SWC



ENHANCE LEARNING AND THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE THROUGH DIGITAL INCLUSION

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The use of digital technologies will continue to become an important defining feature of South West College's performance and is critical to 'future proofing' our curriculum, how we deliver learning, and reimagining our current business processes. What we deliver and how we deliver will be heavily dependent on our digital capacity, in terms of our digital proposition for students, staff and stakeholders. Delivering technology is not the focus of this new South West College Digital Strategy, rather the focus is on delivering tangible and measurable benefits to our students, staff and stakeholders.

This Digital Strategy will provide direction for all digital services and systems and will ensure the College continues to promote innovative uses of technology in teaching, learning and assessment to engage, motivate and inspire students. We wish to equip students with the essential digital skills to enable them to be prepared for the digital workplace, and exercise digital citizenship. We also wish to streamline and improve the student digital journey from point of application through to enrolment, orientation, attendance and performance tracking. The Strategy also directs that we achieve the highest levels of student and staff satisfaction for IT services and support.

Robust infrastructure is critical to underpinning our digital work and the College will seek to provide a secure and resilient digital infrastructure plan, which is adaptive and responsive to business and curriculum change. It will also be important to drive efficiencies in our business processes through streamlining, ensuring compatibility and integration of systems and improving the flow of data. Cybersecurity is of critical importance and the Strategy will ensure College systems and data are robust and as safe as possible from cyber-attack.

The College Digital Strategy will also aim to improve the governance of our digital planning, systems and processes. This will lead to improved prioritisation and decision making and will ensure senior leaders have a clear vision and commitment to using digital technologies to enhance learning and improve the work of the College.

Digital Strategy 2023 - 2028

2.0 STRATEGY ON A PAGE

The Digital Strategy is summarised in Figure 2.1 and presents a single page overview of the vision and direction of College digital services over the next 5 years. This considers the strategic policy drivers for the College and distils a vision to direct the work of the Digital Services team to 'Enhance learning and the student experience through Digital Inclusion'.

Four core themes have been defined around infrastructure & cybersecurity, systems & data, digital skills and governance. From these, a detailed action plan will be developed covering a five year timeframe.

A key aspect in the Digital Strategy is the underlying principles which will shape all planning, management and delivery activity.

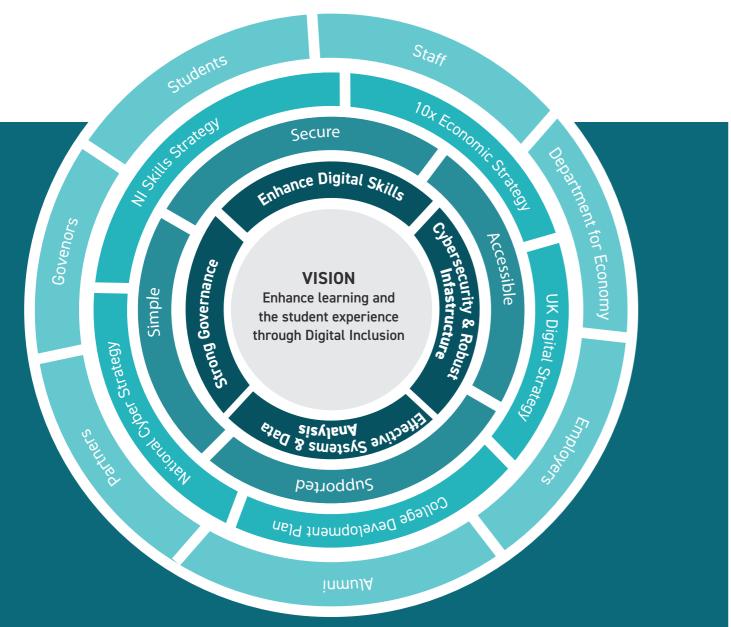


Figure 2.1: College Digital Strategy

3.0 OUR STRATEGY

The purpose of the Digital Strategy is to outline the College commitment to continually improving the delivery of education for our students, enhancing and streamlining our business processes to support business continuity, and ensuring that our staff and students are equipped to thrive and succeed.

South West College recognises the role that digital skills play as an enabler and catalyst for change. To achieve our potential, we plan to develop an environment which ensures that digital skills are at the core of all that we do and is underpinned by the fundamental principles of digital inclusion and accessibility for all.

