



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

E-learning strategy at the University of Sheffield 2012- 2016.

This strategy is informed by the University's learning & teaching strategy, 'Global Education in Civic University 2011-2016', and is designed to support the aspirations and priority themes contained therein. It also draws on 'An exploration of the impact of the use of technology on the student experience of learning and teaching' a report commissioned by the University of Sheffield Students' Union in April 2012 and on consultation with staff across the University.

Purpose of the strategy

E-learning has a key role to play in delivering one of the University of Sheffield's (UoS) core priorities, learning and teaching. The University prides itself on the quality of its distinctive student experience and on producing well rounded graduates who are in demand (The Sheffield Graduate). We believe that technology and e-learning can enhance every aspect of the student journey, from registration through to graduation and beyond. By e-learning we mean all technology enhanced learning (TEL) activity including the use of video, audio, lecture capture, group response software, etc. as well as VLEs, virtual classrooms and social networking software to support learning and teaching in both traditional and online settings.

TEL offers great opportunities to academic staff to enhance traditional teaching and with appropriate curriculum design it can also offer more interactive, inquiry based, and creative ways to learn. For students, there is the added dimension that using technology well and effectively is now a necessary skill for any job. Therefore, helping them to develop their understanding and critical analysis of the digital world and the information therein must be one of the key skills that we give the Sheffield Graduate. However, we must recognise that to realise these opportunities requires significant effort and support.

The University's Guiding Principles state 'Solutions to important problems depend increasingly upon collaboration: between staff and students, across disciplines and in partnership with others locally, nationally and internationally.' TEL can enhance collaborative working by providing us with skills, tools and resources that make it easier to work across disciplinary and geographical boundaries.

We exist in an increasingly competitive global market and are no longer competing with just institutions in the UK. Our digital presence is a critically important part of our marketing strategy. Our competitors, particularly in the United States, have high profile public facing sites demonstrating their excellence and showcasing what is special about them. Potential students and staff will be looking at these sites when making choices about which institution to study at or work in. The UoS needs to have a presence in this arena and technology provides mechanisms for making content available beyond the physical University. Developing excellent content to share requires staff time and expertise and funding priorities and HR policies will need to reflect this.



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We also pride ourselves on our relationship with our local community in Sheffield and have a strong commitment to widening participation. Providing non traditional students with an opportunity to have a 'taster' of a University course or be inspired by a world class researcher may be the first step leading them towards a University career.

The University's strategic plan states 'Solutions to important problems depend increasingly upon collaboration: between staff and students, across disciplines and in partnership with others locally, nationally and internationally.' TEL can enhance collaborative working by providing us with skills, tools and resources that make it easier to work across disciplinary and geographical boundaries. Technology has an important role to play in enabling all of these aspirations, and this strategy aims to put in place a framework for supporting them.

Strategic Aims

1. To provide a learner-centred approach focusing on enhancing the learner experience through the appropriate and consistent use of technology.
2. To support distance and blended learning PGT programmes.
3. To provide enhanced training and development to PGR and postdoctoral researchers providing them with future proofed research skills.
4. Provide technology to sustainably and innovatively support the provision of flexible Continuing Professional Development programmes (CPD) that enable professionals to build up to a University of Sheffield award.
5. To ensure that Sheffield academics are enabled to enhance their teaching with the appropriate use of technology to provide students with the best possible learning experience.
6. To help create interdisciplinary communities of learning for students and staff across departments and faculties.
7. To ensure that our students are equipped with the knowledge and expertise to use technology for both discipline specific learning and professional development.
8. To advertise the University's excellence in research and teaching to attract potential students and to share our knowledge with the wider community both at home and around the world
9. To provide excellent flexible technology-enabled learning spaces that can support research led learning.

Strategic Objectives

1. Develop an enhanced e-learning environment. This will incorporate core systems and makes effective use of e-delivery, e-assessment, e-feedback and e-submission. Its use should be consistent across disciplines and provide excellent learning support for students and provide staff with the flexibility to innovate.

2. Facilitate the sharing of online educational resources within the University. Provide guidance and support for academics on the creation of sharable and reusable learning objects that facilitate interdisciplinary learning for students and disseminate good practice. Provide a supported environment for sharing such resources.

3. Develop the use of technologies to support distance and blended learning. Provide training and guidance for departments developing their distance learning provision, covering

learning and teaching methods and techniques as well as technical know how. Provide a framework for sharing good practice and expertise in this area.

4. **Provide guidance for students on managing their 'digital footprint'** emphasising how technology can enhance their online presence but including robust advice on e-safety. Embed the appropriate use of technology into their discipline specific learning and provide opportunities and support to enable them to develop new technical skills.

5. **Provide training and guidance for staff on the use of technology in their teaching** including initial teaching training and CPD. Include the appropriate use of technology in teaching as part of the definition and expectation of the Sheffield Academic.

6. **Develop sustainable blended provision of training for staff in the use of technology in their teaching.** Develop the use of technology to enable staff to share good practice both within the University and with external colleagues.

7. **Create a digital presence** using various channels, for example iTunesU. This will showcase excellent lectures as well as providing material of interest to potential students and will help to define the distinctive Sheffield brand.

The University will pilot and evaluate MOOCs (massive open on-line courses).

8. **Develop technology-rich physical and virtual learning spaces** that enable students to work collaboratively and individually, that provide flexibility while at the same time providing a robust, reliable, predictable experience for teaching staff, and that support a range of learning styles.

9. **Develop the use of portable technology** and support for bring your own devices to make our learning and teaching spaces as flexible as possible.

To meet these aims we must have in place:

- University structures defining support responsibilities at central and local level and sufficient resource to staff these.
- A framework for auditing, monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of e-learning to feed into development and support strategies.
- Training and guidance for academic staff on the effective use of technology to provide an interactive, activity based approach to learning.
- Formal recognition of TEL skills for academics and the inclusion of TEL skills as part of CPD.
- A facilitated network of e-learning academic champions in departments and professional services who understand local requirements and can work with the centre to develop appropriate support.
- A supported digital environment for the University's public facing materials with clearly understood approval and review mechanisms and support for staff who wish to contribute.
- A relationship with Futurelearn to enable us to deliver MOOCs.
- A supported environment to deliver our digital presence which includes iTunesU.
- A supported process and support for providing e-delivery, e-assessment, e-submission and e-feedback.
- A suite of tools to support distance learning and blended learning including training for staff who undertake teaching these courses.

- A supported integrated environment to share learning resources within the University across departmental and faculty boundaries.
- Flexible teaching spaces that enable innovative teaching and experimentation.
- All teaching space kitted out with appropriate technology to enhance and support the consistent delivery of an excellent learning and teaching experience.
- Advice and support for students on how to make the most of their digital footprints and support for academic and professional services staff who work with students in this area.
- A steering group comprised of colleagues across the institution to monitor progress and provide strategic direction. This group will provide an annual report to the Enhancement and Strategy Sub-Committee

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