

Digital & Data Strategy 2030

Harnessing the **Power** of **Technology**



Your College, Your Future

Contents

Foreword	4
Strategic Context	5
Our Digital Strategy	7
Supporting the Learner Experience	8
Supporting Curriculum development	9
Supporting the Staff Experience	9
Leadership, culture and governance for a digital college	10
Building Underpinning Technologies and Processes	10
How will we measure ourselves against the strategy?	11
Acknowledgements	12



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Foreword

Welcome to Borders College's Digital and Data Strategy for 2025-2030. It is designed to support the outcomes set out in **Vision 2030**, our statement of ambition.

At Borders College, our mission is to provide the highest quality learning experience and outcomes, to support business and drive economic growth in the Scottish Borders. Our **Vision 2030** clearly states the importance of the digital environment in supporting us to achieve our ambitions for the Scottish Borders.

Borders College has a long history of digital innovation in our learning, and in our strategic and operational decision-making. Our use of data has assisted us in improving student outcomes and in providing the right services at the right times to our business partners.

This Digital and Data Strategy is intended to:

- **Provide a clear picture to staff, students and our external stakeholders of the College's vision for the future and the priorities it has set around digital.**
- **Assist the College with decision-making and funding allocation by driving these decisions back to clear aims that the College will look to meet over the next five years.**
- **Explain how the College will measure and determine if it is meeting its goals as laid out in this strategic plan.**



I look forward to seeing the results of our continued investment in our digital and data provision, resulting in further improvements to the student experience and outcomes, and ultimately supporting economic growth in the Scottish Borders.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Smith', written in a cursive style.

Pete Smith, Principal and CEO

Strategic Context

Here in 2025, there are several ‘grand challenges’ that make up the strategic context that the College faces. This section addresses their specific links to the Digital and Data Strategy.

Poverty and the new digital divide

Over the last five years, many digital technologies have seen an increased uptake, often accelerated by the impact of COVID-19. Access to the internet, especially via smartphones is now almost ubiquitous, with internet penetration reaching 97.8%¹ of the UK population in early 2025, with 67.8 million users and 99% of teens ages 16-17 in the UK having access to a smartphone². While the closing of the gap between students in terms of internet access has been a positive change, studies are now indicating that there is a separate ‘usage divide’ opening, where low-income or low-education areas are more likely to engage in video streaming or social media and less keen on news consumption,

information searching, e-mail or audio streaming³. Access to learning devices (PCs or laptops) also remains significantly behind smartphones, with two million young people lacking access to a learning device in 2023⁴. These figures suggest continuing difficulties for some students trying to access and use digital devices and services for learning.

Growing the economy

Vision 2030 states that “The skills we will deliver for the Scottish Borders are designed to support economic growth across the region and Scotland”. The use of data and digital will be a key part in helping to deliver this goal. Digital skills continue to have a significant impact on economic growth in Scotland, with a 2021 CBI Scotland study

estimating that these could add £25 billion⁵ to the Scottish economy over the decade but only if digital competency is raised across the Scottish population. Demand for digital skills is a feature of almost all businesses in Scotland, with even 75% of job adverts for roles classified as “low-skilled” in Scotland now requiring basic digital skills, such as using spreadsheets and word processors⁶, and persistent digital skills shortages identified in areas such as manufacturing and cyber security⁷.

Tackling the climate emergency

The Scottish government continues to place the climate emergency as a top priority, with a commitment to reaching net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045, five

1 [Digital 2025: The United Kingdom — DataReportal - Global Digital Insights](#)

2 [UK Mobile Phone Statistics 2025 - Stats Report - Uswitch](#)

3 [News or social media? Socio-economic divide of mobile service consumption](#)

4 [Digital-Youth-Index-2023-report.pdf](#)

5 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/a-changing-nation-how-scotland-will-thrive-in-a-digital-world/pages/digital-education-and-skills/#21%20ftn>

6 [Digital Education and Skills - A changing nation: how Scotland will thrive in a digital world - gov.scot](#)

7 <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/pg5fwkcb/digital-economy-skills-action-plan.pdf>

years ahead of the UK-wide target⁸. The College is also committed to being a part of this response, both in delivery of skills needed for students to increase sustainability across all sectors of the Scottish economy, and also in how the College provides those skills. Digital technologies continue to be a key area of opportunity in the delivering of sustainability improvements whether directly, through examples like provision of remote communication tools to reduce travel or indirectly, through the use of data to help track CO₂ emission reductions from other sources to support decision-making.

