

DIGITAL STRATEGY

2025-2028

Digital Strategy 2025-2028

Policy Owner: Board
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ELT		
CMT		
Unions		
Students		
Employees		
Employers/Stakeholders		

Any Associated Documentation, for Reference:

Strategic Plan, Curriculum Strategy, Quality Strategy, IT Strategy

ELT SIGN-OFF: Simon Nixon, Principal & Chief Executive



Digital Strategy for Preston College 2025-2028

Introduction

This Digital Strategy outlines Preston College's vision and plan to leverage digital technologies to enhance teaching, learning, and operational efficiency from 2025 to 2028. The strategy is informed by key documents including the Jisc Further Education and Skills Strategy, the UK Governments National AI Strategy, and relevant government publications on generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education and digital development. It aims to position Preston College as a leader in digital education, ensuring that students, staff, governors and stakeholders benefit from innovative and effective digital solutions.

The College's new Digital Strategy emphasises the importance of digital technologies in enhancing performance and future-proofing the curriculum. The focus is on delivering measurable benefits to students, staff, and stakeholders rather than just implementing technology. The key points are:

1. **Digital Capacity:** The strategy highlights the need for a robust digital capacity to support the College's curriculum and delivery methods.
2. **Innovative Use of Technology:** The strategy aims to promote innovative uses of technology in teaching, learning, and assessment to engage and inspire students and staff. It also focuses on equipping students and staff with the essential digital skills for the workplace and digital citizenship, promoting a culture of digital inclusion.
3. **Streamlined Student Journey:** The strategy seeks to improve the student digital journey from application to enrolment, induction, attendance, and performance tracking. It also aims to achieve high levels of satisfaction for IT services and support among students and staff.
4. **Robust Infrastructure:** A secure and resilient digital infrastructure is critical. The strategy includes plans for an adaptive and responsive infrastructure that supports business and curriculum changes.
5. **Efficiency in Business Processes:** The strategy aims to drive efficiencies and impact positively on staff workload by streamlining processes, ensuring system compatibility and integration, and improving data flow.
6. **Safe Digital Ecosystem:** The strategy will ensure that students and staff are empowered to navigate the online world safely, and operating in a safe and cyber secure digital ecosystem, which supports the College's Safeguarding Strategy.
7. **Focused Leadership:** The strategy aims to enhance the leadership of digital planning, systems, and processes. This will lead to better prioritisation, decision-making, and a clear vision for using digital technologies to enhance learning and improve College operations.

This comprehensive approach will ensure the College remains at the forefront of digital innovation, providing a high-quality educational experience and efficient business operations.

Vision and Goals

The College's Vision is: **To transform lives through education.**

This reflects our longer term ambition for the College, and encompasses more than just helping people to achieve qualifications. We want to be a place that people choose to come to in order to change their lives in a positive way, whether through improved job prospects or learning new life skills.

Our ambition is to create a digitally empowered learning environment that supports the academic and professional growth of our students and staff. The key goals of this strategy are:

1. **Enhance Digital Learning and Teaching:** Integrate advanced digital tools and platforms to improve the quality and accessibility of education.
2. **Improve Operational Efficiency and Effectiveness:** Utilise digital technologies to streamline administrative processes and enhance data management.
3. **Support Staff Development:** Provide continuous professional development opportunities to ensure staff are proficient in using digital tools.
4. **Foster Innovation:** Encourage the adoption of emerging technologies such as AI and VR to create innovative learning experiences.
5. **Promote Digital Inclusion:** Ensure all students and staff have access to necessary digital resources and support.
6. **Maximise Local Skills Impact:** Engage with local stakeholders and partners in ensuring that the College positively impacts the City of Preston and the wider region.

Strategic Priorities

1. Enhance Digital Learning and Teaching

Objective: To enhance the learning experience through the integration of digital technologies.

Actions:

- Further develop and enhance the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) which supports interactive and personalised learning and support. This will include features such as adapted resources, virtual reality, accessibility and multimedia content to engage and empower students with self-paced learning and facilitate collaboration.
- Utilise appropriate AI-driven tools to provide adaptive learning experiences and personalised feedback. AI, used effectively, can help identify students' strengths and weaknesses, allowing for tailored support and interventions.
- Incorporate VR and AR technologies to create immersive learning environments. These technologies can simulate real-world scenarios, providing hands-on experience and enhancing understanding.
- Develop online resources to support flexible learning options. This will enable students to access digital learning and support anytime, anywhere, and accommodate different teaching styles and schedules.
- Further develop and enhance digital tools to enhance the monitoring of student engagement and performance, through analytic monitoring of the whole student journey.

2. Improve Operational Efficiency and Effectiveness

Objective: To streamline business processes and improve data management.

