

Title: **Making the ‘right’ choices of digital tools to support our educational practices: issues and strategies.**

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Session Learning Outcomes

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

- Recognise the importance of a critical approach to using digital technologies in their practice which incorporates significant ethical issues.
- Identify their own criteria (and update/revise them if necessary) for deciding which digital technologies to use in their practice.
- Identify how/whether course teams and their own institutions use suitably comprehensive criteria to determine areas of digital practice.
- Suggest ways of enabling their own institution to take a more comprehensive and ethical approach.

Session Outline

Alongside many tutors and developers in HE/FE, we recognise that digital technologies offer students and educators many benefits. However, we are less convinced that individual staff, course teams, and institutions always apply consistent and sufficiently comprehensive criteria in choosing specific digital technologies. Decisions to use particular technologies rest, as they should, on pedagogic, technical and economic criteria. But these might not be sufficiently analysed or explained to all users.

Various critical/sceptical analyses already exist re educational technologies (e.g. Losh, 2014; Selwyn, 2016). But we are increasingly concerned that a fourth dimension is often neglected – the ethical dimension of using specific digital technologies, especially considering recent controversies/developments including:

- Revelations about manipulations of social media platforms to push specific political agendas.
- Surveys demonstrating that while most people are concerned about online privacy, very few are doing anything about it (Mozilla, 2018).
- Challenges of GDPR compliance (e.g. webinar from Mark Glynn, 2018).
- Concerns about the long-term impact of ‘over-use’ of technology (e.g. Twenge, 2018).
- Concerns about analytics and ‘big data’ alongside claims that it offers “new insights into human technology and behaviour.” (Stephens-Davidowitz, 2017)

The ethical dimension becomes increasingly important as more courses/modules employ technologies ‘outside’ standard institutional systems, from social media to very specific applications.

Based on our position paper which will be developed continuously up to and beyond the conference through SEDA Jiscmail list and other channels (Chesney, Hartley and Baume, 2017), this workshop offers questions and approaches which delegates can apply to enable sound, principled decision-making about appropriate learning technologies to use. This workshop will be particularly valuable to educational developers and PG Cert leaders, as it can be adapted/customised for use in their own organisation.

Outcomes from the workshop will feed into the position paper, providing a continuing resource and developing an active community of practice around these issues.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

Activity	Workshop Timing (90 minutes)
Introduction and outline of previous work	15 minutes
Sharing examples of questions developed prior to the workshop, and consideration of questions from participants	15 minutes
Participants to record and share via Post-it™ an ethical issue or theme they have a query about	10 minutes
Buzz group - working in pairs and then quartets, participants produce and agree questions for interrogating practice that address particular ethical dimensions or issues	25 minutes
Plenary – sharing questions developed and developing approaches to using these questions to inform decision-making in a team when participants return to their institution	25 minutes

References

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https://docs.google.com/document/d/1f5Jnegn5O24_qOoodVaX55GP_phN7zZb9PRFqG_u-clk/edit
- Glynn, M. (2018) *A Learning Technology professional's guide to GDPR in the classroom*. Webinar resources available at <https://www.alt.ac.uk/civicrm/event/info%3Fid%3D356%26amp%3Breset%3D1>
- Losh, B. (2014) *The War on Learning: Gaining Ground in the Digital University*. MIT Press.
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Twenge, J.M. (2017) *iGen. Why today's super-connected kids are growing up less rebellious, more tolerant, less happy – and completely unprepared for adulthood*. New York: Atria Books.