

Cylchlythyr | Circular

Revised Enhancing Learning and Teaching through Technology (ELTT) strategy

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To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales
Principals of directly-funded further education colleges in Wales
Response by: No response required
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This circular provides a further scheduled refresh of the ten year Strategy for Enhancing Learning and Teaching through Technology (ELTT) from 2007/08 to 2016/17.

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Introduction

1. This circular provides a further scheduled refresh of the ten year [Strategy for Enhancing Learning and Teaching through Technology](#) (ELTT) from 2007/08 to 2016/17. Our vision remains the same, ie that enhancing learning and teaching through technology be considered a normal part of mainstream provision, processes and practices.
2. This refresh moves from a focus on the student learning experience to the student experience more broadly, as the increased use of technology means that the two are increasingly linked, and difficult to separate. In addition, there is now increased engagement with students before they attend university and after they leave, which has led to our focus on the student journey. This refresh attempts to ensure that the strategy continues to meet the needs of the sector, and set goals which are achievable by the end of its life span.
3. By the end of the period covered by the strategy we expect institutions to be able to evidence their achievement of the indicators of success. Through this refresh we also encourage institutions to showcase and disseminate what has been achieved to date through their implementation of this strategy. Further details will be provided in 2016/17.

Background

4. The period since the publication of the [Strategy for Enhancing Learning and Teaching through Technology](#) has been one of substantial change for the higher education (HE) sector. In publishing the ELTT strategy in 2007/08 we recognised that it would need to be reviewed at regular intervals to take account of such changes. The strategy was therefore [refreshed](#) in 2011. We formed a task and finish group to inform this revision, membership of which is available at **Annex A**. Feedback from this group indicates that the sector is progressing well against the objectives of the refreshed strategy.
5. Changes since the last refresh of the strategy include the implementation of changes to fees and funding, together with the publication by the Welsh Government of their [Higher Education \(Wales\) Bill: Technical consultation](#), and [Policy Statement on Higher Education](#).
6. The Welsh Government also commissioned an [Online Digital Learning Working Group](#) to examine the potential of this area and advise how the Welsh Government could support the HE sector. The revised strategy takes account of the [outcomes of that Working Group](#), in particular recommendations 4-7 to:
 - review institutional policies, monitor developments and exploit opportunities;
 - strengthen institutional reputation and brand;
 - improve the skills of higher education staff;

- license and share open educational resources.

The recommendations inform the evidence base outlined in the indicators of success.

7. The student voice has become increasingly important, and partnership with students has become a priority through the [Wise Wales](#) work. In multi-campus institutions, which have become more prevalent due to the reconfiguration agenda, or where students are studying off campus, technology can facilitate a comparable student experience regardless of location of study. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs); open educational resources and practices (OER and OEP); social learning; increased use of bring your own device (BYOD); rapid development and deployment of innovation across a range of platforms; information sharing and authentication; and learning analytics, are becoming ever more prominent and may offer opportunities for individual HE institutions and Wales as a whole. There is a much increased focus on the need for students, staff and organisations to develop academic and professional literacies appropriate to the digital age (sometimes called 'digital literacies') eg www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/infokits/digital-literacies/. Finally, the forthcoming HE Bill will also impact on the role of HEFCW, which may shape how HEFCW works with the sector in the future.
8. The review of the strategy in 2011 concluded that implementation of the strategy had been successful to date. The refresh took account of changes in technology, and to the policy context of higher education (HE). To reflect these changes, we shifted the emphasis to a more evidence-based approach for all the longer term indicators of success, and asked institutions to focus on gathering, refining, and providing evidence to support the achievement of the strategy's objectives.
9. [Circular W14/12HE](#) asked institutions to provide three case studies on Enhancing Learning and Teaching through Technology (ELTT) to HEFCW by 30 May 2014, together with a summary of the impact of the strategy. The outcomes of these are available on our [website](#).
10. This strategy places substantial emphasis on the evaluation of technology. Digital communication facilitates the sharing of experience and knowledge across previously separate professional networks and disciplines. There are substantial benefits in learning lessons from innovation elsewhere, including innovation which has been funded, facilitated and/or communicated by Jisc, the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and other agencies. Institutions' efforts are therefore best used in reviewing evaluations carried out by others for similar purposes, and, if appropriate, to evaluate how technologies might best be implemented either locally or collaboratively.

Updates to the objectives of the strategy

11. We have updated the objectives of the strategy as indicated below. These objectives need to be considered in the context of the needs of the diverse student body, including the diversity of their experience of technology. We continue to encourage you to make use of external agencies, for example Jisc and the HEA, in achieving these objectives. We set priorities for these agencies, engage directly with them and encourage them to work closely together to eliminate duplication and enhance collaboration. We also encourage them to disseminate good practice from Wales more broadly.

Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Assessment, and of processes supporting student journey management

- i. Emphasising the student experience rather than technology**
The emphasis should remain on how technology enables, and is embedded in, the enhancement of the student experience, for example, via personalisation, learner-focussed technology, social learning, and enhancing pedagogical practice.
- ii. Mainstreaming the role of technology in enhancing learning, teaching and assessment**
We confirm the importance of analysis and reflection in planning, and the importance of maintaining continuous improvement. This can be facilitated through engaging with activities to support institutions in making the most strategically effective use of technology facilitated, for example, by work Jisc is leading in Wales in 2014-2015 on Transforming the Digital Student Experience.
- iii. Academic and professional development**
Academic and professional development opportunities for staff should continue to be evidence-based and include scholarly and academic literacies appropriate to the digital age. This includes determining how learning, teaching and staff development may be enhanced through the use of technology. This needs to include reflective practice, and consideration of how technologies and digital approaches have contributed, or not, to an enhanced student experience, and consideration of how reward and recognition for teaching excellence can be linked to this area.
- iv. Enhancing other processes supporting student journey management through use of technology**
The seeking of enhancements to other processes supporting student journey management, eg student recruitment, selection, enrolment, transition, progression and assessment, through the use of technology should continue to be normalised. These processes impact upon, and can transform, the student experience, although they may vary with discipline and institution. They will also need to align with the provision in your Welsh language scheme and the developing Welsh language standards. You will also need to consider how you use technology to access and use data

intelligently to inform decision-making in order to enable students to succeed.

An Enhanced Student Experience, demonstrating flexibility and accessibility of provision

- v. Enhancing the student experience**
We recognise the continued role of technology in addressing the needs of diverse learners, facilitating continuous learning, and ensuring parity of learning experience. Changing student and staff expectations, including in relation to accessibility and support, make this increasingly complex. In addition, it is essential for students to develop scholarly/academic literacies appropriate to the needs of our increasingly digital world in order to align student digital skills with those they will need in the workplace. We expect you to develop creative and innovative ways of engaging actively with students as partners, leaders, and co-creators, using technology as appropriate, in order that their voice informs the enhancement of the student experience and the establishment of agreed staff and student expectations.
- vi. Demonstrable flexibility and accessibility**
Accessibility and flexibility are becoming increasingly important, with technology as a major enabler. We confirm the continued importance of technology in increasing accessibility and flexibility of learning and support, including addressing equality and diversity, the needs of students with protected characteristics, Welsh medium learning, those wishing to use the Welsh language, and fostering lifelong learning with the ultimate aim of facilitating learning and addressing student needs. This will be demonstrated differently in each institution, depending on its strategic approach and the needs of its students. It would be helpful to demonstrate this beyond institutional boundaries, for example via collaboration with Jisc and the HEA.
- vii. Research and scholarly activity**
Staff are now more widely expected to have a teaching qualification and undertake scholarly activity. We welcome this expectation, and confirm that staff in all institutions should continue to carry out, utilise, share through open academic practices, and/or apply the research of others in their own practice to identify how the student experience may be enhanced through technology. This will maximise benefit, avoid duplication, inform decision-making and build capacity.
- viii. Engaging with benchmarking and learning analytics**
We confirm the importance of analysis and reflection in planning, and the importance of maintaining continuous improvement which developed as a consequence of the original benchmarking exercise. We anticipate some evidence of ongoing, albeit periodic, analysis and reflection. This needs to include consideration of learning analytics, which offer an embedded means for institutions of

measuring their own performance in relation to enhancement.

Effective Collaboration and Sharing of Current and Good Practice

ix. Collaboration

Collaboration has become increasingly important, and can be between staff and students, departments, staff/institutions and employers, and/or institutions. We encourage institutions to use opportunities provided by Jisc and other bodies to collaborate in enhancing learning and teaching through technology. It can also be through the sharing of strategic ideas, such as via: Future Directions; the HEA Welsh Institutional Group; the [Cadarn](#) work to create a web portal to showcase, promote and facilitate technology enhanced learning across a group of higher education institutions (HEIs) and support access to bilingual learning; and the Higher Education Wales (HEW) Pro Vice-Chancellors (PVC) Learning and Teaching Advisory Group (LTAG), which is working to embed OER/OEP in institutions. It includes sharing ideas and projects which were not successful, for example via the Jisc [CAMEL](#) networks, in order to avoid repetition of mistakes, and enable an increased focus on solutions.

You need to consider possibilities for shared teaching, and informing scholarly activity and research, as well as for cross-functional collaboration. You also need to address the fact that library and information services, student services and other academic and professional services may need to support different types of collaborative partnerships in the future. You need to consider how to make examples of collaboration more visible and to extend them. It would be helpful in terms of Welsh reputation to raise the profile of ELTT and what has been achieved in Wales in this area, for example through active participation in pan-Wales and UK-wide networks and organisations.

x. Demonstrating competitiveness

Institutions have changed in strategic approach over the period of this strategy, as the context of HE has changed in the time since the strategy was originally written. We confirm that technology should continue to be used to support and enhance your institution's mission and remain competitive, both individually and pan-Wales, in order to provide an optimum student experience.

