# Digital Learning Framework

The use of technology to support education is essential to ensure a contemporary, innovative and supportive learning environment. The use of technology can take many forms and is tied to various 'modes' of study. At Flinders the term 'digital learning' has been defined to refer to the use of digital technology to enhance learning. This encompasses all modes of delivery, including online and on campus.

The digital learning framework outlines the overall framework of necessary enablers for digital learning, including fully online learning and the use of digital learning in on campus topics and courses, in a high-quality way. The framework is designed to ensure that the systems, technology, support mechanisms are in place to both expand and improve the experience and meet all regulatory requirements. Associated with the framework is a workplan designed to progress the tasks.
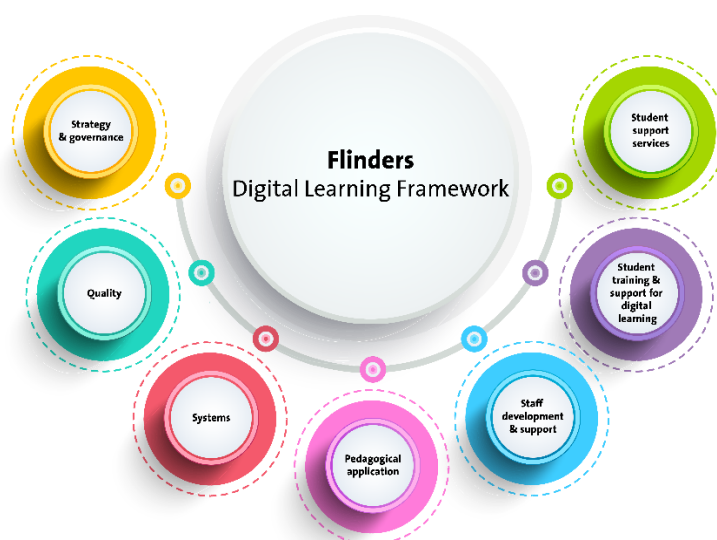
Two key documents have informed the development of this framework; the Higher Education Standards (HES) and the Benchmarks for Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) developed by the Australasian Council on Open Distance and eLearning (ACODE).

The Higher Education Standards (HES) apply irrespective of mode of delivery. Additionally TEQSA has developed a set of key considerations for providers related to online learning. A complete mapping has been done against the HES to identify areas which need specific attention when delivering in a fully online mode. Key issues arising include: definitions and understandings; policy, procedures and process issues; quality assurance; staff capability building; pedagogical models; technological considerations and appropriate usage. There are several additional elements that are essential including strategic direction and market analysis. Meeting the standards is essential as a baseline however, higher quality is critical to achieving our goal as set out in the 2025 Agenda.

The Australian Council on Open Distance and eLearning (ACODE) Benchmarks for Technology Enhanced Learning are intended to assist institutions in taking a continuous improvement approach and draw attention to the breadth of requirements for technology enhanced learning. The benefits of utilising the ACODE model to underpin our framework are that it has had considerable development over the last 15 years; is well recognised nationally and internationally; provides the opportunity to identify and track progress and can be used for benchmarking with other institutions. The ACODE TEL benchmarks do not address the broader range of HES and therefore some of these standards have been added to the relevant benchmark. As such the framework document is organised around the 8 slightly amended benchmarks with a brief explanation for each, summary of issues for Flinders and work undertaken to date. Further detail can be found in the workplan and/or related appendices. All work has been informed by available knowledge in the sector on best practice and future development.

1. Strategy and governance

Good Practice Statement: The institution has established, well understood strategy, governance mechanisms and policies that guide the selection, deployment, evaluation and improvement of the technologies used to support learning and teaching.

This is contributed to by:

- Clarification of the university wide strategic approach to digital learning (*In progress – at a high level below*):
    - Fully online courses where this makes sense under strategic and funding considerations (e.g. fee considerations, viability issues).
    - More topics online to increase flexibility for students and improve retention.
    - Increased and improved use of digital learning in all courses and topics.
- Development of a framework for digital learning (*Complete - this document*).
- HES mapping to identify relevant policies and procedures for review (*Complete*).
- Development of recommended approach for international offshore online teaching (*In progress*).
- Development of a learning technology testing process for offshore online teaching to be applied to different countries (*In progress*).
- Development of guidelines for topic coordinator responsibilities and resourcing for online teaching (*Scheduled for 2021*).
- Development of a process for gathering information and displaying to students about specialised equipment that they need for digital learning in addition to standard computer/access to internet (*In progress*).