As the College progresses on its digital journey, we will need to expand and develop our digital approaches in order to keep abreast of current and emerging technologies both in industry and for teaching and learning. This will require targeted investment and effective management of resources to deliver our strategic aims. We will ensure that the College continues to adapt and innovate, and that no student or member of staff is left behind by the dramatic shift in our use of technology.

This plan supports the aim of the College to promote high expectations and aspirations of success for all staff and students as aligned to our College vision, mission and values:

'INSPIRING LEARNING - EMPOWERING PEOPLE'

MISSION:

South West College works, in partnership, to provide inclusive lifelong learning opportunities, to enrich lives, support business and to promote community, economic and social wellbeing

RESPECTFUL - ACCOUNTABLE - ENGAGING - COMMITTED

For the past 10 years, South West College has been building capacity and capability in the area of digital technology, digital skills capability, digitising college processes and systems and building digital resources. The College has transitioned to an enhanced level of remote-learning, providing an opportunity to further develop online teaching capacities. The years of capacity building in the area of remote working and Digital Learning meant that the College was able to fully function with no reduction in service delivery to the students, staff and wider community during the Covid-19 pandemic. In the same year, the College implemented a new Learner Management System (EBS) as part of an FE sector wide project with increased functionality, a move to online applications, more streamlined processes and increased access to data for staff. This has put the College in a very strong position for future developments and business contingency planning.

4.0 STRATEGIC DRIVERS

The development of the SWC Digital Strategy is informed by a range of drivers:

- 10x Economy: Northern Ireland's Decade of Innovation
- · Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland Skills for a 10x Economy
- Northern Ireland Government Making Lives Better A Strategy for Digital Transformation of Public Services 2017-2021
- UK Digital Strategy

10X ECONOMY NORTHERN IRELAND'S DECADE OF INNOVATION

The strategy has identified five key economic clusters and the new and emerging technologies which will drive them.

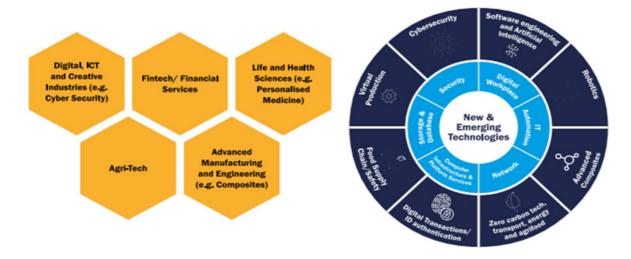


Figure 4.1: 10x New & Emerging clusters & technologies

Priority clusters identified are those where Northern Ireland can develop a unique, competitive proposition and are intrinsically reliant on advanced digital skills.

SKILLS STRATEGY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND SKILLS FOR A 10X ECONOMY

Skills for a 10x Economy identifies enhancing digital skills and technological change as strategic issues for society and the labour market. The skills strategy cites the high correlation between digital exclusion and social exclusion, with significant swathes of populace being at risk of digital exclusion and 32% of the population aged 16 – 65 having low or no digital skills. It introduces the digital spine concept and identifies three levels of digital skills: Digital Citizen, Worker and Maker.

Development of **digital citizens** is an essential step in tackling inequality and promoting economic development. Digital Citizens have the skills to participate in digital society: communication, handling information, transacting, and problem solving and being safe.

Digital workers must have digital skills to make them relevant in the workplace. The number of jobs which require digital skills will continue to grow as automation replaces tasks historically carried out by humans. The Skills Strategy highlights that one third of adults do not have the essential digital skills required for work.

Digital makers create digital technologies. The NI tech sector is growing and provides a focal point for 10x, yet, the sector is struggling to recruit the talent needed to fulfil its potential. Talented individuals must be supported through education to cultivate these skills and be encouraged to choose pathways aligned with NI's strategic clusters.



NI GOVERNMENT MAKING LIVES BETTER STRATEGY FOR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES 2017-2021

This strategy sets out a vision for transforming government, with people and businesses enabled to engage digitally at a time/place that suits them. The strategy identifies Connected Citizens and a Digital Society as outcomes and Digital Inclusion and Cyber Security as enablers. Digital First is a priority where new or redesigned services prioritise online access as the model for citizens to interact with government.

