



Digital Strategy

How Digital Enables Strategy 2025 and Beyond



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Background

Introduction

Digital has been a fundamental part of change, improvement, and transformation at the University. We have adopted digital technology into our teaching, learning, research and operations as part of our digital transformation agenda.

Digital now underpins not only what we do, but the society within which we operate and whom we serve.

The digital strategy describes why and how the University will embed digital in all aspects of what we do. Ultimately the aim of this strategy will be to mainstream and wholly embed into our University strategy, with digital no longer seen as other or different.

Why the focus on digital?

Digital demands special attention. We cannot underestimate the degree to which it is disrupting the economic underpinnings of the global education sector. We must not overlook the speed with which digital ecosystems are blurring industry boundaries and shifting the competitive balance. Meanwhile, many staff in the University lack clarity on what digital means for our core activities. Responding to digital by building new processes, ways of working and shifting resources away from old ones can feel threatening to individuals, who may therefore be slow to embrace (much less drive) the needed change. The only way to cut through inertia and incrementalism is to take bold steps.

Fully embracing digital will create flexibility to keep pace with the evolution of HE, with competitors in the sector and beyond and with student expectations. It will allow the University to:

- leverage opportunities in digital research and digital teaching and learning
- make our processes and services more effective and efficient, freeing up time for human interactions.



A digital-first continuous improvement culture built around people, processes and technology will better enable us to deliver our mission, strategic themes and future-proof the organisation.

Why do we need a digital strategy?

Digital strategy is the application of digital technologies to our business. It is crucial for the University to thrive in the digital age; it helps us harness the opportunities presented by digital technologies while addressing the challenges and risks associated with them, ultimately driving growth, innovation and competitiveness.

A well-planned digital strategy, one that aligns with and supports overall University objectives, allows us to create a digital foundation for sustainable growth. It supports development into a modern digital-by-default University. An organisation that is well prepared for the incredible impact that digital has only just begun to have on the world.

Our digital strategy bridges the gap between the remainder of Strategy 2025 and the development of Strategy 2035 that has digital embedded as a core component.



Artificial intelligence and the digital strategy

Artificial intelligence (AI) has been around for some time but the recent development in generative AI in particular have highlighted a need to understand the implications and benefits of this technology to the University. AI acts as a catalyst, amplifying the impact of our digital strategy by fostering innovation, efficiency, and agility across the University.

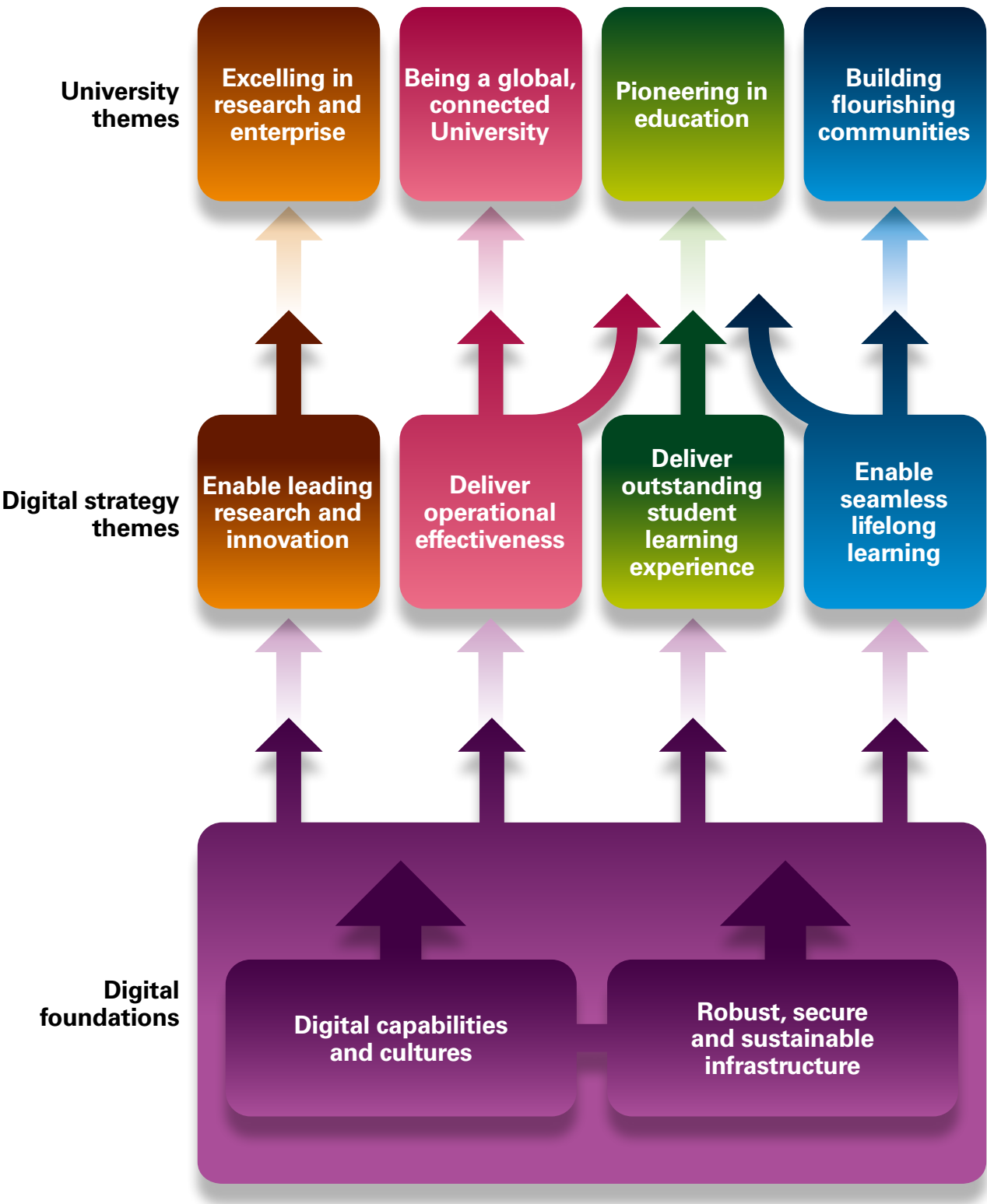
Our approach to AI can be described as curious but cautious. We should be prepared to embrace it but in a measured and fully-informed way. AI has the potential to contribute to our digital landscape through enhanced decision-making, personalisation and customer experience, process automation, predictive analytics and cybersecurity. Specifics of how we deploy AI strategically within the University should be guided by a cross-institutional AI advisory group reflecting the particularly wide-ranging impact of this technology.