Actions:

- Adopted systems, processes and tools will be used to promote more efficient working, ensuring information and communication is made easier, and impacting positively on workload.
- User experience will be a key focus for any digital process or system, ensuring convergence with systems where possible, to remove duplication of data and effort.
- Enhance digital tools for student enrolment, attendance tracking, and performance monitoring. These tools will help to streamline administrative tasks, reducing manual effort, improving accuracy and quality assurance, enabling better use of valuable staffing resource.
- Investigate potential uses of AI for predictive analytics to improve decision-making and resource allocation. AI, used appropriately, can analyse data to forecast trends, identify areas for improvement, recognise intervention requirements and optimise resource utilisation.
- Use, where appropriate, cloud-based solutions for data storage and management to ensure secure and efficient access to information. Cloud technology will enable real-time data sharing and collaboration among staff and students.
- Enhance cybersecurity measures to protect sensitive data and ensure compliance with regulations. This includes regular security audits, staff training, and the implementation of advanced security technologies.

3. Support Staff Development

Objective: To enhance the digital competencies of staff through targeted professional development, ensuring they are equipped to effectively integrate digital tools and technologies into their teaching and administrative practices.

Actions:

- Provide regular training and professional tailored development programmes for all staff focused on digital skills, including continuing the annual 'DigiFest', to support staff in integrating digital tools into their teaching and business practices.
- Encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing through agreed digital communication platforms. Staff will use online communities and forums to share best practices, resources, student engagement and experiences.
- Develop a structured digital training programme that covers essential digital skills, including the use of educational technology tools, digital pedagogy, online assessment, and data management.
- Create a digital skills framework to guide staff development, measure proficiency and recognise achievement.
- Utilise AI to streamline lesson preparation and enhance teaching practices, including the use of AI chatbots and virtual assistants to support students and provide AI solutions to improve operational efficiency.

- Create digital champions where experienced staff can provide peer to peer support to develop digital skills. Champions will provide guidance and share best practice, with access to more specialised training opportunities.

4. Foster Innovation

Objective: To foster a culture of innovation and experimentation with emerging technologies.

Actions:

- Promote a culture of innovation and experimentation, empowering staff and students to immerse themselves in new technologies, including AI and VR, in enhancing teaching and learning and improving business processes.
- Collaborate with industry partners to stay updated on technological advancements and best practice. Engagement with tech companies, research institutions, employer partners and other educational organisations will facilitate knowledge exchange and innovation.
- Encourage students and staff to participate in innovation challenges and development days designed to promote experimentation, digital confidence, and skills development.
- Invest in digital resources which support innovation, recognising the importance of 'research and development' in promoting operational advancement.
- Regularly engage key stakeholders in evaluating progress, celebrating achievement, and promoting timely intervention as required.

5. Promote Digital Inclusion

Objective: To ensure all students and staff have equitable access to digital resources and support, fostering an inclusive and technologically proficient learning environment.

Actions:

- Ensure the availability of assistive technologies and tools for students and staff with special educational needs (SEND) and/or who are neurodivergent, enabling them to access digital resources effectively.
- Develop and provide tailored digital learning materials that cater to the diverse needs of students with SEND
- Collaborate with parents and external agencies to ensure comprehensive support is in place for students with high needs, including digital access
- Integrate AI to enhance personalised learning experiences by tailoring educational content to individual student needs, thereby improving engagement and outcomes.
- Develop AI-driven analytics to provide staff with insights into student performance, identifying those who need additional support and enabling timely interventions.

6. Maximise Local Skills Impact

Objective: To engage with local stakeholders and partners in ensuring that the College positively impacts the City of Preston and the wider region

Actions:

- Develop and maintain effective approaches that facilitate collaboration between the College, local businesses, and community organisations. This will include a targeted Sector Advisory Group for Digital whilst our collective approach will include sharing resources and practice, promoting apprenticeship opportunities, and organising joint projects that address local needs.
- Implement virtual delivery resources and workshops tailored to the specific skill requirements of local industries. By offering flexible, online engagement options, the College can ensure that more individuals have access to the training they need to succeed in the local job market.
- Utilise social media, College website, Mailchimp, and other digital communication tools to keep local stakeholders informed about the College's initiatives, events, and opportunities for collaboration. Regular updates and interactive content will help enhance a strong, engaged community around the College.
- Use data analytics to identify skill gaps in the local workforce and tailor educational programmes to meet these needs. By analysing local employment trends and feedback from stakeholders, the College can ensure that its curriculum is aligned with the demands of the regional economy.
- The College will develop AI content within the curriculum offer to ensure that students have the required digital skills for the employment sector which they are planning to progress into. This will require working with employer sector bodies and awarding bodies to ensure the curriculum is fit for purpose in the era of AI.

Implementation Plan

The implementation plan for the Digital Strategy for Preston College (2025-2028) aims to create a transformative digital learning environment that supports the academic and professional growth of our students and staff. By leveraging advanced technologies and fostering a culture of innovation, we will ensure that Preston College remains at the forefront of digital education.

