Digital Strategy
2023 - 2028

Royal
Agricultural
University

Contents

Foreword by the Governor with Digital Portfolio

Jason Makepeace, Governor with digital portfolio

The RAU's digital capability will be crucial to fulfilling our ambitions as the global agricultural University, as a place where students can learn from the best, collaborate with peers from around the world, and use technology to solve the problems of the future.

Changes to ways of working created as a rapid response to COVID-19, have acted as a springboard for development of international partnerships and equitable access to education. Now "A University without walls", with remote learning, teaching and working; we are truly global.

Our role as Trustees is to ensure that everyone at the RAU has the support, empowerment and capability they need to reach their full potential. We are a university with responsibility for the future of our whole planet, so our students and staff need the right tools to take up leadership wherever they are in the world.

We are excited to support the RAU team as they bring this digital strategy to fruition as part of our University Strategy, and achieve a critical part of our ambitious plans for the future.

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Introduction by the Chief Operating Officer

Graham Pollard, Chief Operating Officer

Our digital environment affects the quality, reach and sustainability of the RAU on multiple levels. It is central to our University Strategy and impacts the way we interact across our international and UK campuses; with our networks of students, alumni, industrial and academic partners as well as sector leading experts. We seek to enable all within the RAU community with the ability to seamlessly share thoughts, ideas and information; promoted and enhanced by our digital platforms and capabilities.

In 2021 we took a significant step towards this aim by forming a new Digital Innovation Directorate, which brings together expertise in learning technology, digital architecture, digital operations, procurement and library services. It is our Digital Innovation Directorate that will provide the expert knowledge to shape our digital future. However, we recognise everyone has a role to play. Our Digital Strategy is as much about empowering people across the RAU as it is developing infrastructure, and we are excited to embark on this digital journey together.

Mission and Vision

Our mission

To connect people and places.

Our vision

Our vision is to deliver a digital environment enabling the University to become the UK's global university for sustainable farming and land management.

For our students

We want our students to be able to experience digital services that work first time, every time; to enable and enhance their studies and social experiences at the RAU; and to help prepare our students with the digital skills and confidence to thrive in their future careers.

For our staff

Digital solutions will complement the creativity, innovation and effectiveness of our staff; to simplify processes and underpin the efficiency of how we work; to create a safe and progressive environment; and to be a platform for development, enterprise and opportunity.

For our partners

Our digital capabilities bring our partners in to the same room, regardless of country or location; The RAU wants to be at the forefront of technology and its application in agriculture and land use. Sharing our experiences and insights about technology, through technology, with our network of partners is core to our mission.

Help prepare our students with the digital skills and confidence to thrive in their future careers.
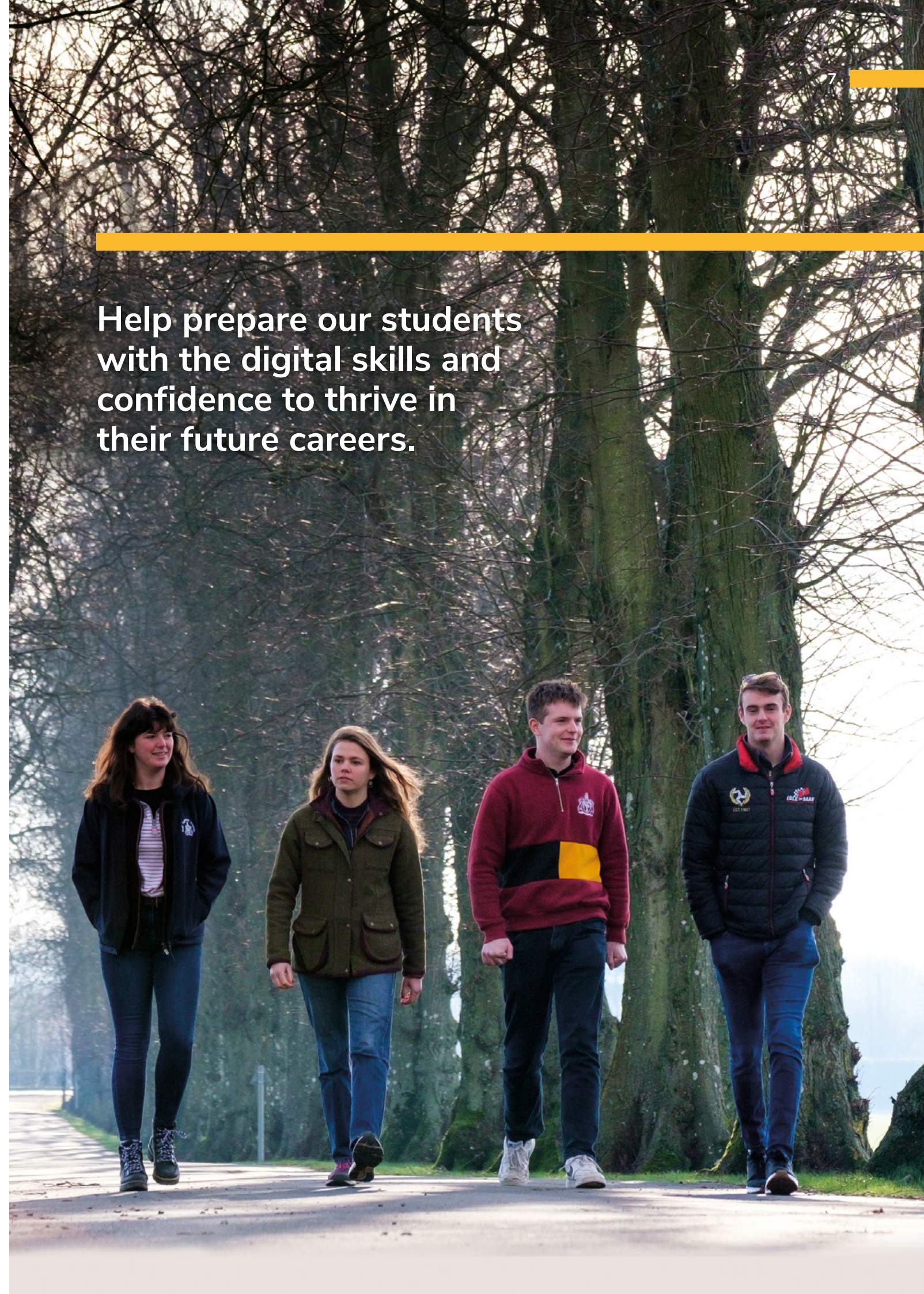
Our digital pillars and measures of success

