

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 is a comprehensive plan for Ireland's higher education sector, with a strong focus on integrating technology. Key highlights include:

- **Digital Competency Focus:** Emphasis on developing digital proficiency within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and integrating these skills into the higher education framework.
- **Institutional Modernisation:** Encouragement for HEIs to modernise by using technology to improve administrative and operational tasks.
- **Flexible Learning:** Advocacy for digital platforms and tools to support varied teaching methods and cater to diverse student groups, including part-time, international, and lifelong learners.
- **Digitisation in Research and Collaboration:** Stress on using technology to enhance research capabilities and foster both local and global collaborations.
- **Digital Literacy:** Aiming to equip students with essential digital skills for the future workforce.

# National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030



## Key highlights continued:

- **Professional Development for Faculty:** Continuous updating of educators with emerging digital teaching methodologies.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Investment in digital infrastructure, like high-speed internet and advanced learning management systems.
- **Post-Pandemic Strategy:** The "Harnessing Digital - The Digital Ireland Framework" launched in 2022, aims to make Ireland a digital leader and drive digital transformation across the economy and society.
- **Agility and Responsiveness in Education:** Focusing on adapting to technological changes and meeting climate objectives.
- **Strengthening Education, Research, and Innovation:** Enhancing the role of education, research, and innovation in the Irish economy, with a special focus on SMEs and digital capacity, and leveraging a national clustering system involving research-active HEIs and regional enterprises.



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# The All-Aboard Initiative

The All-Aboard initiative, endorsed by Ireland's National Forum for Teaching and Learning, focuses on elevating digital literacy in the higher education sector and was launched in 2017. Key highlights include:

- **Response to Educational Evolution:** This initiative ensures educators, students, and staff are equipped with essential digital skills, responding proactively to the evolving demands of modern education.
- **Establishment of a Digital Skills Framework:** A key outcome is the development of a digital skills framework, categorising and defining crucial competencies, guiding individuals to assess and enhance their digital skills effectively.
- **Contribution to Higher Education:** Aligning Ireland's higher education with the digital needs of the 21st century, meant the initiative significantly upgrades the sector's digital competency.
- **Engagement and Implementation Strategies:** The initiative's success is bolstered by engaging events, seminars, and workshops, designed not just for adoption of tools but also for facilitating stakeholder dialogue and disseminating latest digital educational practices.

# Roadmap for Enhancement in a Digital World

The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education launched a roadmap from 2015 to 2017, focusing on guiding Irish HEIs through the digital landscape's challenges and opportunities.

Initially, broad categories were identified:

- finding (effectively/systematically) and using information and digital resources;
- applying and using information and resources in an effective manner;
- using tools to learn and to support the learning of others;
- managing one's online identity (factored into this also were concerns regarding security, personal safety ("cyberbullying" and "trolling" were mentioned as risks) and data security;
- creating materials in a variety of media formats;
- using a range of tools for communication and collaboration;
- higher level critique of information sources, of technological dependency, commercial restrictions and wider societal implications

# Roadmap for Enhancement in a Digital World

However, these were developed into the following topics, with related subtopics into a “railway” infographic:



# Enhancing Digital Teaching & Learning in Irish Universities Project



- The Irish Universities Association (IUA) Enhancing Digital Teaching & Learning in Irish Universities Project 2019-2022 was funded through the Irish Higher Education Authority's Innovation and Transformation programme and co-ordinated by the Irish Universities Association (IUA), The project aimed to enhance the digital attributes and educational experiences of Irish university students.
  - Introducing flexibility in technology-enhanced assessment
  - Transforming assessment with learning portfolios
  - Mobile-enabled formative assessment
  - Group work
  - Group assessment with technology
  - Peer review and peer assessment
  - Student feedback workshop
  - Fundamentals of technology-enhanced assessment
  - Loop and assessment: the basics
  - Loop and assessment: advanced
  - Creating consistency and transparency in technology-enhanced assessment
  - Transitioning from examinations to continuous assessment
  - Discussion activities for assessment



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# Final Notes

- PWC (2018) asserts that fully leveraging platforms like Blackboard, Canvas, or Moodle demands a substantial time investment from universities. This investment is crucial when teaching is valued as much as research.
- Without such investment, there's a risk of these platforms merely serving as storage for lecture notes instead of offering enhanced learning experiences or providing valuable data analytics related to student retention and success.
- Utilising digital tools can particularly help with student retention when utilising student learning analytics. Enhancing student retention and bolstering their success is a primary policy aim for the Irish government.
- "Optimising student success isn't merely a 'commendable act'. It's a crucial aspect of institutional competitiveness in a higher education environment increasingly influenced by commercial principles. Here, teaching excellence, student satisfaction, and graduate outcomes are central to institutional achievement."- Future Focus Digital Transformation.

# Final Notes

- Tracking student involvement and performance by amalgamating data from diverse sources can enhance student retention and outcomes.
- Digitalising and amalgamating student records/platforms to make such data readily accessible not only supports these interventions but also curates a fluid experience for students throughout their academic odyssey.
- Such an initiative needs comprehensive planning, stakeholder consultation, and the endorsement of both staff and students.