Building digital capability

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'An institutional workforce that can make informed choices around the tools and technology they use, be that for teaching, research or administrative tasks, is essential in ensuring that institutions realise their strategic goals across all aspects of their business.' (Lawrie Phipps, Connect more… in Scotland (event) 16 June 2016: https://www.jisc.ac.uk/events/connect-more-in-scotland-16-jun-2016)

Digital capabilities can defined in a variety of ways – by individuals themselves, by their colleagues and students, by their professional and representative bodies, and by the organisations that employ them.

The Jisc Digital Capability Framework was developed in order to articulate the capabilities in a way that can be contextualised to suit a range of staff working in any (educational) organisation. In developing the framework, Jisc has drawn upon the experience and expertise of professional bodies and staff working across higher education in a range of jobs in order to create a framework that can be contextualised for all staff and integrated into staff development activities.

The Jisc '7 elements of digital literacy' model is well used and recognised (93% recognition from survey April 2015). Most other frameworks and definitions can be fitted comfortably into one or more of the elements as originally defined. However, since it was first devised, two issues have emerged as critical in living, learning and working effectively with technology: *data literacy* in an age of proliferating personal data, big / deep data and data hacking; and various aspects of '*well-being*' (health, safety, work–life balance, relationships, personal safety and privacy) in an increasingly hybridised (real / virtual) environment. Some of the original elements now look a bit dated as digital practice has moved on and discourse about digital literacy has become more nuanced and widely shared. The most significant change is to combine 'information' with 'media' literacies, as feedback suggests that users have difficulty distinguishing between the two.

This version has been adapted considerably from an earlier one in response to detailed feedback from sixteen stakeholders (more than 40 were consulted about the initial version) and to broad-brush feedback from consultation events, which are ongoing. There was consensus about the need for shared language, and an appetite for a shared framework – one that was mapped carefully to other frameworks such as the SCONUL 7 pillars, CILIP, ANCIL, UK PSF, Vitae digital lens, etc., showing how and where these representations add detail to the broader picture.

The framework was seen as most useful to:

- bridge staff and student digital capabilities (i.e. supporting discussion about and planning for both in departments and services)
- plan for embedding digital capabilities into specific subject areas (for which the 7 elements are already well used)
- map digital expertise across all staff

The framework sits within a suite of other resources: a discovery tool, an online offer and a leadership programme.

The discovery tool, provided by Jisc, gives individuals the opportunity to understand and build their digital capability through a series of questions. The tool will help all staff explore digital capabilities and assess what they can do to build their skills and experience across the six digital capabilities (see diagram) to suit their own needs. After answering the questions in the tool, the user is provided with a diagram that reflects their current level of digital capability,

which they will be able to compare with others.
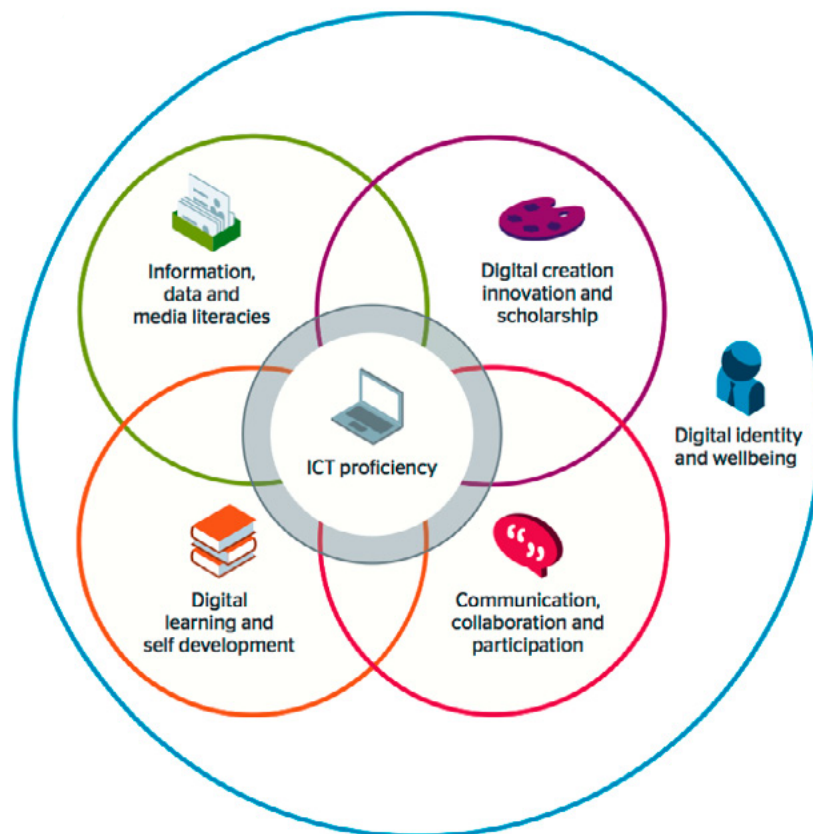
*Digital capabilities:
the six elements*

A series of feedback statements across sub-elements of each digital capability is provided as part of the results. These statements focus on advice and guidance for staff to build their own digital capability, providing them with a dynamically generated suite of resources and activities that can be undertaken to help them build their capability. These guides and resources are drawn from a body of work from across Jisc, professional bodies, universities and colleges.

Digital learning and self-development

Summary
- In the digital world, we are learning all the time as technologies and practices change. While this can feel overwhelming, an active and positive approach will help.

less information..