Ensuring high quality and sustainable public services

Digital and data have key roles to play in the delivery of an outstanding learner journey and success measures. External bodies continue to place a high importance on the College's ability to effectively measure a wide range of data relating to our learners, both for their own understanding of the performance of the further education sector as a whole, and also as a key part in high quality education delivery. Education Scotland's 'How good is our college' framework specifically highlights "the need for strong leadership and robust analysis of intelligence and data as essential features of effective continuous self-improvement⁹".

Within the College, data around learners is more important than ever, with the use of timely data collection and sharing through dashboards now an essential part of data-driven decision making. It is expected that the use of data to measure learner outcomes, equity, institutional planning, policy alignment and broader accountability will only increase over the coming five years. Alongside the increased data demands, the college sector faces significant challenges in delivering sustainable business plans within the available resources. Digital and data have an important role to play in this area, both to deliver the best return on investment in digital technologies and also to drive wider efficiencies through automation of College processes, enabling support staff to be able to meet the demands placed on colleges.

⁸ <https://www.gov.scot/policies/climate-change/>

⁹ [How good is our college?](#)

Our Digital Strategy

Borders College's Vision 2030 strategy lays out five key strategic outcomes:

1. Improved learner success
2. Sustainable curriculum that meets the needs of our region
3. Increased support to regional businesses
4. Reduced environmental impact
5. An efficient estate and optimal use of technology

The Digital and Data Strategy aims to support those outcomes by focusing on three key areas – supporting learning, supporting business processes and supporting decision-making.

The College has chosen to make use of sector best practice by mapping these key areas to the five sections of JISC's further education and skills strategy¹⁰. This allows us to take a broad view of how digital and data can have the biggest impact on our key focus areas by tapping into best practices from across the UK. JISC's further education and skills strategy areas are also flexible enough to allow us to select the most appropriate technologies and approaches for our region.