UK DIGITAL STRATEGY

The strategy highlights the importance of digital technology with the UK's economic future, jobs, wage levels, prosperity, national security, productivity and ability to compete globally, all reliant on continued advancements in digital technology. The aim, to position the UK as the best place to start and grow a technology business. Strengthening the digital economy could grow the UK tech sector's annual GVA by £41.5 billion and create 678,000 jobs. The strategy focuses on strengthening the foundations of the digital economy by rolling-out a world-class digital infrastructure: Al, data, digital competition, digital twins, autonomous systems and quantum computing.

Government will ensure that technology businesses have access to the skills needed to develop and will work with schools, universities, and further education providers to deliver the digital skills that the economy needs. The strategy cites a commitment to working with the Devolved Governments to ensure that the benefits of digital technologies are felt across the UK investing in skills for the existing workforce and for future generations to ensure that all can share in the success of our digital economy. Ensuring the UK has a digitally skilled workforce is vital to economic prosperity, government is committed to strengthening the digital education pipeline, increasing awareness of pathways into digital occupations and developing advanced digital skills.

NATIONAL CYBER STRATEGY 2022

The National Cyber Strategy is a recent plan to ensure that the UK remains confident, capable and resilient in the digital world and continues to innovate and invest in order to protect and promote interest in cyber. The strategy recognises both the opportunities and challenges of the digital age which has changed the way we live, work and communicate, and transformed the critical systems we rely on in areas such as finance, energy, food distribution, healthcare and transport. The strategy recognises the unprecedented complexity, instability and risk which has seen UK cyberattacks on hospitals, oil pipelines, schools and businesses. Five pillars have been identified to build on and move forward including Pillar 1 which focuses on strengthening the UK cyber ecosystem and investing in our people and skills and Pillar 2 with a focus on building a resilient and prosperous digital UK, reducing cyber risks so businesses can maximise the economic benefits of digital technology and citizens are more secure online and confident that their data is protected.

DIGITAL STRATEGY - CORE THEMES

The core themes emerging across the strategies reviewed are:

- Digital Transformation
- Cyber security
- Enhancing digital skills

The Digital Strategy will drive digital transformation, based on a safe, solid and flexible digital infrastructure which reduces our carbon footprint and ensures a sustainable future. Supporting students to develop skills via an industry led future proofed curriculum (aligned with priority clusters and wider economic/societal needs) delivered by skilled staff in well-resourced modern facilities will be a key challenge. The drive to support the development of Digital Citizens, Workers and Makers will necessitate Digital Services that enable staff to continuously refresh their own digital skills. Governance of college provision informed by real time availability of data which is accurate and easily interpreted will be imperative. Value for money considerations, alongside the enhanced responsiveness of available commercial products, will allow for adoption of a product first approach only developing bespoke interventions where existing systems have been fully embedded and available products evaluated.

South West College



Our vision for the College Digital Strategy is to:

'ENHANCE LEARNING AND THE STUDENT

EXPERIENCE THROUGH DIGITAL INCLUSION'

This vision defines what we will do as an organisation and, to achieve this, a number of key aims have been identified:

- Ensure College systems and data are robust and as safe as possible from cyber-attack;
- 2. Ensure the underlying technical infrastructure operates effectively with high availability to the user;
- Provide a single 'digital/technology/data' service, so it is clear what support is available, working to common standards with a focus on the end-user;
- 4. Support all users in using digital technology and systems including the development and enhancement of digital skills;
- 5. Improve decision making, balancing the competing demands so that the most important projects are prioritised;
- Enhance data analytic functions to support key business operations and provide straight-forward access to accurate data to support student engagement;
- 7. Collaborate internally and across sector to deliver good practice solutions;
- 8. Develop a culture of innovation to ensure that teaching and learning is supported, planned and delivered with the future in mind.

In the development and prioritisation of the aims it has also been important to consider the key challenges faced by the College in relation to the development of the Digital Strategy as summarised in Figure 5.1.



Figure 5.1: Key challenges in delivering the Digital Strategy

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6.0 PRINCIPLES To support the delivery and governance of the College Digital Strategy,

a number of underpinning principles have been developed. These principles are aligned to the College values of being Respectful, Accountable, Engaging and Committed and will ensure that all digital interactions are considered from a student, staff and stakeholder enduser perspective.

SIMPLE

Systems, processes and tools must lead to more efficient working, where information and communication is made easier and leads to increased efficiency and increased productivity. We will make use of commercial products and services by default and only develop internally where there is no viable alternative.