The Digital Strategy underpins the University's strategic goals as expressed in the University Strategy 2023-28. These are:

Quality

A global reputation for excellence and leadership across teaching, research and engagement.

Reach

A growing, diverse and inclusive community of students and partners in the UK and internationally.

Sustainability

A showcase for sustainable and resilient management through our land and estate, our finances and culture.

In support of these goals, the Digital Strategy is formed around five pillars that are central to the RAU's digital transformation. These are:

Connectivity

The technology and skills which form the foundation of digital delivery; enabling a seamless experience across our physical, virtual and international campuses.

Context

To understand and account for our organisational characteristics when designing our digital transformation, to ensure the change reflects our genuine business need.

Culture

Develop and encourage a culture of confidence and self-improvement amongst our users, alongside right first-time, digital first service delivery.

Collaboration

Work across our wider community to facilitate the services and change which will support the UK's global university for sustainable farming and land management.

Capability

Realise the potential of our people, resources and processes. Maintain and grow existing capacity to deliver University ambitions.

Connectivity

The technology and skills which form the foundation of digital delivery; enabling a seamless experience across our physical, virtual and international campus.

Measures of success	KPIs	Targets
We have a dependable, performant digital service	Year-on-year reduction in unplanned systemic downtime of business-critical systems	Rolling infrastructure replacement and maintenance programmes in place
The digital experience is consistent and seamless across our global campus	Engage with our community to identify and prioritise requirements Prioritised requirements are met within timeframe agreed by the Digital Steering Group	Student experience is appropriate across our international delivery
Connectivity is scalable, flexible and efficient; enabling communication and connecting our global community	Successful completion of projects and change requests against defined requirements	Connectivity enables seamless fulfilment of University's UK and international ambitions for growth

Key actions

» Continually assess new and emerging technologies that could enhance connectivity and engagement.

» Develop a systematic approach to the design and hosting of systems, that minimises risk, maximises opportunity and ensures value for money.

» Proactively pursue a replacement and maintenance schedule of hardware to ensure seamless service provision.

» Identify and remove single points of infrastructure failure that might disrupt service provision to our users.

Spotlight

Investment in our VLE platform enables a scalable, Cloud based platform, facilitating the creation of the International VLE. This supports international growth and a flexible response, enabling seamless teaching delivery for students in China and Uzbekistan.

Context

To understand and account for our organisational characteristics when designing our digital transformation, to ensure the change reflects our genuine business need.

Measures of success	KPIs	Targets
We meet and exceed compliance standards. An agreed and consistent level of service is provided across our global community	A process for reviewing and evidencing compliance is in place	Legal and sector digital compliance requirements are met
We provide consistent digital processes and standards across our partners	A process for reviewing and evidencing compliance with relevant regulations and guidelines is in place	Relevant sector regulations and guidelines are met
We are ready to meet sector developments and have addressed historical digital debt	% increase of technology enhanced, University enabled processes and % reduction of digital debt	Digital debt addressed, and systems allow emerging technology such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) to be adopted when required

Key actions

» Work with sector bodies to understand and influence a changing regulatory environment.