It is however, just one tool of many that are in scope of our digital strategy. The strategy vision and principles apply equally and will also guide us as newer and equally disruptive technologies come along.

The four pillars of our digital strategy



Articulation with Strategy 2025





Vision: *To be a digital-first University.*

Our University activities and the services that support them are digitally-enabled, effective, equitable and secure with staff and students who are digitally capable, prepared and equipped for the future.

The Digital Strategy

Digital-first means approaching any new opportunity or problem with the assumption that digital will be a key enabler and central to the solution.

- ✓ People first, then process, lastly looking at systems and technology that will facilitate them
- ✓ Imagine as much of what is being delivered and consumed as being in digital formats
- ✓ Imagine as much as possible being powered by underlying digital platforms.

Digital-first does not mean digital-only and is fully compatible with our campus-based principles. Our digital strategy is **intelligently-digital** and **people-centred** reflecting that we will use digital processes, techniques and services that are appropriate to the requirement and free up time for humans to do what they do best.

The following principles further elaborate on this digital vision for the University.

They also give us a guide to what this means for our University, its students and its staff and more importantly how we should seek to deliver this vision. These guiding principles should be foremost in our mindset when deciding the actions required in order to deliver the strategy and vision.



Principles: People

Community

We will use digital to enhance and connect our global communities, especially that of our alumni and online students to our campus-based foundation. We recognise that hybrid working and teaching are part of our society and will use digital to enhance that experience.



Meaningfully digital

Our technology will enhance our teaching and research rather than be for its own sake. Our use of digital will be ethical, with empathy and people-centred reflecting that we will use AI, digital processes, techniques and services that are appropriate to the requirement, free up time for humans to do what they do best and help them achieve their purpose.



Individual

We will boost individual productivity by providing an intuitive, effective and consistent self-service-oriented experience that enables students and staff to learn, teach and work from anywhere at any time.



Accessible, equitable and inclusive

We will deliver digital with respect for the full range of human diversity, working for as many of our students and staff as possible seeking to use technologies to reduce inequality (including digital inequality) and increase accessibility at every opportunity.



Digitally fluent

We will be a digitally capable student body and workforce, embracing digital to enhance our working environment and prepare our students with life-ready skills, constantly striving to improve our digital skills and confidence. Ensuring staff and students have the skills to use the digital solutions ethically and equitably is crucial in ensuring our community gains the value from its investment in technology.



Effective

We will provide proactive and timely support, in a digital-first manner, making effective use of available digital resources and techniques to remove or eliminate unnecessary barriers.



Principles: Process

Digital-first

We will be digital by default, ensuring digital is considered at the outset of everything we do. Digital-first does not mean digital-only but we will take every opportunity to think about how digital could supplement or enhance our activities.



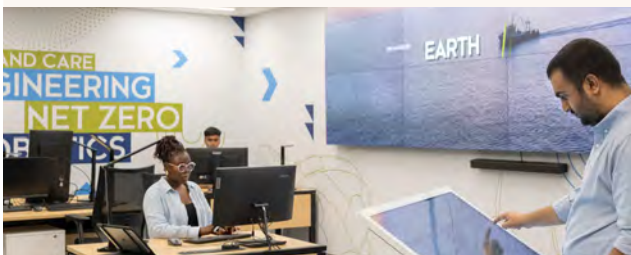
One globally-connected University way

We will operate consistently as a global organisation, ensuring our technologies, digital processes and methods of working are simple and uniformly applied recognising local variation by exception and only when required. Our technology will facilitate our students and staff being globally connected with each other, with research, industry and local and global communities.