SECURE

Staff and students must continue to operate in a safe and secure digital environment where threats to digital security are minimised and which allows work to take place unhindered.

ACCESSIBLE

Staff and students must be able to access digital information and systems readily and easily, with increased speed and connectivity at the core.

SUPPORTED

Proactive support will be provided the way students and staff prefer to access it, making effective use of available resources and removing unnecessary barriers.



7.0 STUDENT DIGITAL JOURNEY

The core vision of the Digital Strategy is to 'Enhance learning and the student experience through Digital Inclusion'. Today's students have grown up as digital natives with expectations of digital first and 24x7 access. Technology has changed the way students plan for college, enrol, engage and learn and every journey is different. Students are at the core of the South West College Digital Strategy and it is important to develop and refine the student digital journey. This is not about replacing personalised interactions which create a sense of belonging with the College and boost student confidence but rather about facilitating it in a new way. As the start of the student journey, it's important to get that first impression right.



EMPLOYABILITY

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STUDENT EXPERIENCE

CONTACT TO ENROLMENT



CONTACT TO ENROLMENT											
Online Application & Enrolement	Website course info & accessibility	, Ca			Online tours of campus buildings		Online open days		Online enquiries/ Careers Advice		Digital buddy system with current students
ORIENTATION & INDUCTION											
Induction	System Acces	s S	tudent ID	Cards	Student A	\pp	Tin	netables	Online fresher fair		
TEACHING & LEARNING											
Online Learning Platforms - Canvas	Digital Resources	Class	Online ssroom - Tools			Online assessment, exams & feedback - EPortfolio & Markbook		feedback -	Remote access to software		
		:	STUDE	NT EX	PERIEN	ICE					
Assistive Technology	Clubs & Soci Online	eties	Wellb	eing	Digital	Signag	е	Wi-Fi	Equipment Availability		
			EMI	PLOYA	BILITY						
Online Careers Advice	Digital Skills					line Practice Interviews Jobspot		Jobspot	Employer Engagement		
ALUMNI											
	ills development ng learning		Access t	o Wider	Student Ex	kperier	nce	Alun	nni Platform		

Figure 7.1: South West College Student Digital Journey

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8.0 THEMES

To deliver this Digital Strategy four high level thematic strands have been defined. Within each strands a number of projects have and will be developed, which holistically will contribute to the delivery of the objectives of the strategy.

These thematic strands are as follows:

> THEME 1: INFRASTRUCTURE & CYBERSECURITY

Developing a resilient digital infrastructure for staff and students:

- Desktop Services
- Infrastructure and Network
- Cyber Security

> THEME 2: SYSTEMS & DATA

Data driven innovation for continuously improving services:

- EBS Learner Management System
- Data Analytics/Dashboards/Reporting
 Services
- Key College Systems (SharePoint, Canvas, Agresso, Jane HR, Service Desk)
- Business Processes
- User experience

> THEME 3: SKILLS & LEARNING

Digital and data skills for students and staff:

- Skills development Student and user focus
- Digital Learning
- Future Technologies

> THEME 4: GOVERNANCE

Digital initiatives aligned to business priorities and executed effectively:

- User experience
- Policies and procedures
- Resourcing the workstreams including Team Structure
- Project Management and Deliverables

9.0 ACTION PLAN

Following a review of the strategic context and drivers and with consideration of the strategic objections outlined in this Digital Strategy, a number of project goals and actions have been defined around where we want to get to in terms of digital development and transformation.

These initially focus on the key areas of student and staff user experience, development of the student learner management system, data analytics and reporting, cybersecurity, digital infrastructure and systems, digital learning and future technologies.

PROJECT	GOAL	WHAT WE WILL DO								
THEME1: INFASTRUCTURE	THEME1: INFASTRUCTURE & CYBERSECURITY									
Cyber Security	 Achieve Cyber Essentials certification Increase the security awareness of all students and staff Improve the college's security posture 	 Engage external expertise to support the implementation and achievement of Cyber Essentials Conduct regular security awareness campaigns Conduct regular security testing of all students and staff Utilise specialist products to manage endpoint protection, patch management, software distribution (standardised by approved software list) Benchmark and measure results: Microsoft Secure Score, PingCastle Healthcheck, Purple Knight Security Assessment 								
Infrastructure	 Improve performance and resilience of backend infrastructure Fully implement remote access solution Improve performance and resilience of wireless connectivity 	 vCenter upgrades Core and Edge switches patching VMware patching and upgrading Avamar patching and upgrading Firewalls review - security, performance and best practice recommendations Active Directory audit - security and performance recommendations and best practices for Domain Controller configuration Create golden images for standard specification desktop and CAD specification desktop Review existing College Wi-Fi across the estate and implement recommendations where needed 								