Phase 1 (2025-2026):

- **Dissemination and Consultation:** Staff groups and governors will be provided with workshop sessions to promote understanding of this new Strategy and allow consultation on the best ways to implement the desired changes. This will include more formal consultations with recognised Trade Unions on matters of workload.
- **Audit and Planning:** Conduct a comprehensive audit of current digital capabilities and resources. This will involve assessing the existing digital systems, identifying skills gaps, and determining the needs of students and staff.
- **Action Plan Development:** Develop detailed action plans for each strategic priority. This will include setting specific goals, timelines, and responsibilities for implementation. Assignment of digital champions and creation of Digital Steering Group to oversee the action plan.
- **Initial Implementation:** Begin the implementation of key initiatives such as the AI Tools and staff training programmes. This phase will focus on laying the foundation for future digital transformation. The College will trial the adoption of both Teachermatic and Microsoft Co-Pilot to support staff with lesson preparation, and streamline the process of

creating engaging and effective lesson plans, as well as more general business use.

These trials will be evaluated, alongside consideration of other tools that may replace or enhance the initial solutions, as part of a proactive continuous development.

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Engage with students, staff, and other stakeholders to gather feedback and ensure their needs and perspectives are considered in the implementation process. This will include formal Board reviews.

Phase 2 (2026-2027):

- **Expansion and Integration:** Expand digital learning resources and further integrate advanced technologies such as AI and VR into the curriculum and general management of the College. This phase will focus on enhancing the learning experience and improving business efficiency.
- **Operational Efficiency:** Enhance operational efficiency through the adoption of AI and cloud-based solutions. This will involve automating administrative processes and improving data management.
- **Continuous Staff Development:** Continue staff development programmes and support innovation initiatives. This will include providing ongoing training, promoting collaboration, and encouraging experimentation with new technologies. Introduction of a rewards scheme for staff, to recognise digital achievements, will be considered as part of this action.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Monitor the progress of the implementation and evaluate the impact of digital initiatives. This will involve collecting data, analysing results, and making necessary adjustments to ensure the success of the strategy. This will include formal Board reviews and approvals.

Phase 3 (2027-2028):

- **Evaluation and Adjustment:** Evaluate the overall impact of the digital strategy and make necessary adjustments based on feedback and data analysis. This will involve reviewing the achievements, identifying areas for improvement, and updating the action plans accordingly to reflect current digital trends. Board reviews and approvals will be an important part of this process.
- **Scaling Successful Initiatives:** Scale successful initiatives and explore new opportunities for digital innovation. This will include expanding the use of effective digital tools and technologies and identifying new areas for improvement or further development.
- **Ongoing Support and Resources:** Ensure ongoing support and resources for digital inclusion. This will involve maintaining the provision of digital devices, offering continuous training and support, and addressing any emerging barriers to digital access.
- **Sustainability and Future Planning:** Develop a sustainability plan to ensure the long-term success of the digital strategy. This will include securing funding, building partnerships, and planning for future digital advancements.

Monitoring and Evaluation

To ensure the success of the Digital Strategy, we will establish a Digital Steering Group to monitor progress against the action plan and report to Executive Leadership Team (ELT), this will include:

- Regular progress reviews and updates.
- Key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure the impact of digital initiatives.
- Feedback mechanisms to gather input from students, staff, and stakeholders.
- Continuous improvement processes to refine and enhance the strategy.

ELT will be responsible for reporting to the Board, ensuring full awareness of progress and involvement in setting targets and priorities.

Alignment with College Strategy

This Digital Strategy aligns with Preston College's overarching objectives as outlined in the College's Strategic Plan 2023-2026, and will be reflected fully in the new version of the Plan that will take effect from August 2026. The College's vision to transform lives through education and its mission to inspire, educate, and support the diverse community are central to this digital strategy. The strategic priorities of enhancing digital learning and teaching, improving operational efficiency, supporting staff development, fostering innovation, and ensuring digital inclusion directly support the College's goals of delivering high quality teaching, learning, and support, and providing a high quality technical and vocational curriculum.

Artificial Intelligence

AI is poised to revolutionise the education sector over the next three years. The integration of AI can enhance personalised learning experiences by tailoring educational content to individual student needs, thereby improving engagement and outcomes. AI-driven analytics can provide staff with insights into student performance, identifying those who may need additional support and enabling timely interventions. Additionally, AI can streamline business tasks, freeing up valuable time for staff to focus on other activities.

Looking ahead, the future application of AI at Preston College includes the development of intelligent teaching and support systems that offer real-time feedback and support to students, providing a more interactive and responsive learning environment. AI-powered virtual assistants can assist students with queries related to coursework, campus services, and career advice, enhancing the overall student experience. Moreover, predictive analytics will be another tool assisting the College to forecast enrolment trends, using multiple metrics, optimise resource allocation, and plan for future growth.

This Strategy will be informed by other College policies and strategies, such as the Sustainability Strategy, ensuring that the use of new technologies is not at the expense of wider environmental considerations. The use of AI solutions will not be encouraged where other more sustainable solutions exist that can achieve the same outcome. The College will always seek to balance its responsibilities in a digital world with the need to be environmentally sustainable.

Through sensible use of AI, Preston College can create a more efficient, personalised, and data-driven educational ecosystem, ultimately preparing students for the demands of the modern workforce. This strategic integration of AI will be pivotal in driving innovation and excellence in education over the next three years.