

Gloucestershire College

Piloting the discovery tool
(February 2019)



Building digital capabilities: what difference will it make?

A key question for colleges and universities is what difference will building digital capabilities make? For Gloucestershire College, the alignment with strategic goals is key. With a substantial proportion of learning taking place via digital delivery the skills and confidence of staff to actively use technologies is a prime consideration.

“We deliver 10-20% of our learning online for levels 2 and 3. Capabilities analysis tells us who feels most confident and who is actively using technologies. The discovery tool provides data we can triangulate with teaching and learning teams. It takes the guesswork out and provides evidence of improvement over time.”

**Alicia Wallace, digital learning manager,
Gloucestershire College**

Data informed decisions

Knowing where to focus effort is important and with over 500 academic and support staff to support the data obtained from both the [discovery tool](#) and the [digital experience insights student survey](#) is helping the college to target finite resources.

The digital student experience insight survey was run in January 2018. It has provided feedback on the various tools and digital systems used at the college, and how students are using these to support their studies. It revealed what was working well and what could be improved.

The pilot of the discovery tool involved students and staff. It was conducted in June and July 2018 in designated sessions and on departmental staff development days. This led to further sessions in the [Tech Lounge](#) where participants could learn more about the tool.

Feedback was positive and the data from both insights and the discovery tool have been used to inform coaching and training initiatives. The fact that the discovery tool uses the six elements of the [digital capabilities framework](#) makes it easy for the college to plan and structure training.

Coaching and contextualisation

Coaching with a view to giving people a degree of confidence and independence is an underpinning principle for both staff and student development at Gloucestershire College.

The college has a team of three digital learning coaches who support staff to develop their digital capabilities in a variety of ways:

- New members of staff are supported by digital learning coaches and complete a college-specific digital MOT and the discovery tool during induction. The digital MOT introduces them to the essential systems used by the college and

ascertains any additional training needs. After completing the discovery tool, new staff members are encouraged to share the personalised report generated by the tool with their coach who will work with them to build a tailored development plan. In addition to facilitating responsive support, it also serves as a record of the starting point for that member of staff which, together with evidence of achievement, can be used to support the six-month probationary review

- Existing members of staff are invited to complete the discovery tool on college development days when they also have an opportunity to ask questions and discuss their findings with digital learning coaches. The relationship to learning and teaching is reinforced through other staff development initiatives such as observations and learning walks
- The library team are engaging with the discovery tool, sharing their results with colleagues and pairing up so that those who are confident in any given area can support those who are less so

And the approach is contextualised for students too. For example, adult learners returning to education may not be confident about using a range of new digital systems and perhaps need to refresh their study skills. The college introduced a mini-questionnaire designed to identify where they need help and have paired someone students can turn to for help with each group.

“Students said they wished they had been able to use the discovery tool at the beginning of their courses. They liked the formats, the charts and the personalised feedback.”

**Amina Begum, digital learning coach,
Gloucestershire College**

Outcomes and impact

The discovery tool offers a focused way for digital learning coaches to start conversations around digital capability which ensures that staff get the support they need without delay.

The anonymised overview data from the discovery tool is being used alongside the digital experience insights data to inform the college training and development plan.

Over 100 members of staff have used the discovery tool so far and this gives an accurate picture of where

people are in terms of digital capabilities as well as providing evidence of progress over time.

“People who feel technically comfortable in their daily life are also more comfortable adopting new activities. We like to empower – we train, we coach and then people develop their own things. It is lovely to see them thrive and to see their confidence grow.”

**Alicia Wallace, digital learning manager,
Gloucestershire College**

Tips for others/lessons learned

Taking part in the pilots for both the discovery tool and the student digital experience insights survey generated a lot of data. The digital learning team are keen to establish goals and objectives to ensure the data generated is used to best effect. Ongoing support from the Jisc service teams and participation in [community of practice events](#) are helping to refine the approach for this year.

Alicia has found an innovative way of promoting the discovery tool – she uses a personalised auto signature on emails with an embedded link:

Realise your potential: Take 5 minutes to discover your personalised Digital Capabilities report.

Thanks



**Alicia Wallace | Digital Learning Manager
Gloucestershire College**



Next steps

The focus with teaching teams is to reduce their workload by introducing digital tools that have a proven, positive impact on learning. The personalised reports produced by the discovery tool help the college to support individuals more effectively. High level departmental and cross college data will inform training provision to develop areas of weakness across the college.

The introduction of the discovery tool is supported across the executive team, with plans to extend use of the tool to all full-time students during their first three weeks at college. The college will then encourage them to revisit it at the end of the academic year to track development. This is carried out with an eye to the digital experience insights feedback received from students in relation to how prepared they felt in use of digital across the college.

New members of staff no longer need to complete the college's Digital MOT as the reports from the discovery tool are comprehensive enough to use in its place.

The college is currently working across learning and development and digitech to reach out to all members of staff and encourage them to complete the tool.

“The discovery tool and digital experience insights surveys give us clarity in terms of the situation at the college. We like to get to know the people we work with individually and these services align that knowledge with their digital confidence. It provides a way of moving forward for both individuals and the organisation.”

**Alicia Wallace, digital learning manager,
Gloucestershire College**