Establishing existing staff digital capability levels

Piloting the digital capability discovery tool:
Hull College Group

Hull College (hull-college.ac.uk) took part in the pilot of the digital capabilities discovery tool (http://bit.ly/digcapdiscovery) to raise awareness of the importance of digital capabilities, to ascertain the current capabilities and confidence levels of staff and their training needs.

Pilot approaches
The pilot was promoted widely through the internal social media network Yammer, via email and by asking heads of school and departmental heads to encourage their teams to participate. Yammer had only recently been introduced at the college and so the pilot offered a focus for discussions.

At the same time, a new scheme to encourage staff to work towards ‘digital medals’ based on an approach developed by North Lindsey College (http://ji.sc/CS-Hull-digital-missions) through their DPD go staff development initiative was being launched. This scheme is based on the Jisc framework for digital capabilities (http://ji.sc/digicap_ind_frame) and breaks each of the six digital capabilities into four levels of achievement. Each level is associated with a number of capabilities, and a digital badge is awarded for evidencing these capabilities at each level.

Outcomes
107 staff from Hull College took part in the pilot, responding to the prompt questions in the discovery tool to self-assess their current levels of digital capabilities. Participants included academic staff spanning 18 subject areas, members of the library and learning resource, learning support, student services, administration, student records and MIS, human resource and organisational development and estates management teams.

The data generated by the discovery tool is anonymised but gives an overview of levels of digital capability for each of the participating teams against 13 skills groupings, using rating categories of ‘developing’, ‘capable’ and ‘proficient’.

Staff felt the questions were good at encouraging reflection and the individual radial diagrams provided for each participant at the end of the process provided a visual overview of capabilities along with suggested areas for action and links to resources. Some staff shared their individual results with colleagues via Yammer, generating discussion which further helped to raise awareness and engagement.

“The framework is very good and very clear. It encompasses a wide range of skills and moves away from digital capabilities just being something technical.”
Emily Armstrong, libraries and elearning manager, Hull College Group
Key lessons learned

» Ensuring senior leaders are on board (http://ji.sc/Thought-leadership-Hull) and are promoting the importance of digital capability development and the relevance to other priorities is essential, especially when there are so many competing calls on staff time.

» Not everyone understood the questions and this highlights a need to have both face-to-face and online support options available.

Next steps

The college is now analysing the data generated by participating in the pilot to identify any trends and inform future staff development initiatives.

Although staff were encouraged to use their individual profile results as part of their appraisal process, doing so was entirely voluntary and it is too early to say how many people did this and to what effect.

Hull College Group hopes to take part in the next stage of the piloting when the next iteration of the discovery tool is released.

Contacts

Emily Armstrong
Libraries and elearning manager, Hull College Group
email: earmstrong@hull-college.ac.uk