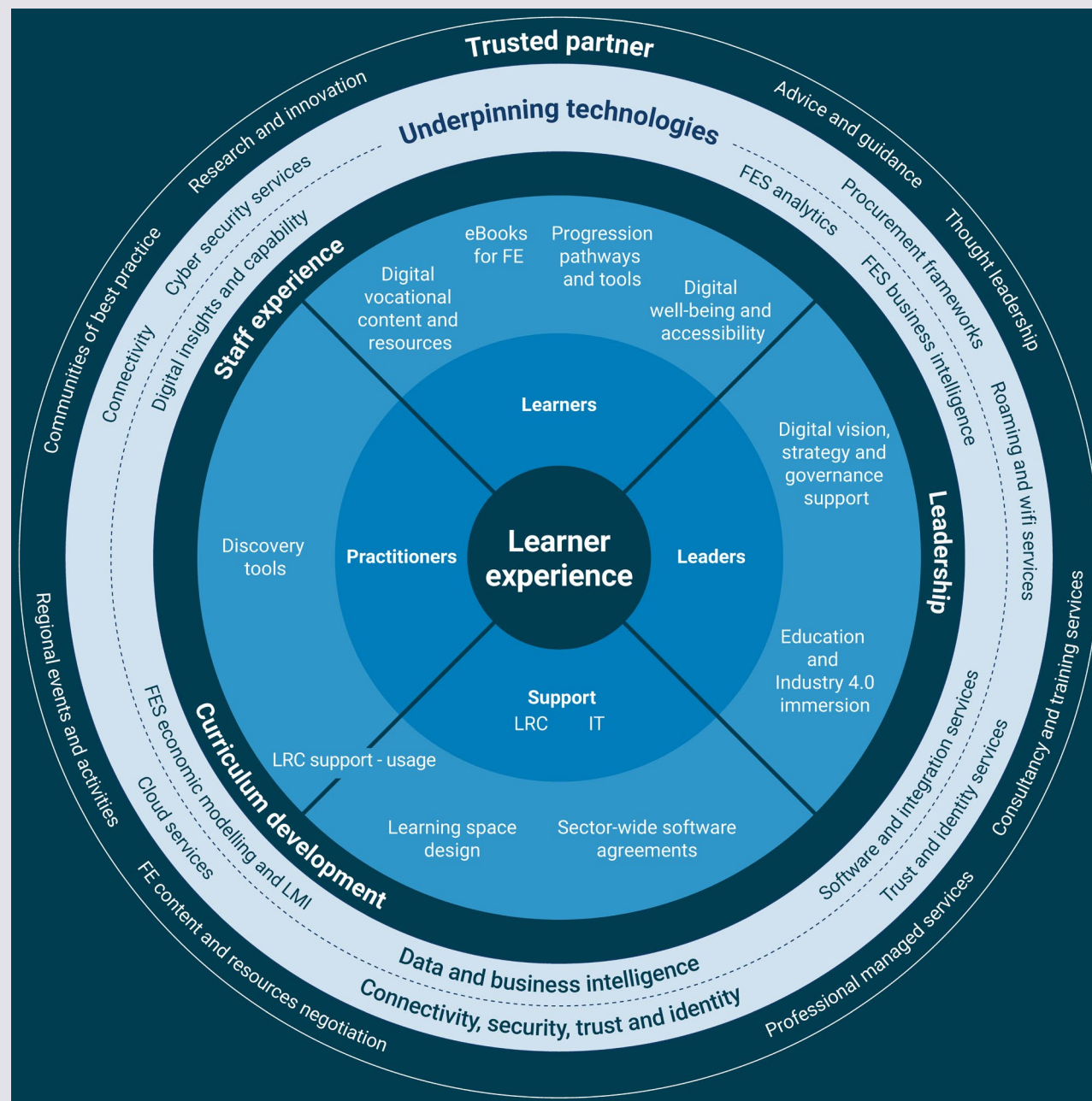
Supporting Learning	Supporting business processes	Supporting decision-making
1. Supporting the learner experience	3. Supporting the staff experience	4. Leadership, culture and governance for a digital college
2. Supporting curriculum development		
5. Building Underpinning Technologies and Processes		

¹⁰ [Jisc further education and skills strategy 2020-2023 - Jisc - Jisc](#)

1 – Supporting the Learner Experience

The College understands that learners' interactions with digital services has a significant impact on their experience and is fully committed to using digital to create a high quality 'learner journey'.

- Use digital to make students' pre-arrival and arrival experience as simple and inclusive as possible.
- Embed digital in the student learning experience, provide relevant training on the use of digital services and resources, and use digital to support student wellbeing and success.
- Use digital to support students' transition from the College to workplaces, both in terms of their digital skills and also how to use digital services to find appropriate work.



2 – Supporting Curriculum Development

A significant part of curriculum delivery and assessment now takes place on College digital platforms. The College commits to support curriculum design and management on these platforms to deliver excellent learner and staff experiences.

- Embed the VLE within learning and teaching plans, including full awareness of available digital tools to elevate delivery and learning.
- Use digital to create learning resources that are more accessible and inclusive

- Foster collaboration within groups, courses and the wider College using digital tools.
- Combine the approach of curriculum and student support using data and digital to identify and support students as early as possible and then throughout their course.

3 – Supporting the Staff Experience

Staff must be enabled to be digitally confident in order to be able to assist learners' progress. The College will work with staff to continually build and improve that digital confidence.

- Review staff digital capability and provide tools and training to allow staff to continually upgrade that capability.
- Make student data availability ubiquitous for staff across a range of platforms to

allow staff to better support students in an informed and timely manner.

