Cardiff and Vale College

Developing digital capabilities (November 2019)

Supporting and encouraging digital explorers, innovators and pioneers

"The discovery tool came at the right time for us – it fitted our needs perfectly and supports our digital strategy."

Hannah Mathias, e-learning manager | rheolwr e-ddysgu, Cardiff and Vale College

Strategic alignment

Developing digital skills for staff and students is a high priority at Cardiff and Vale College (CAVC). A new technology enhanced learning (TEL) steering group led by the deputy principal has overseen the introduction of a new digital strategy and is leading digital transformation across the college.

The Welsh Government initiative of introducing their digital competency framework as an integral element of the curriculum is expected to have a positive impact on the digital experiences and confidence of arriving students. With this in mind, the college are encouraging staff and students to get on board with digital and has several initiatives designed to help them on their digital journeys.

A data informed approach

The college are using the discovery tool from Jisc's digital capabilities service and data obtained from the digital experience insights surveys to inform their approach. Tutorial time was used to encourage students to take part in the 2018 pilot of the student digital experience insight survey, providing valuable baseline data that can be used to inform TEL initiatives and evidence year-on-year improvement. Students are also being encouraged to use the student version of the discovery tool in tutorial time to reflect on the digital capabilities they have and identify opportunities for further development.

In addition to the students insights survey, CAVC plan to run the staff insights survey this year to gain a holistic picture of the overall digital experience at the college. They are also encouraging staff to engage

with the discovery tool in their scheduled continuous professional development (CPD) time.

Together, the high-level anonymised data from the discovery tool and the detailed, more nuanced data obtained from the surveys and will yield valuable data that can be used to inform strategy and practice.

Structured journeys and clear ways to engage

CAVC is a Microsoft Showcase College that use the latest technologies to enhance learning and drive digital change. The TEL strategy for the college has been condensed into a visual two-page document using an infographic approach. This articulates the concept of a TEL journey and this is presented using tailored versions for specific roles (eg lecturers, support staff, leaders).

Staff are being encouraged to engage with the Microsoft Innovative Educators (MIE) programme through a series of structured development pathways.

Every journey starts off with the Jisc discovery tool. Individuals review their feedback from the discovery tool with their line manager and then engage with the pathways approach.

The referencing of Microsoft Educator Community content through the discovery tool has been helpful and provides a synergy with the approach taken at CAVC.

The TEL journeys

- The TEL explorer journey is the first step on the pathway for lecturing staff. Lecturers must achieve their MIE badge through the Microsoft Educator Community (MEC) and develop their Moodle course to achieve a two-star rating (interactive). This is rated by the TEL team. Lecturers also conduct a TEL experiment where they reflect on the use of TEL in their teaching and learning. All of this evidence is submitted to Moodle for the TEL team to evaluate and award the TEL explorer badge. Those working towards this are supported by the CAVC TEL team.

- The second stage is to work towards becoming a TEL pioneer. Lecturers must achieve their MIE Expert badge from the MEC and develop a three-star rated Moodle course recognised as being innovative by the TEL team. Portfolio building continues along with a second TEL experiment and the additional responsibility of supporting others with TEL developments.

Similar pathways have also been developed for business support personnel, leaders and managers incorporating Microsoft certifications and MEC badges.

Gamification, rewards and recognition

The TEL journeys generate badges and each term the team that has gained the most badges is rewarded with a prize of a team building activity – something fun but focused. This reflects the importance of team building which is not always evident in traditional approaches to continuous professional development.

The idea behind the approach adopted by CAVC is to gamify digital skills development a little, to make it fun, engaging and most importantly to allow individuals and line managers ownership and the ability to contextualise digital development activities in ways that best suit their subjects, the needs of learners, curriculum and team ambitions.

Linking development into the appraisal and personal development review processes emphasises team ownership and naturally builds in an additional level of team co-development, interest and support.

Inspiring digital enterprise for students

Student digital leaders
CAVC has approximately 35-40 student digital leaders, some of whom are doing this as part of their course, others who are volunteers. Most are also doing the iDEA scheme. They work with a Microsoft coach and can also take MS office exams and more technical MS qualifications if they wish. They have the opportunity to work towards badges on the Microsoft Educator community and some are now running their own workshops for students in the Makerspace area.

Makerspace
The Makerspace facility opened in November 2018. It is a cross-curricula facility that is equipped with cutting edge, industry standard technologies. The Makerspace area is open to staff and students.

Technologies available in Makerspace are varied and include virtual reality, coding, 360 cameras, 3D printers. Workshops are available on topics such as 3D design (including reviewing the product in virtual reality before sending to 3D print) and creative arts and crafts with Microbits.

The concept is in making and creating using digital technologies which aligns with the curriculum focus at CAVC.

Examples of how this is being used include:

- The psychology curriculum team created a video and an interactive lesson using Google cardboard headsets on schizophrenia

- Law students experiencing a simulation of a court experience using a green screen

- ESOL students researching and presenting news reports to develop their literacy and communication skills

Early signs of impact

It is early days still to fully assess the impact of all the work and initiatives that CAVC are doing but early feedback indicates that the perception of digital learning is more positive this year and that staff and students are engaging in self-led learning.

Estyn commented favourably on several aspects of using digital technology in the November 2018 inspection report.

"In vocational programmes, a majority of teachers provide useful opportunities for learners to practise and develop digital skills."

Estyn, 2018

Tips for others/lessons learned

- The drive and support from senior leaders at the college has been instrumental in driving the digital agenda forward

- Providing clear and simple infographics to help staff see how digital technologies align with strategic priorities combined with structured pathways make it easy for staff to get on board

- The change of approach from directed training to team and individual ownership of digital learning and development is facilitating meaningful and contextualised curriculum development

Next steps

The college is currently analysing data from their participation in digital experience insights surveys for staff and students. Data from surveys and the discovery tool data dashboard is reported to the TEL strategy group and is informing ongoing development at CAVC.

"The focus is on what learners need and what we need to do to ensure our staff can fulfil these needs."

Hannah Mathias, e-Learning manager | rheolwr e-ddysgu, Cardiff and Vale College

Work includes planning for new builds, the development of policies and practice to encourage BYOD (bring your own device) to facilitate flexible, collaborative and personal learning and the development of a student-focused (and student designed) well-being chat bot using Microsoft Azure and will be available via MS teams and the college intranet.

The college is also looking at adding iDEA as an extension activity for students in the eTutorial programme.