Digital Learning Framework

1. Vision for Digital Learning

Digitally enabled learning is an integral feature of the student experience at Sheffield Hallam University in both online and physical environments. Our staff are skilled and confident in threading digitally-enabled and enhanced learning through the curriculum. Students develop skills that enable them confidently, competently and critically to use digital technology to enhance their engagement with learning and teaching. Graduates continue to develop and apply these skills throughout their lives to meet real world challenges in a fast-moving, digitally driven economy.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the Digital Learning Framework is to support the implementation of the University's Strategy[1]. The Framework enables consistent delivery of excellent applied teaching which inspires and challenges our students. Our learning and teaching activities engage students within innovative, inspiring spaces, enhanced with cutting-edge technology. Digitally-enhanced learning and teaching allows our students to develop into confident, collaborative, world-ready citizens.

The Framework relates to all levels of study and has been developed using examples of practice from across the institution and the sector and has been benchmarked using an externally recognised benchmarking tool[2].

The Framework is intended for use by staff delivering, designing and reviewing modules and programmes of study. The framework sets out the principles which underpin the operation and delivery of digitally enabled learning in order to support staff when considering learning design and implementation at modular and course level. The framework is accompanied by guidance and resources that support staff in the development of learning and teaching, and consistency in the delivery of digital learning.

3. Definitions

The Framework establishes a common language for Sheffield Hallam University, which provides clarity that in turn ensures consistent understanding, communication and application of learning design and management. Application of a consistent language helps us better articulate our provision.

The definitions that will be used have been developed through consultation with staff across the University:

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[1] Ref to new strategy
[2] ACODE Benchmark reference

- **Digital** broadly describes the use of any electronic technology, independent of, or integral to online environments.
- **Learning** happens through formal learning activities within the curriculum, as well as activities in informal and non-formal contexts.
- **Face-to-face** learning activities require learners and teachers to be located in the same physical environment.
- **Online** learning is characterised by the use of *the internet* to enhance and support learning.
- **Blended** learning is a combination of any proportion of *face-to-face* and *online* learning activities as part of a coherent course offer.
- **Flexible** learning offers a diverse range of students choices about when, where and how they learn[3].
- **Distance** learning mostly comprises online learning activities. Although the term is useful for marketing purposes as it is widely understood, it is not precise enough to describe the specific design of courses and modules.

4. Principles

The following principles articulate the enabling role of digital technology in the design and delivery of learning at Sheffield Hallam University:

4.1 Core principles

- The use of digital technology in the curriculum is driven by pedagogical considerations and learning outcomes.
- Digital technology is threaded comprehensively, appropriately and confidently through the curriculum to support, supplement, enhance or facilitate learning.
- Staff and students are supported in the development of their digital capabilities and confidence.
- We use digital technology to increase the flexibility of our delivery, enabling strategic response to market demands to extend our capacity to transform lives.
- Our physical and virtual infrastructure supports and enables learning experiences that are required for world-ready graduates in a digital future.
- Our culture is inclusive, constructive, objective and innovative; it places value in the role of digital technology in enriching the curricula.

4.2 Learning design principles

Learning design at Sheffield Hallam, whether at module, course or programme level, has digital threaded through that is:

- Learner-centred[4]: creating world-ready, lifelong and independent learners, with the commitment and skills needed to thrive, contribute and adapt in a rapidly changing world.

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[3] HEA Flexible Learning https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/workstreams-research/themes/flexible-learning
[4] Adapted from How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School: Expanded Edition (Chapter 6) http://www.nap.edu/download.php?record_id=9853

- Knowledge-based: building deep, usable knowledge that is valuable to individuals, and enables the construction of practical solutions to real-world challenges.
- Outcome-focussed: integrating flexibly-configured assessment for learning.
- Community-minded: supports and promotes diversity, is inclusive, promotes collaboration, and extends learning beyond the University to the city, the region and the world.

4.3 Operational principles

The following principles underpin the integral role of digital technology in delivering and supporting learning:

- The language articulated within this framework is used consistently to discuss and describe module and course design.
- Students may be physically on campus, or remote from the University at different points in their student experience, accessing their course regardless of location, therefore students are not described as being either on or off-campus.
- The blended design, role of digital technology, and delivery of modules and courses is clearly described in course documentation. A course may incorporate a variety of different module approaches to create a curriculum diet dependent on the context of the course.
- Curriculum designers are supported in achieving the appropriate blend through timely guidance, processes and development opportunities (e.g. clarity on contact time).
- Modules and courses are designed to take into account future flexible design and agility of provision.

5. Expectations

5.1 Expectations of the University

- The University provides technology with a stakeholder-inclusive approach to the governance, procurement and deployment of that technology.
- The University develops and supports staff to become digitally confident and capable.
- University leaders model and cultivate an enabling digital culture.
- The University is clear how staff and students are expected to contribute to the integral use of digital technology in the curriculum.

5.2 Expectations of Staff

- Staff are aware of, acknowledge and advocate for the evolving role of digital technology in their own discipline and they reflect this within the curriculum.
- All staff engage with, and take responsibility for, their own digital capability and development.
- Staff take a collaborative, course-centred approach to curriculum development and the role of digital in the curriculum.

5.3 Expectations of Students

- Students understand that digital is an integral part of their learning experience at Sheffield Hallam University.
- All students engage with, and take responsibility for, their own digital capability and development.

- Students are active in their use of technologies for their development, to support their learning, and the skills they develop into the future as lifelong learners.

6. The Hallam Learning Experience

Learning at Hallam is shaped by the unique factors demanded by the discipline, and is informed by the specialist knowledge of the staff teaching it. The curriculum is enriched by digital, purposefully and confidently threaded throughout.

The application of digital and the blend of the learning experience is described at module level. However, modules are always considered holistically to deliver a coherent course experience.

Curriculum design embodies the principles outlined earlier, being characterised by the following hallmarks:

- **Applied in nature:** Subject staff are confident in their academic expertise, and where appropriate are informed by industrial and professional perspectives. They have consensus on the contemporary role and value of digital within that discipline, and they thread this coherently through the curriculum design.
- **Blended by design:** all provision is enriched by a considered blend of face-to-face and online delivery, appropriately exploiting the benefits of the environment for their context. Pure online provision exists where business requires it and both student and market needs demand it.
- **Flexible in delivery:** provision is adaptable, accessible and inclusive. It enables greater access to higher education, meeting evolving student needs and market demands, thereby better equipping the university to transform lives.

The curriculum reflects the necessary and varying roles played by digital, and cultivates the development of associated capabilities:

- **Administrative and Organisational:** where consistent and clear use of tools is important for communication and successful engagement with learning at Hallam.
- **Personal Effectiveness:** learners develop confidence and capability to identify their own needs, and to explore and critically appraise digital tools and functionality to meet those needs. The curriculum supports and builds personal and professional responsibility for digital capability, critical awareness, and awareness of digital identity
- **Discipline, Professional and Industry Standard Digital Tools and Approaches:** learners experience and develop the professional expectations for their digital capabilities. Their understanding of tools is not limited to the present and they are able to adapt as digital technologies progress.