

Title: **Visioning the Digital University – from institutional strategy to academic practice**

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Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Identify a number of factors, dimensions and implications that relate to the emerging concept of the 'digital university'
- Apply a strategic framework for conceptualising the construct of a digital university to their own institutional context and academic practice
- Consider how the lessons learned from a strategically focused Digital Futures consultation at a Scottish university (including the themes explored and the recommendations for learning, teaching, staff development, and educational scholarship) could inform thinking and practice within their own institution
- Reflect on the ways in which we can better understand the nature of the student and staff experience in the context of the digital university, including the questions we might ask and methods of research and evaluation to be used

Session Outline

The concept of the 'Digital University' - of the Higher Education institution that is digitally enabled and digitally agile in their practices - is being widely debated within the sector (e.g. McCluskey and Winter, 2012), and various understandings of what 'being digital' means are becoming increasingly embedded in the policy, practice and futures planning of higher education institutions. However, what being a 'Digital University' might look like in practice, and what this means for learning, teaching, student support, and research and scholarship, is a contested area.

This workshop will provide an opportunity for participants to consider and explore various dimensions that relate to the concept of the digital university, to discuss the implications for institutional strategy and policy, learning and teaching, and staff development both generally and in relation to their own institution and practice.

The workshop will begin by introducing and exploring a Conceptual Matrix for the Digital University (MacNeill and Johnston, 2012). It will then explore how the matrix was applied within the context of a recently-concluded Digital Futures consultation at a Scottish

University, and which involved benchmarking internal and external best practice in areas including digitally enhanced education, digital literacies development, and digital scholarship. Importantly, the consultation set out to recognise the 'value pluralism' that often exists around institutional-wide technology-related initiatives (Johnson and Smyth, 2011), and sought to formulate a 'digital agenda' and set of recommendations based on the consensus view within the university community.

Structured activities will engage participants in the discussion and application of key issues relating to the Digital University, both in general and in relation to their own institution and professional practice, before the workshop concludes by addressing how we can better understand the nature of 'being' in a Digital University.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

This session will be highly participative, and involve interactive exploration of online resources, individual activity, and group and open floor discussion as follows:

10 mins: Introduction to session including the notion of the 'Digital University'

10 mins: How digital is your university? (Open floor discussion of current digital practice and strategy, key concerns, and future developments)

15 mins: Introducing a Conceptual Matrix for the Digital University. Background to the development of the matrix, and exploration of the various dimensions it covers including digital participation, information literacy, curriculum and course design, and the learning environment.

15 mins: Engaging with the Conceptual Matrix. Participants will work in small groups, or individually if they prefer, in using the matrix to reflect on their own institution, learning and teaching practice, curriculum design, student support, or staff development provision (whatever is most relevant to their own role). There will be a focus in this activity on identifying current good practice and areas for further enhancement

20 mins: Visioning the Digital University – Case study of a Digital Futures consultation. Overview of an institution wide Digital Futures consultation, which applied the Conceptual Matrix in defining key themes to be explored, and which involved a multi-stage process of external and internal benchmarking, critical friend input, and student and staff consultation events in developing a 'Digital Agenda' and related recommendations. Participants will have the opportunity to consider how the approach taken, the themes explored, and the final recommendations could potentially inform their own practice and developments.

15 mins: Future directions in understanding the Digital University. Concluding discussion around how we can come to better understand the nature and experience of 'being' within the Digital University, including key questions that remain unanswered and methods of research and evaluation.

5 mins: Concluding evaluation of session.

References

Johnson, M. & Smyth, K. (2011). Diversity, value and technology: exposing value pluralism in institutional strategy. *Campus-Wide Information Systems, Special Issue on Learning Technology and Institutional Strategy*, Vol. 28 (4), pp. 211-220.

MacNeill, S. & Johnston, B. (2012). A conversation around what it means to be a Digital University (Parts 1 to 5). Available from: <http://blogs.cetis.ac.uk/sheilamacneill/2012/04/27/a-conversation-around-the-digital-university-part-5/> [Accessed: 1 May 2014]

McCluskey, F.B. & Winter, M.L. (2012). *The idea of the Digital University: ancient traditions, disruptive technologies and the battle for the soul of higher education*. Washington: Policy Studies Organization.