2. Quality

Good Practice Statement: Institutions support and encourage the sustainable, effective and efficient use of digital learning through strategic planning processes at all levels of the institution. The focus is continuous improvement through systematic and regular evaluation of implementation strategies and outcomes. Such evaluation will in turn inform future planning and align with the institution's strategic direction.

This is contributed to by:

- Development of definitions for courses and topics to clarify expectations regarding attendance and access to online learning systems for students (*Complete – implementation will be phased across 2020-2022. See Appendix A*).
- Differentiation and clarification of location codes to be used with new definitions (*In progress as part of implementation of definitions*).
- Development of guidelines for digital learning in order to; achieve a consistent experience for students, set clear expectations of quality for teaching staff, provide the basis for continuous improvement, provide better training/support aligned with standards, and inform technical techniques for the learning technology ecosystem (*Complete and published – dissemination activities to occur throughout 2021*).
- Participation in ACODE benchmarking activity in order to evaluate Flinders digital learning against Australian universities (*Complete in 2020 – participation every 2 years*).
- Establishment of consistent process to seek feedback from students during and after study period about their online experience and use this to inform continuous improvement (*In progress*).
- Establishment of continuous improvement framework to evaluate online excellence and promote small cycles of innovation (*Scheduled for 2021*).
- Establishment of advice to monitor, measure and support success of online students (*In progress*).

3. Systems

Good Practice Statement: Technical infrastructure, both physical and virtual, is aligned with institutional learning goals and the technologies are resourced, support staff are trained and the infrastructure is implemented, maintained, administered and supported efficiently and effectively.

This is contributed to by:

- Assessment of alignment of LMS and related learning technologies aligns with the vision for digital learning (*Complete as part of LMS review 2019 – series of recommendation that form a learning technology roadmap*).
- Development of the learning technology roadmap (*Complete*).
- Clarification of governance structure for approval/endorsement/improvement of new and existing learning technologies, including oversight of learning technology roadmap (*In progress*).
- Implementation of the learning technology roadmap (*In progress*).
- Development of a process to identify, communicate and support specialised software/hardware requirements needed for topic/course delivery (*In progress*).

4. Pedagogical application

Good Practice Statement: The application of digital learning is:

- grounded in the institution's Learning and Teaching strategy;
- informed by good pedagogical practice and research;
- supported adequately;
- deployed and promoted effectively;
- evaluated from a number of perspectives; and
- advanced appropriately.

This is contributed to by:

- Development of support resources and services addressing sourcing digital content for learning and teaching (*Complete – see Tip sheet: Sourcing and creating digital content and Library service: source online materials for topics*).
- Clarification of use of readings system to manage third party material used in learning and teaching (*Complete – see Copyright Compliance Procedure*).
- Development of advice on re-using recorded lecture material (*Complete – see making the most of the lecture recording*).
- Development of advice on shared sites in FLO, including standards for sharing online and on campus topics and process for requesting and approving (*Complete – see guidelines for sharing topics and digital learning guidelines*).
- Development of guidelines for designing online learning ensuring inclusivity and accessibility and culturally responsive digital learning (*Complete – see Good practice guide – Accessible and inclusive learning, Tip sheet – accessibility and inclusivity in FLO and Tip sheet – Culturally responsive digital learning*).
- Development of good practice guides and tip sheets on digital learning practice (*Ongoing – see Good practice guides and tip sheets*).
- Development of a roadmap for learning analytics (*Complete – see Roadmap for Learning Analytics*).

5. Staff development and support

Good Practice Statements: Quality learning and teaching is brought about where people are confident, enthusiastic, skilled and well supported, and learning experiences are designed to engage the learner and employ a variety of approaches.

Engagement in professional development should not be limited by factors of physical location, equity or technological skills. This means that staff development is offered flexibly, accommodates a range of entry points, is evaluated and is informed by the work of related units.

A good practice approach to the use of digital learning reflects an understanding of learners' characteristics and needs as required by different discipline contexts.

Staff are made aware of and have access to comprehensive technical and educational support for the use of digital learning tools and services: prior to and during the implementation of the technology, in formal training sessions, on a just-in-time basis, and for troubleshooting purposes.