Institutional engagement

xi. Institutional engagement with the strategy

We confirm that we expect you to continue to engage with this strategy. However, we do not believe it is necessary to maintain separate indicators for this objective.

Refreshing the indicators of success

12. We have refreshed the long term indicators of success to take account of the review of the strategy and the change in the HE context since publication of the strategy. As mentioned above, we do not believe it necessary to maintain the indicators for institutional engagement with the strategy as the previous review of the strategy demonstrated that this has been achieved.
13. We expect you to take an evidence-based approach to derive appropriate quantitative and/or qualitative evidence for the achievement of the indicators which are appropriate to your institutional context by 2016/17. Evidence may be drawn from a range of areas of the University, eg estates, support services, and administration. We expect institutions to take a holistic approach in evidencing each of the objectives, both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Assessment, and of processes supporting student journey management. HEIs can evidence:

- that there are clear processes for ongoing evaluation and development of enhancement of learning and teaching through technology, to determine that it is used in a relevant and beneficial way, while being integral to effective operation of the institution. This includes how technology is used to support the student journey, facilitate the development of new pedagogic practices and assist in curriculum transformation.
- consideration of how practice which has been evidenced to have a positive impact has been shared widely (ie internally, nationally and internationally) and/or effectively, and has informed strategically effective engagement with work to support learning, teaching and the student experience;
- that academic and professional development opportunities for staff are evidence-based and include appropriate digital literacies;
- how students engage in advising on and evaluating the use of technology to enhance their experience;
- active engagement with Welsh Government priorities related to technology, such as the recommendations of the [Online Digital Learning Working Group](#).

An Enhanced Student Experience, demonstrating flexibility and accessibility of provision. HEIs can evidence:

- strategic understanding of the importance of technology in enabling flexibility and accessibility of learning;
- engagement of students as partners, leaders, followers and co-creators in order to enhance the student experience and manage student and staff expectations;
- timely adoption of appropriate technologies, including into

operational processes, with quality materials provided for all learners, encompassing development of the digital literacies required by staff and students to locate, use, adapt, create and share such materials;

- the appropriate use of technology to strengthen and enhance Welsh medium learning, address equality and diversity, and foster lifelong learning;
- enhancement of the student experience through working collaboratively and sharing experiences and outcomes.

Effective collaboration and sharing of current and good practice. HEIs can evidence:

- the benefits of embedding collaboration into practice, resulting in effective dissemination, sharing and promotion of good practice in the use of technology to enhance the student experience;
- increased collaboration with students, within and between institutions in Wales, the UK and globally, including OERs, shared services and cloud computing as appropriate;
- collaboration, including: how good practice already available (eg [y Porth](#), [Hwb](#), [Cadarn](#), [Jorum](#), and MOOC platforms such as [FutureLearn](#)) is being used for the benefit of HE; working in partnership with other organisations, for example Jisc and the HEA, to inform, support and disseminate good practice; and engagement with pan-sector initiatives, such as the [OER/OEP work](#) being led by the HEW PVC LTAG, and the wider impact of this;
- appropriate use of social learning, including through sharing practice and learning from how students use social learning;
- horizon scanning and seeking opportunities for innovation, through agencies such as Jisc and the HE, in order to use technology to maintain competitiveness and increase the contribution of HE to the knowledge economy. This may be measured either directly or via provision of skills to students to enable them to contribute.

14. Following on from circular [W14/12HE](#), which asked institutions to provide us with case studies and a summary of the impact of the strategy to date, the following documents are now available on our website:
- Each institution's favourite case study;
 - Each institution's most portable case study;
 - Case studies on initiatives which were tried, were unsuccessful, but which provided useful lessons;
 - A summary overview of the case studies;

Impact assessment

15. As part of our policy development process we have undertaken an initial screening to consider the impact of this document on individuals with protected characteristics and groups underrepresented in higher education. This screening did not identify any negative implications or

unforeseen consequences for individuals with protected characteristics. The outcomes of this screening are available on request. We will continue to consider the impact of policies on equality and diversity, the Welsh language, and Welsh language provision, and on sustainability within the HE sector in Wales.

16. Institutions are responsible for impact assessing any ELTT developments, taking into account the impact on individuals with protected characteristics in relation to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion and/or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
17. We also considered sustainability matters as part of the impact assessment screening of this document, in line with HEFCW's remit responsibility, recognising the role of ELTT in sustainability. You will need to ensure that sustainability is adequately addressed within ELTT developments, and that they are consistent with and links to the policies, values, and actions set out within your institution's own sustainability policy and environmental management plan.

Further information / responses to

18. For further information, contact Dr Cliona O'Neill (tel 029 2068 2283; email cliona.oneill@hefcw.ac.uk).

Annex A – ELTT Advisory Group Members

Paul Bailey, Jisc;

Rachel Cable, Higher Education Wales (HEW);

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