» Review and evidence the compliances which the University needs to meet to inform our practices.

» Provide a policy and procedure library, which is regularly reviewed.

» Systematically review licences and contracts, applying effective controls that ensure both quality and value for money.

» Take a risk-based approach to reducing digital debt.

Spotlight

All RAU staff are required to undertake security training, including familiarisation with their responsibility for managing personal data in line with GDPR. Cyber security training ensures that all staff understand how only users can minimise some risks from hacking and cyber-attack.

Culture

Develop and encourage a culture of confidence and self-improvement amongst our users, alongside right first-time, digital first service delivery.

Measures of success	KPIs	Targets
Our environment promotes the production of highly digitally literate and confident graduates	Digital literacy sessions provided and promoted	Support University targets for year-on-year improvements in graduate outcomes
Through sector engagement we inform decision making to ensure appropriate and cyber secure solutions and practices are in place	Key digital and security development opportunities are provided and promoted to all staff and students	Our community operates in a security aware, digitally informed manner
	Successful completion of audit and all identified issues addressed	Significant progress has been made towards cyber essentials
	Digital Innovation Directorate staff actively engage with and inform relevant University forums	
Delivery is efficient and effective via defined, established, repeatable procedures	Identify and categorise key processes	60% of key processes have published procedures
	Provide standard delivery models and processes to support efficient and consistent delivery	

Key actions

» Ensure that digital skills form a core component of the RAU's commitment to professional development across the University.

» Use the expertise within the Digital Innovation Directorate to offer digital skills drop in sessions.

» Engage with academic staff to support digital skills within module delivery.

» Ensure that within the University our staff have the ability to keep up to date with emerging technologies and capabilities that might impact the sector.

» Initiate work to identify necessary procedures and develop models.

Spotlight

We support our staff and students with a variety of development opportunities to improve their digital literacy, from induction on arrival and throughout their time at the RAU. Key highlights are Learning Technology and Library support within key digital skills modules, regular drop-in sessions and a library of resources.

Collaboration

Work across our wider community to facilitate the services and change which will support the UK's global university for sustainable farming and land management.

Measures of success	KPIs	Targets
Engagement with the wider sector informs our practices to ensure high quality delivery	Relevant University staff are actively engaged in appropriate digital, national, professional and commercial bodies High quality is supported by emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI)	The wider University informs and contributes to fulfilling its digital aspirations across teaching, learning and research The University has an environment that facilitates engagement with investment partners
Working closely with our partners, we ensure an agile response to the evolution of the University's partnership capability	A customisable delivery model appropriate to University partnership agreements is developed	Agile response to evolution of University partnerships in the UK and internationally
We maximise the advantages of being small and agile when responding to evolving requirements	% optimised and scaled processes increased	Optimised and scaled processes developed, inspired by sector best practice

Key actions

» Ensure effective and representative governance through a Digital Steering Group.

» Enable our digital innovation teams with the opportunity to link in to sector specialist networks.

» Ensure we adopt best practice in how we manage projects and change requests, enabling the incorporation of all the relevant expertise in to design and delivery.

Spotlight

Continue to develop and evolve our SharePoint and Teams capabilities to facilitate secure and consistent collaboration model across our global Community.

The use of Teams and SharePoint provides an opportunity to bring our communication and information sharing into a single channel which will reduce our reliance on local storage of electronic assets.

Capability

Realise the potential of our people, resources and processes.
Maintain and grow existing capacity to deliver University ambitions.

Measures of success	KPIs	Targets
We deploy resources efficiently so all aspects of workload are delivered to a consistent quality	Accurate and detailed specifications gathered to inform quality delivery	Work is deliverable and balanced between business as usual and change Projects are deliverable to specification, timescale and budget
Growth is enabled by ensuring our capacity investment is aligned with our requirements	Appropriate expertise is available within the University to analyse requirements and work flow, and to support and enable project delivery Achievable workload with a reduction in projects placed on hold	Decision making forum and processes meet University needs Sufficient analytical, change management and project expertise exists across the University
We are an attractive employer with confident, empowered and expert teams	Staff capability analysis developed and produced Digital Innovations Directorate is empowered and their expertise is recognised, leading to staff turnover at, or below University norms Flexible and hybrid working models are available to facilitate recruitment, job satisfaction and retention	Capability analysis informs training provision and recruitment A stable, appropriately sized, rewarded, graded, skilled and experienced team Job satisfaction is high and we are able to attract capable staff

Key actions

» Develop an institutional system for authorising and prioritising projects.

» Develop a system for revision of schedules to ensure deliverable workload.

» Quantify business as usual workload.