- Embed best practice digital tools in learning and teaching plans and review their use.
- Take advantage of the opportunities that digital provides around assessment to make the experience easier and outcomes higher for students.

- Look for opportunities to automate business processes and create a culture of building tools in these areas for all departments.
- Look for opportunities to collaborate outside the College with other organisations and businesses to build digital skills.

4 – Leadership, Culture and Governance for a Digital College

For digital to be fully embedded, leaders and governors must embrace change and create a positive digital culture.

- Build a digital culture at the College:
 - Dignity, courtesy and respect towards others in the digital environment.
 - Digital equality, inclusion, enablement and empowerment.
 - Staff and students are comfortable challenging existing processes and adopting new digital approaches.
- Cross provider digital adaptation, innovation, collaboration and sharing.
- Show digital leadership:
 - Leaders embrace and are seen to embrace digital as a way to transform the College, including the learning experience.
 - Leaders are assisted to safeguard wellbeing by digital tools.
 - Capex/Opex are used in ways that support the digital strategy.
- Ensure good governance in our use of digital:
 - The Board embraces digital approaches, challenges the College on its use of digital and prioritises cyber security and data protection governance.

5 – Building Underpinning Technologies and Processes

In order to build, maintain and improve outstanding digital services and experiences, the College will invest in technologies that underpin all stakeholders digital experience and allow the College to safely operate and collaborate.

- Provide accessible digital equipment to staff and students on the basis of need.
- Invest in and maintain a robust digital infrastructure and digital services provision to support the College's digital strategy (including aspects around sustainability).
- Invest in IT specialist staff, both within and outside the College (including eLearning, accessible technology and IT procurement).
- Keep the College safe through effective cyber security and data protection measures, including tools, training and procedures.
- Guide the College and its learners through the assessment of and, where appropriate, adoption of new digital technologies and services through the use of robust project management and appropriate consideration of data protection and equalities impact.

How will we measure ourselves against the strategy?

The College will use the following tools to assess our progress against the strategy:

Tool	Notes
Learner and staff satisfaction surveys	Our learner and staff satisfaction levels will improve
Digital requirement documents for staff and students across each programme	All of our programmes will clearly define their digital requirements for staff and students
Capital planning and programme	Our capital planning and programme will include clear criteria for future investment
Data requirements documents	Our business planning cycle will clearly define the data requirements and our processes will support this
<i>JISC Digital Elevation tool</i>	<i>Using a set of questions covering the key aims from the strategy, the tool will ask the college SLT to self-evaluate whether it has achieved, either at a foundational, elevated or transformational level</i>
<i>JISC Discovery tool – building digital capability service</i>	<i>Using a set of questions, College staff and students will self-evaluate on their level of digital capability. These answers will signpost staff and students to relevant resources and training to assist them with increasing their digital capability level</i>
<i>IT & Digital Learning self-service feedback</i>	<i>The IT & Digital Learning team will provide reports on the feedback received from staff on students, regarding their requests to the self-service portal</i>
<i>Project Management tracking/Capital Bid process</i>	<i>Project Management tracking will provide examples of projects carried out that were approved after evaluation against the Digital Strategy that allows the College to meet its aims</i>

Acknowledgements

This strategy was developed with reference to a number of other key documents:

- *Jisc - Elevating the UK Further Education and Skills sectors (2020-23)*
- *Scottish Government - A Changing Nation: How Scotland will Thrive in a Digital World (2021)*
- *Scottish Government - Taking Stock: report on progress towards a cyber resilient Scotland (2023)*
- *JISC/Colleges Scotland - National Digital Strategy (2030)*
- *Skills Development Scotland - Digital Economy Skills Action Plan (2023-2028)*
- *QAA - Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) (2024)*
- *James Withers - Skills Delivery Landscape Review - Final Report (2023)*

We thank the authors for their time and input.



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Credits

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Borders College and
NC Art and Design students.

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