Developing organisational approaches to digital capability
Our evolving understanding of digital capabilities

Defining organisational digital capability

“The extent to which the culture, policies and infrastructure of an organisation enable and support digital practices.”
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Our work and understanding of digital literacies for individuals has evolved over the years to now expressing these as digital capabilities. At an individual level, we define digital literacies as the capabilities which fit someone for living, learning and working in a digital society. At organisational level, we need to look beyond the capabilities of individuals and be concerned with the extent to which the identity, culture and infrastructure of an institution enables and motivates digital practices.

Our building digital capability co-design project has been exploring how the development of digital capabilities is supported at an institutional level.

Involving collaboration with a wide range of providers, professional associations and other stakeholders, it led to the development of our digital capability framework which describes six overlapping elements of digital capability for individual staff and students.

In addition to building on previous work in this area our understanding of the digital capabilities that students and staff need has been informed by other related initiatives such as effective learning analytics, our research on developing student employability, our digital student project, change agents’ network and online learning.

Why digital know-how is so important

Technological change is not a new phenomenon and digital innovation continues apace. Technology is changing both working processes and the nature of work and knowledge practices. The rate at which educational institutions can adopt new technologies and adapt their practices is an acknowledged challenge.

There are challenges in matching the speed of change in the education sector, for example in changing curricula and training, to the speed of demand, and the rapidly changing skill sets needs in the economy and society.

Digital skills for the UK economy, a report by Ecorys UK for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (January 2016) http://bit.ly/gov_digi_skills
The digitally capable organisation

Our model of the digitally capable organisation looks beyond the capabilities of individuals and acknowledges that digital capabilities impact on, and are relevant to, all areas of university and college business.

Our model of The digitally capable organisation with a comprehensive explanation of the various elements is available to download from: http://ji.sc/digicap_org_frame

“When we were looking at the Digital Lancaster strategy [we considered] whether people would have the skills to undertake what we were expecting, and above and beyond that, did they have a culture that encouraged them to actually do it?”

Rachel Fligelstone, Head of IT support, Lancaster University

“Everyone needs to have an increased awareness of what they are learning from their analytics and how to apply them back. We need to grow these skills across the organisation but we still need to rely on specialists as well, particularly in areas like IT where we really need to build something meaningful on the back of the data we have.”

Will Woods, Head of learning and teaching technologies, The Open University

“We have created a number of exhibitions, events and activities in the learning lounge and across college [to support Safer Internet Day]. We use interactive technologies, QR codes and augmented reality in a very creative way.”

Vikki Liogier, Head of digital literacy, voice and innovation, Epping Forest College

“It’s important to address infrastructure as well as people’s skills. You can’t get people to try stuff if the technology won’t actually let them do it.”

Kerry Pinny, Digital education developer, University of Lincoln
Organisational digital culture
Building a contextualised model appropriate to your needs will require sound digital leadership and making sure that opportunities for students and staff to explore what this means to their areas of practice are an integral aspect of the development process.
Q. How well does the organisation support the development of digital capabilities through its core strategies, culture, leadership, governance, strategic planning and estates management?
Q. How is innovation encouraged and how are students and staff engaged?
Q. How are digital practices enabled and proactively developed in core activities?

ICT Infrastructure
A robust, reliable and flexible infrastructure is essential and will provide a strong foundation from which staff and students can develop individual and collective digital capabilities and try out new tools and approaches, confident in the knowledge that the technology will work.
Q. How do you support the varying needs of students and staff and their subject/professional specialisms?
Q. Do your planning and investment processes include capacity to scan the horizon for emerging practices and absorb new demands?
Q. How are you engaging and supporting stakeholders - from those starting out to those at the cutting edge?

Core activities
Digital capabilities can enhance all areas of organisational practice and while there may be common digital issues, requirements can vary. We have identified four core areas of activity particularly pertinent to educational organisations and looked at the digital capabilities these require.

Content and information
Effective management of information and data is critical to the functions of large organisations like colleges and universities.
Q. Do your human resource strategies recognise and support data, information and content management aspects in recruitment, CPD and personal development and review processes?

Research and innovation
Changes and development in specialist digital capabilities are often developed in connection with a professional body, research team, subject community or other specialist domain.
Q. How do you support staff and students to proactively build, use, share and develop specialist digital expertise and to participate in professional networks?

Communication
Digital communication enables core functions to be managed effectively and makes it possible for people to work, study and research together regardless of barriers such as time and location.
Q. How well does your organisation make use of the different types of digital communication and engender effective and respectful e-communication practice and behaviours for staff and students?
Q. How is digital media used to promote organisational and personal reputations?

Learning, teaching and assessment
Learning, teaching and assessment is arguably the core business of education and is a broad core activity encompassing multiple elements and specialist areas of expertise.
Q. How are teaching staff supported to develop the digital capabilities they need to design, deliver and assess digital activities in the curriculum?
Q. How are students supported and encouraged to develop the skills they need to operate safely and effectively in a digital workplace, including the ability to innovate and adapt to new digital opportunities?
Find out more: our guides and further resources

**Project pages**
Building digital capability
http://ji.sc/building-digicap

Developing student employability
jisc.ac.uk/rd/projects/developing-student-employability

Effective learning analytics
jisc.ac.uk/rd/projects/effective-learning-analytics

Scaling up online learning
jisc.ac.uk/rd/projects/scaling-up-online-learning

Student digital experience tracker
jisc.ac.uk/rd/projects/student-digitalexperience-tracker

**Guides**
Developing organisational approaches to digital capability
http://ji.sc/developing-digicap

Developing digital literacies (updated December 2014)
jisc.ac.uk/guides/developing-digitalliteracies

Developing students’ digital literacy
http://ji.sc/develop_digital_literacy

Technology for employability toolkit
http://ji.sc/tech_for_employ_toolkit

Developing successful student-staff partnerships
http://ji.sc/develop_partnerships

Enhancing the student digital experience: a strategic approach
jisc.ac.uk/guides/enhancing_the-digital-student-experience

Scaling up online learning
jisc.ac.uk/guides/scaling-up-online-learning

**Reports**
Deepening digital know-how: building digital talent

**How Jisc can help**

This briefing is a summary of our online guide on Developing organisational approaches to digital capability. The briefing provides an overview of some of the models and resources we offer while our more detailed online guide aims to support organisational leads with responsibility for developing staff and student digital capabilities in FE and HE by offering a structured approach showing how our digital capability framework can be used alongside a suite of tools and resources to help you to build a contextualised model for developing digital capability in your organisation.

For more information on all related resources please see the developing organisational approaches to digital capability http://ji.sc/developing-digicap

All institutions supported by Jisc have a dedicated account manager who can identify appropriate specialist support to develop digital capability solutions. The service is scalable, ranging from a diagnostic meeting, advice and resource signposting, to a more detailed and involved consultative support service.

Contact the Jisc customer service help desk to find out who your account manager is customerservices@jisc.ac.uk
Share our vision to make the UK the most digitally advanced education and research nation in the world.
jisc.ac.uk
Our digital capability resources are available from our developing organisational approaches to digital capability guide: http://jisc.ac/developing-digicap