Data and information-driven

We will naturally seek out data to turn into information that will inform our decisions at every level. Intuitive and informative dashboards and reports will be readily accessible in order to enable this. Data use will be ethical, will embed data protection by design and will comply with our information governance principles.



Mainstreamed

Digital will cease to be a separate or other strategy and will become mainstreamed into and embedded throughout our overall University strategy and plans. Digital will become interwoven into our institutional DNA such that consideration of digitally-enhanced approaches to our activities become second nature.



Secure by design

We will embed information security in our culture and within our governance, technology, applications, data and our supply-chain. Security is everyone's responsibility and our systems and services must be secure by design.



We will operate consistently as a global organisation, ensuring our technologies, digital processes and methods of working are simple and uniformly applied recognising local variation by exception and only when required.

Principles: Technology

Sustainably digital

We will play our part in delivering on the University sustainability strategy, incorporating the impact on the climate into our technology and digital decision-making processes with the aim of achieving net zero.



Technologically fit for purpose

We will strive to get the basics right, with technology solutions and infrastructure considered by our users to be fit for purpose and will facilitate services which add value to every aspect of University life.



Cloud-first

Cloud products and services will be selected by default to leverage scalability and as-a-service solutions whilst benefitting from a more sustainable IT environment. We will make use of commercial products and services by default and only develop internally where there is no viable alternative using managed services from a small number of strategic partners to augment small but capable internal teams.



Integrated

Systems and services will be tightly integrated and appropriately porous. Data will flow between our enterprise systems in a timely manner driven by the business need.



We will strive to get the basics right, with technology solutions and infrastructure considered by our users to be fit for purpose and will facilitate services which add value to every aspect of University life.



The Digital Strategy Roadmap and Future State

The roadmap is indicative, not definitive

The digital strategy roadmap we have created is a multi-year set of initiatives and actions that we aim to take as a University to achieve our digital-first vision. It is not set in stone and must adapt to the emerging digital needs of our staff and students in an agile way, always moving us towards being digital-first as an organisation.



For each digital pillar and foundation, we have set out:

***What;** expansion on the vision for that theme, a sub-vision statement*

***How;** specific identified actions we will take*

***Future state;** what the future will look like when we have achieved our “vision.”*



Enable seamless lifelong learning

Digital processes, platforms and services will facilitate the entire student lifecycle, including our alumni as well as our educational offer outwith traditional learner pathways.

Deliver outstanding student learning experience

Enabling a seamless student journey from application to alumni with globally connected learning at the heart delivering the best possible student experience through innovative digital and technology enhanced learning.



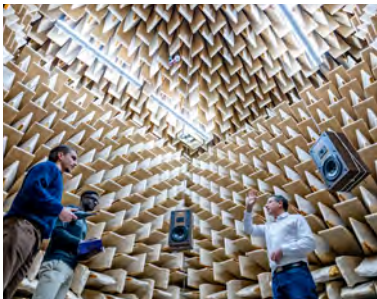
Enable leading research and innovation

Using digital techniques and infrastructure to digitally-enable and transform the way we undertake research, opening up new opportunities for our researchers and funding streams for our University.



Deliver operational effectiveness

We will use digital to make our processes and the University more efficient and effective with appropriate and considered use of self-service, automation and AI.



Digital capabilities and culture

Equipping our staff and students with the capability to use digital tools, data and AI fluently, effectively, ethically and appropriately.



Robust, secure and sustainable infrastructure

Ensuring that the digital infrastructure we deploy within the University is performant, reliable, resilient, secure and environmentally sustainable.



Strategic Performance Indicators



Digital insights survey demonstrates **year-on year institutional increase** in digital maturity across staff and students.



Digital maturity has reached “**high**” or “**optimised**” through multiple measures including Gartner, TCS and Jisc to ensure we are addressing the sector and wider.

Operational Performance Indicators

- Time saved and costs avoided through digital transformation of our processes at micro and macro level.
- Digital discovery tool demonstrates a year-on-year improvement to our institutional digital capability and confidence.
- Bi-annual digital insights survey demonstrates high satisfaction with University systems for staff and students:



80%
of students rate the quality on the online learning environment as good or better.



80%
of students rate the quality of online learning on their course as good or better.



50%
of students feel they are recognised for their digital skills.



50%
of staff feel they have sufficient time to develop their digital capability and explore new tools.



65%
of staff feel that they are supported to teach online.



80%
of researchers can access the systems they need.



85%
of staff rate the quality of online working environments as good or better.



75%
of staff and students feel they are part of an online community.



85%
of staff agree that working online allows them to work the way they prefer.



75%
of staff feel they are supported to work effectively online.