Actions and Resources
- Watch other people use digital technology (ask them to help if necessary!) and ask them about what they are doing.
- Turn information searches into learning opportunities with podcasts, TED talks, google scholar and open learning resources.
- Learn to use at least one completely new digital tool, application or service. What was the best way for you to learn?

  Playlist: Digital learning and self-development

Screenshot of one of the feedback statements

To ensure the relevance of the framework to staff, Jisc has worked with and is continuing to work with a range of professional bodies and associations to create digital capability profiles for various roles within educational institutions. These profiles can be used as discussion documents or serve as templates

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that can be contextualised, depending on the member of staff or role, to help embed the need for digital capabilities into the professional roles within each organisation. Sample profiles for staff in a variety of roles, including academic, support and leadership and can be accessed from the Jisc repository:

Sample teacher profile
http://repository.jisc.ac.uk/6240/1/Digital_capabilities_teacher_profile.pdf

Example Researcher Profile
http://repository.jisc.ac.uk/6238/1/Digital_capabilities_researcher_profile.pdf

The discovery tool will generate a set of data which Jisc will collect, anonymise and aggregate by institution. This data will then be used to provide the nominated contact in a member organisation with an institutional view of the digital capabilities of their staff, along with appropriate advice and guidance on how the institution can support and build capability from an institutional perspective.

One method Jisc is using to support the development of the proposed service is to create user stories that reflect the actual way in which the service may be used by staff who will engage with it to build their own or their organisation's digital capability.

User stories: a hypothetical example

Fionnuala is the Library Director at Weatherfield City University. She felt frustrated that the university was not making more strategic use of digital technology and that many academic staff lacked essential digital information literacy skills. She struggles to provide the appropriate training and staff development effectively. Following a meeting with her Jisc Account Manager along with the Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Manager, Organisational Development Lead and the IT Director, she decides to roll out the Digital Capability Discovery Tool across the university. Using the dashboard, she is able to drill down to see the levels of digital capability demonstrated by staff across different areas of the university. She notes that some areas have high levels of capability in digital information literacy, whilst others have very low levels. Her team creates a targeted training plan with different kinds and levels of training for identified areas of the university. Following the training, a review of information literacy is undertaken. This shows that usage and patterns of use have changed and increased. Fionnuala and the other managers are now using the dashboard to identify other aspects of digital capability to build on across the university.

Leadership with good understanding of digital practices is needed in order to embed them and make best use of what they have to offer. Alongside the discovery tool, Jisc have developed and continue to deliver a face-to-face course for staff in leadership positions (https://www.jisc.ac.uk/advice/training/digital-leaders-programme). The course is supported with online materials, but the core component will be run regularly as a residential course at a variety of locations. The role of leaders in enabling the benefits of digital capability to be realised is essential, as Sarah Davies, Head of Higher Education and Student Experience at Jisc highlights: 'Development and support for digital leaders emerged as a strong need from our stakeholders right from our initial consultation on the Building Digital Capability challenge. We know that educational organisations need digitally capable leadership and a strategic approach to digital capacity across a wide range of leadership roles, not just in those with a traditional technology focus.'

In the context of advances in the digital world, leaders in all parts of an organisation need to think about more than just technology, infrastructure

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and governance. In the current climate, education and business environment success – no matter how defined – will have an element of digital technology and will require leaders to demonstrate digital capabilities. That environment is changing constantly. Strategies and visions acknowledge taking risks and the importance of innovation at all levels and across all areas of institutional activity. A key element is how this is communicated to staff and stakeholders; how does a leader communicate change, and ensure innovation is understood and embraced by the organisation?

In the framework, the leadership role, and how it relates to digital capabilities, is framed in two ways, highlighting the way leaders should structure their own development:

- Leading and managing an effective digital organisation (team, service, department)
  http://repository.jisc.ac.uk/6237/1/Digital_capabilities_organisational.pdf

- Being an effective digital leader
  http://repository.jisc.ac.uk/6235/1/Digital_capabilities_effective_leader.pdf

The final element draws together a host of resources, providing an extensive online offer. This will be personalised, depending on the user and their results, through the discovery tool. Through dynamic personalised playlists of guides and resources from Jisc, professional bodies, universities and colleges, the user will be provided with a list of resources and activities to help them build their capability.

The project has a phased approach, with features and functionality being added as they are developed and revised following evaluation from the pilots.

We have designed and are managing the project in collaboration with co-design partners from a range of organisations including UCISA, RUGIT, and ALT. We also have a user group of 91 universities, colleges and skills providers who provide feedback on developments.

We are running two types of pilots:

- Small-scale phased pilots with small groups of staff. This is mainly to test the technical aspects of the tool, but also to ascertain feedback on the questions and feedback from users.

- Whole-institution pilots, covering all staff across the organisation. This is to test roll-out processes, robustness and scaling up of the discovery tool. In addition we shall look at the aggregated institutional data.

Effective use of digital technology by university and college staff is vital in providing an excellent student experience and in realising a good return on investment in digital technology.

By working with stakeholders and sector bodies, we intend to provide clear guidance about which digital skills are required and to equip leaders and staff with the tools and resources they need to improve digital capability at a local or institutional level.

References

Beetham, Helen. (2015). Building digital capability: the six elements defined. http://repository.jisc.ac.uk/6239/1/Digital_capabilities_six_elements.pdf

Beetham, Helen. (2015). Deepening digital know-how: building digital talent. http://repository.jisc.ac.uk/6259/1/Deepening_Digital_Knowledge.pdf