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PROJECT	GOAL	WHAT WE WILL DO
THEME 2: SYSTEM	IS & DATA	
Learner Management System (EBS)	 To have EBS fully embedded as the core tool to manage student journey; creating a single central digital record of accurate student data, including support requirements and tracking of student progress Ensure 100% staff usage of EBS at user, expert and manager levels Enhance the use of EBS for continuous improvement of processes, where possible, including increased automation of part time lecturer payroll, pastoral care, tracking unit/module achievement and student attendance alerts To ensure our data environment is compliant and secure To improve the quality of the data and overall data accuracy 	 Continuously capture and define user requirements Simplify reporting from EBS Implement an on-going staff development and an annual training plan on EBS Fully utilise EBS (including the new Safeguarding (Pastoral) module) with the aim of identifying early warnings and flagging students at risk of withdrawing, to ensure support interventions can be quickly provided Enhancements include increased automation of part time lecturer payroll, pastoral care, tracking unit/module achievement (Markbook) and student attendance alerts (Engage App) Ensure 100% staff usage of EBS at user, expert and manager levels Review current access levels for staff to ensure appropriate levels of training, accurate data being input and access restrictions in place for compliance Implement new and/or updated elements of EBS across the College E-ILP, Markbook, Engage App; and other systems developments and collaborations approved at a sector level in relation to the EBS 3-year roadmap via the STS Change Management Board Developing new capability within EBS
Business Intelligence Data Analytics & Reporting	 To improve access to key data and simplify our data/business processes, challenging ourselves to do things differently To provide staff at all levels with access to appropriate reliable and robust data/business intelligence to facilitate effective decision making Develop all staff who use data systems Build an enhanced pool of data specialists Enhance data analytic functions to support key business operations including applications, recruitments, KPIs, funding, withdrawals, retention, customer service and engagement To positively employ our data to identify trends, profiling, allocation of resources, identifying impediments in our processes 	 Refresh and re-establish the Data Analytics Project Identify priority reports to be developed based on management and functional requirements Analytics & Reporting platform: Develop and roll out a central data Hub which will provide managers with access to central, clear and robust data including data visuals, dashboard and reports To create a data warehouse to store accumulated data from a wide range of sources within the College and used to support management decisions Increased data analysis to inform curriculum planning and improve student experience

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operational teaching ar - Canvas \ - Gateway - Eportfoli - Agresso - Jane HR - Telephor - Printing - Specialis - Support the	o; Finance;	t; processes which coul Build automated feed within the College Ca (VLE)	sses and rs to identify d be digitised back processes
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PROJECT	GOAL	WHAT WE WILL DO
THEME 3: SKILLS 8	& LEARNING	
Digital Learning	 To support the development of fully online and hybrid courses offered To support staff and students using technology as part of their learning and teaching experience To develop a range of rich and diverse multi-media resources that includes video, audio, graphics, animation, and interaction e.g. gamification, discussions To empower both staff and students with comprehensive digital skills, fostering a digitally literate community that adeptly leverages technology. 	 Develop additional online resources to support learning, teaching and assessment and the corporate functions Provide access to appropriate professional learning opportunities to develop staff confidence in the use of digital delivery techniques, and ability to identify suitable technologies, tools, and devices to support their work Support for teaching team - online learning platforms and applications to enhance the student experience Provide guidance and support to staff to understand their responsibilities in using technology to widen access and support students, taking account of online safety considerations, and ensuring compliance with accessibility standards To establish and enhance accessible and relevant digital training programs aimed at building upon Essential skills in ICT.
Future Technologies	 To ensure digitally enabled learning delivery is designed to reflect industry practices and an awareness of current and emerging technologies such as AI, Robotics, Automation To provide curriculum staff with access to content libraries and innovative curriculum resources 	 To provide a range of Workshops and Masterclasses To develop and source relevant and up-to-date innovative curriculum resources