This is contributed to by:

- Development of updated staff professional development opportunities into an online and flexible formats with an emphasis on digital learning (*Complete – see* workshop listing).
- Development of recommended approach for teaching students in different time zones (*Complete – see* Tip sheet – Managing FLO for students in different time zones).
- Development of guidelines on how to create and manage an online teaching team (*Complete – see* guidelines).
- Development of guidelines and processes to support the design and implementation of good online assessment / examination (*Complete – a series of good practice guides now available, including* Moving assessment online*. To be enhanced throughout 2021*).
- Development of pedagogical approach for digital learning (*In progress*).
- Development of awareness of copyright and open access options for learning materials (*Complete –* workshop available).
- Development of guidelines for integrating digital literacy in learning and teaching (*Complete – see* good practice guide – digital literacies).
- Development of material (tip sheets/guides) to support the implementation of the digital learning guidelines (*In progress*).
- Review of the online delivery support services for ongoing improvement and changing student cohorts (*In progress*).

6. Student training and support for digital learning

Good Practice Statements: The provision of student training for the effective use of the institution's digital learning services is aligned with digital learning as defined by standards; is adequately resourced; is coordinated with other student support services; is flexible; is focused on the needs of students; covers a range of current technologies and reflects good practice in the use of technology.

Students are aware of and have access to effective and well-resourced support for the digital learning used by the institution. Student support is responsive to student needs; is coordinated with student training; and is constantly developing in response to changing technology.

This is contributed to by:

- Creation of an online orientation program for students, targeting the specific things they need to know to succeed (*Complete – see Finding your way at Flinders and Learning Online*).
- Development of a student-facing website (*Complete – see student portal*).
- Development of a plan for building digital student communities (*In progress – linked to Retention Plan*).
- Identification and implementation of enhancements to existing IT training and support for students (*Scheduled for 2021*).

7. Student support services

Good Practice Statement: Students can contact and interact with academic and support services and that student support is adequately resourced. Support services within this context include academic skills (language, literacy, numeracy, including information literacy), health and counselling, disability (student wellness), financial, orientation including clear academic integrity expectations, Library services, student administration, orientation, evaluation of teaching. Services must be accessible to online students in an equivalent manner to on campus students, including identification of equity groups.

This is contributed to by:

- Enhancement of academic support services for students, particularly online students in order to bridge the gap of expected knowledge on how to engage with online learning and other skills (*Complete - Study guides available, video library on academic skills, Studiosity 24x7 academic support, learning lounge on campus and online academic support, process for embedding resources into assessments*)
- Ensuring support services for students (both online and on campus) are current, relevant, effective, accessible, and timely. Includes assessing options and implications for providing extended hours support (eg. 24/7, 6am-8pm, different time zones) and consideration of the approach for delivery of health, counselling and disability services for online students (*In progress*).
- Mapping support structures and training to enhance the digital literacy of students and staff (*In progress*).
- Review of the orientation program with reference to fully online students, targeting the specific things they need to know to succeed (*Complete – see Learning Online, Finding your way at Flinders FLO topic, orientation program, orientation video library and online version of the O'Guide program*)

Glossary

FLO – Flinders Learning Online

HES - Higher Education Standards

Location – place where the teaching occurs. Denotes a physical location where a physical location is used

Mode – mode of delivery of the teaching (see Appendix A)

TEL – Technology Enhanced Learning. Interchangeable with the term 'digital learning' within the context of this document.

Digital Learning – the use of digital technology to enhance learning. Encompasses all modes of delivery.

Appendix A: Definitions for digital learning

Title	Definition (staff facing)	Advice to students*
Online	All topic resources, interaction, assessment and activities are available online. No in person attendance is required.	This topic is available to study completely online.
Partial on campus	Most topic resources, interaction, assessment and activities are available online. Some in person attendance will be required.	Most topic resources, interaction, assessment and activities are available on Flinders Learning Online. This topic requires some in person attendance.
On campus	Requires in person attendance. Some topic resources, interaction, assessment and activities are available online and are of a supplementary nature.	This topic requires in person attendance and access to Flinders Learning Online.

*When published definitions will also include the standard type of technological infrastructure students will need to complete their studies for each definition, eg. hardware, software, internet.