» Establish communication channels to ensure all staff are aware of institutional and directorate priorities.

» Encourage an open and collaborative environment conducive to staff making suggestions for improvements and efficiencies.

» Enable professional growth by providing training and development opportunities.

» Maintain accurate, current job descriptions, which correctly value tasks and responsibilities.

» Encourage development of expertise within the University to analyse requirements and work flow, and to support and enable project delivery.

Spotlight

The creation of a Digital Steering Group will facilitate planning and prioritisation according to University strategic goals.

This forum brings together Digital Innovation department senior staff and University executives, who will work together to maintain a prioritised and achievable project portfolio.

Digital at the RAU in 2028

This Digital Strategy underpins the University's strategic ambitions as expressed in the University Strategy through the provision of appropriate and relevant digital and information service.

Our digital themes are critical to the delivery of the University's strategic goals:

	Quality	Reach	Sustainability
Connectivity	We have a dependable, performant digital service	The digital experience is consistent and seamless across our global campus	Connectivity is scalable, flexible and efficient; enabling communication and connecting our global community
Context	We meet and exceed compliance standards. An agreed and consistent level of service is provided across our global community	We provide consistent digital processes and standards across our partners	We are ready to meet sector developments and have addressed historical digital debt
Culture	Our environment promotes the production of highly digitally literate and confident graduates	Through sector engagement we inform decision making to ensure appropriate and cyber secure solutions and practices are in place	Delivery is efficient and effective via defined, established, repeatable procedures
Collaboration	Engagement with the wider sector informs our practices to ensure high quality delivery	Working closely with our partners, we ensure an agile response to the evolution of the University's partnership capability	We maximise the advantages of being small and agile when responding to evolving requirements
Capability	We deploy resources efficiently so all aspects of workload are delivered to a consistent quality	Growth is enabled by ensuring our capacity investment is aligned with our requirements	We are an attractive employer with a confident, empowered and expert team

The UK's global university for sustainable farming and land management

Our five-year strategy: overview

KPI's

Measures of success

Pillars

Vision

Purpose

To connect people and places

Connectivity
Context
Culture
Collaboration
Capability

Deliver a digital environment enabling the University to become the UK's global university for sustainable farming and land management

Connectivity

» We have a dependable, performant digital service
» The digital experience is consistent and seamless across our global campus
» Connectivity is scalable, flexible and efficient; enabling communication and connecting our global community

Context

» We meet and exceed compliance standards. An agreed and consistent level of service is provided across our global community
» We provide consistent digital processes and standards across our partners
» We are ready to meet sector developments and have addressed historical digital debt

Culture

» Our environment promotes the production of highly digitally literate and confident graduates
» Through sector engagement we inform decision making to ensure appropriate and cyber secure solutions and practices are in place
» Delivery is efficient and effective via defined, established, repeatable procedures

Collaboration

» Engagement with the wider sector informs our practices to ensure high quality delivery
» Working closely with our partners, we ensure an agile response to the evolution of the University's partnership capability
» We maximise the advantages of being small and agile when responding to evolving requirements

Capability

» We deploy resources efficiently so all aspects of workload are delivered to a consistent quality
» Growth is enabled by ensuring our capacity investment is aligned with our requirements
» We are an attractive employer with confident, empowered and expert teams

Connectivity

» Year-on-year reduction in unplanned systemic downtime of business-critical systems
» Engage with our community to identify and prioritise requirements
» Prioritised requirements are met within timeframe agreed by the Digital Steering Group
» Successful completion of projects and change requests against defined requirements

Context

» A process for reviewing and evidencing compliance is in place
» A process for reviewing and evidencing compliance with relevant regulations and guidelines is in place
» % increase of technology enhanced, University enabled processes and % reduction of digital debt

Culture

» Digital literacy sessions provided and promoted
» Key digital and security development opportunities are provided and promoted to all staff and students
» Successful completion of audit and all identified issues addressed

» Digital Innovation Directorate Staff actively engage with and inform relevant University forums
» Identify and categorise key processes
» Provide standard delivery models and processes to support efficient and consistent delivery

Collaboration

» Relevant University staff are actively engaged in appropriate digital, national, professional and commercial bodies
» High quality is supported by emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI)
» A customisable delivery model appropriate to University partnership agreements is developed
» % optimised and scaled processes increased

Capability

» Accurate and detailed specifications gathered to inform quality delivery
» Appropriate expertise is available within the University to analyse requirements and work flow, and to support and enable project delivery
» Achievable workload with a reduction in projects placed on hold
» Staff capability analysis developed and produced
» Digital Innovation Directorate is empowered and their expertise is recognised, leading to staff turnover at, or below University norms
» Flexible and hybrid working models are available to facilitate recruitment, job satisfaction and retention

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