Background
Salford City College (salfordcc.ac.uk) is a medium-sized General Further Education College in Greater Manchester with five campuses including a brand-new centre in the heart of Media City. FutureSkills @MediaCityUK. A broad range of courses are offered at all levels including A-levels and HE. Salford City College students attain some of the best results in the country with a 99% A-level pass rate in 2016, and hundreds of students progressing to university and employment. September 2016 saw the opening of state-of-the-art Digital Learning Zones (http://ji.sc/SCC-digital-learning-zone) in each Centre as part of a £9m programme of investment in buildings, facilities and IT.

Strategic priorities
In May 2015 Digital learning was adopted as one of five strategic priorities, with an aim of implementing the FELTAG recommendations (http://feltag.org.uk) by 2018. The Digital learning strategy (2016) sets out how the college will achieve this, through seven strands.

1. Pedagogy: achieving a fully blended curriculum
2. Digital learning environments: combining space with technology
3. Technology: infrastructure, hardware and software
4. Resourcing: structure and harnessing the synergy
5. Digital literacies: staff and learners
6. Collaboration and partnerships: learning from others and pooling resources
7. Innovation and quality: the LearningWheel framework, management information, measuring effectiveness, performance management

Supporting diverse learners is a personal passion of the Director for digital learning and IT services, and the Digital learning strategy will continue to promote assistive technologies while allowing learners to use a wider range of their own devices and interfaces.

The reason I’m so passionate about using technology is that it helps everyone... You tend to find you have a lot of learners with a range of disabilities and difficulties. If you use an appropriate tool it can remove or reduce their difficulties, and allow learners to achieve far more than they could [otherwise].

Employability and progression are also key success factors for the college. As well as developing partnerships with employers to place students in digitally challenging workplaces, the college aims to grow the use of online learning to support work-based learners and apprentices.

Digital capability is an outcome that makes students and staff more employable.

Leadership of change
The Vice principal for development and innovation has overall responsibility for developing the college’s digital capabilities to enhance teaching and learning, and transforming the estate and facilities. He attended a Jisc Digital leaders course (jisc.ac.uk/training/digital-leaders-programme) where he was able to discuss strategic issues with other college leaders in advance of presenting the college’s Digital learning strategy.
The new Director for digital learning and IT services at the college is responsible for developing and implementing the Digital learning strategy, in collaboration with key stakeholders across the five centres, as well as developing the digital capabilities of staff.

The delivery team includes 18 curriculum-based Digital leaders, who support digital practice in their departments, and nine Digital learning facilitators, (DLFs). These are full-time staff operate from the Digital learning zones to support students in their digital study hour.

**Actions for digital capability**

In relation to strands 2 and 3 of the Digital Learning Strategy, an early decision was made to invest in Canvas as a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Procurement of a virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) solution and various classroom technologies was also fast-tracked in time for the 2016/17 academic year.

The current priority – focusing on strands 1, 2, 5 and 7 of the Strategy – is to develop all teaching staff to be confident users of Canvas and of digital resources, including social media, for learning. Staff have an hour of dedicated CPD time every Wednesday to enhance their practice, which might involve a ‘breakfast bite’ in a staff room, online support for Canvas, or exploring new ideas in an Online sandpit.

The Director for digital learning and IT services works with the 18 Digital leaders, who in turn support other teaching staff in their departments, cascading skills and helping with the preparation of the required one hour of digital learning per student per week.

A Learning Wheel model ([learningwheel.co.uk](http://learningwheel.co.uk)) is used to define the skills that staff need in four areas, across three levels, giving 12 standards in all. The Digital leaders are helping their departmental staff achieve level 1 by June 2017. Staff conference days are used to showcase a variety of Canvas sites with tools such as Twitter, Scoopit and Pinterest embedded. Staff are also sharing resources with other colleges via the Canvas Commons library.

**Moving ahead**

The number of hours that learners spend on digital activities will be extended as they progress, but by making it an integral part of the learning experience from the outset, the college expects that learners will be well prepared for more digital engagement.

There are plans for an event at which staff and students will inform one another about the digital resources they use by sharing the ‘three benefits’ of their favourite apps and applications. A number of students are already showing interest in becoming digital champions or ‘DigiPals’. They will join a growing national network ([facebook.com/TheDigipals](http://facebook.com/TheDigipals)) of DigiPals and will have opportunities to be involved with the Jisc Change agents’ network (CAN) ([http://ji.sc/SCC-change-agents-network](http://ji.sc/SCC-change-agents-network)).

**Opportunities and challenges for the future**

A key opportunity is to connect learners and staff with people beyond their own institution, including in other countries and regions. The Canvas Commons library is one example of this; connecting language learners with native speakers who happen to be learning English is another.

Using the right digital resources can empower people and increase their potential. It reduces geographical boundaries, disability boundaries, and financial boundaries.

There are opportunities to redefine what learning looks like. For example, physical attendance at a site might be less significant than how a learner engages in activities, whether they are physically present or participating online.

There are new opportunities to engage with the local community, for example offering the use of college resources to support local businesses with their digital skills and working practices.

We aim to increase our students’ digital literacy skills to a level that ensures they are not only able to function from a digital perspective in employment, but they can thrive and become desirable employees.
There are risks, however, in introducing new digital systems if teaching staff feel overwhelmed and that their expertise is being undermined or replaced by technology. It is important to listen to and understand these concerns, and to convey how digital practices can be beneficial for staff themselves – such as by helping them make better use of their time.

Lessons learned

» A cascade model of digital development makes good use of limited staff resources, and brings support close to where it is needed

» A coherent model such as a LearningWheel allows staff to see clearly what is expected and to monitor how they are progressing

» Digital badges are motivating for staff as well as students

» Teaching staff concerns need to be taken seriously and the benefits of engaging with new tools and systems must be relevant to them

» An up-to-date digital environment provides opportunities to engage local businesses directly in digital upskilling, as well as supporting learners with their digital employability skills

» Student change agents benefit from networking beyond their own institution

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Presentation to the Jisc Student experience experts’ meeting:
http://ji.sc/SCC-prezi-experts-meeting

Any unattributed quotes in the text were provided and have been approved by the contacts above.

For more information
on all related resources please see the
Building digital capability project page.
http://ji.sc/building-digicap