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PROJECT	GOAL	WHAT WE WILL DO
THEME 4: GOVER	RNANCE	
Strategy, Policy & Resourcing	 Ensure clear direction and vision for digital and IT services in the College. Ensure effective communication and compliance on IT approach Effective collaboration (internally and externally) to support best practice. Utilise available resource in the most efficient and effective way 	 Develop, promote, and track progress of implementation of Digital Strategy Review team structure, composition and responsibilities to ensure available resources are effectively deployed Actively engage with other Colleges on mutually beneficial projects Establish Digital Steering Committee
User Experience Staff Student Stakeholder	 Improve communication and response times (both technician and users) Skillset Development - Upskill all staff and students in functionality of core and advanced systems Ensure as close to 100% staff usage of Service Desk at all levels Increase student engagement with Service Desk Ensure website ease of use for new applications and accessibility for all Build confidence/digital competence to embrace changes/new methods of working/processes Develop life ready digital skills and exploit the opportunities created by digital technology Enhance the student experience through innovative, high quality accessible digital platforms, tools, services, and resources 	 Provide up-to-date hardware and software in classrooms and staff areas: Rolling refresh of hardware equipment, industry standard software to prepare students for the world of work Increase utilisation of hardware equipment and software across all areas Staff engagement workshops. Team training on Service Desk best practice and staff engagement workshops Staff and student engagement workshops, Knowledge Base, How To Guides. Train the trainer model Provide proactive support/personalised development through mandatory, supported and self-service training

9.1 TIMELINE FOR KEY PROJECTS

The timeline for delivery of key projects is outlined in the following plan:

ТНЕМЕ		SEMESTER 1	23/24	SEMESTER 2	23/24	SEMESTER 3	23/24	SEMESTER 1 24/25	SEMESTER 2 24/25	SEMESTER 3 24/25	ACADEMIC YEAR 25/26	ACADEMIC YEAR 26/27	ACADEMIC YEAR 27/28
	Achieve Cyber Essentials Certification												
	Improved College security posture												
INFRASTRUCTURE & CYBERSECURITY	Fully implement remote access solution (VXrail)												
	Review and streamlining of software and hardware in light of budget challenges												
	Improve performance of wireless connectivity												
	Implement and roll out Engage App for all students												
	Implement Pastoral Care functionality & ensure optimum use												
	Fully implement and embed Markbook												
SYSTEMS & DATA	Build and roll out Data Hub and Data Warehouse												
	Build staff capacity and capability in data analytics												
	Simplify User Experience - student and staff including pre-application												
	Systems realignment in relation to new structure (IT services, Canvas, Sharepoint, EBS, eforms)												
	Improve website ease of use for applications & accessibility aspects												
	Fully implement and embed e-portfolio tool across FE &WBL												
SKILLS & LEARNING	SWC Online Development												
	Rollout Digital Skills CPD for staff and students in teaching and learning and all competencies required to effectively use, navigate, and leverage digital technologies for life and work												
	Review Team structure												
GOVERNANCE	Establish Digital Steering Committee												
	100% staff usage at user, expert and manager level												

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10.0 GOVERNANCE

Effective governance will ensure that digital initiatives are aligned to business priorities, analysed rigorously and executed effectively. Governance and review of this Digital Strategy will take place on a regular basis by managers in consultation with the Director of Corporate Services as well as curriculum and other relevant areas of the College. This review will take place, at least, on a quarterly basis and will be scrutinised by the College senior management team.

A new strategic forum for IT decision making will be established as part of this Digital Strategy. This new digital Steering Committee will meet bi-annually and serve as a platform for departments and service areas to have input to the continuous development and implementation of this Digital Strategy.

STRATEGIC GOVERNANCE -

(GOVERNING BODY)

F&GP (Bi Annual) Updates Strategy

Audit & Risk Committee (Bi Annual) **Cyber Security Updates**

STRATEGIC GOVERNANCE - (SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM)								
Digital Strategy	Digital Steering Committee	Quarterly Reporting to SMT	Prioritisation of demands	College Digital risk management	Allocation of resource and approval of large investments			

OPERATIONAL GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT (CORPORATE SERVICES DIRECTORATE)								
Tracking performance against Digital Strategy	Development of policies and procedures	Delivery of services	Managing resource	Digital Risk Register	Staff Development			

PROJECT GOVERNANCE & MANAGEMENT (IT SERVICES TEAM)									
Online Learning Platforms - Canvas	Digital Resources	Online Classroom - Teams	Communication Tools	Online assessment, exams & feedback - EPortfolio & Markbook	Remote access to software				





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