Building an informed and focused professional development offer

Piloting the digital capability discovery tool:
Cardiff University

Cardiff University (cardiff.ac.uk) is home to the **Wales Centre for Pharmacy Professional Education** (WCPPE) (http://wcp.pe/about) which provides continuous professional development (CPD) in pharmacy across Wales. The centre is supported by a small team of learning technologists. The team secured funding through the university's innovation fund to develop a digital CPD framework to support technologists with a view to developing innovative teaching practices using technology.

By taking part in the pilot of the **digital capability discovery tool,** (http://bit.ly/digcapdiscovery) the university hoped to raise awareness of the importance of digital capabilities for staff and students, identify any gaps in support and inform future CPD requirements.

Pilot approaches
The prime target audience for the pilot was academic staff in the school of pharmacy but those with other roles were also invited to participate, including learning technologists from other schools across the university. Strategies used to promote the initiative and engage participants included:

» Use of the **digital capability checklist for organisations** (http://repository.jisc.ac.uk/6629/) with the senior project sponsor, learning technologists and school representatives as a means of starting conversations, raising awareness and gathering information to establish the current situation in each school

» An email sent to all staff in the school of pharmacy with a brief help sheet giving details of the initiative

» Drop-in workshops were held at lunchtime to support individuals to complete the tool

» Promotion of the discovery tool during other events including a series of workshops on using the **visitors and residents mapping process** (jisc.ac.uk/guides/evaluating-digital-services) designed to ascertain a picture of individuals' overall engagement in the digital landscape

» Blog posts on the university's learning technology blog site which helped to maintain interest and engagement throughout the pilot period

Outcomes
80 respondents took part in the pilot, approximately half of whom identified themselves as academic staff. Other participants included colleagues from administrative, library and learning resources, human resources and organisational development, and learning support teams.

> *"Using the discovery tool is a great way of starting a conversation around digital capabilities."*
> **Matt Smith, eLearning project manager, Wales Centre for Pharmacy Professional Education, School of Pharmacy, Cardiff University**

The pilot process has raised awareness of the importance of digital capabilities and has generally opened up communication channels with individuals and teams about how digital technologies can enhance and support learning and teaching and what support is needed to make this happen. While the lunchtime drop in workshop sessions were not particularly well attended, those who did attend effectively acted as a gateway to access other teams, creating opportunities to discuss digital practices that could be embedded in new courses.

Staff are more aware of the expertise available in the WPPCE and this raised profile is allowing the learning technologists to work collaboratively with a wider group of people - reaching out beyond the 'usual suspects'.

Learning technologies and digital capabilities are now a frequent agenda item on learning and teaching committee meetings and the school of pharmacy is working with Matt Smith, eLearning project manager for Wales Centre for Pharmacy Professional Education to develop an education technology strategy.

The learning technology team felt it was important that they experienced the digital capabilities discovery tool for themselves. They found that the tool caters for a people with different skills levels and varied exposure to digital practices, offering tailored guidance and information that can help individuals to develop informed and focused personal development plans.

> *"It doesn't matter how exposed you are to digital capabilities - the discovery tool will highlight where further progress can be made. It gives people of all levels and capabilities a personal development pathway."*
> **Matt Smith, eLearning project manager, Wales Centre for Pharmacy Professional Education, School of Pharmacy, Cardiff University**

Key lessons learned

» Anonymity was important to participants - some sought reassurance that individuals would not be identified from the data collected. While the opportunity to use the outputs and profile from use of the tool in professional development reviews was promoted it was stressed that this was entirely optional and up to individuals

» A structured and co-ordinated communication plan was used to promote the personal benefits of using the tool and to explain how the data gathered would be used to inform a more focused and responsive CPD offer. Reminder emails and project updates help to sustain interest and gather those who need more encouragement to participate

» Linking work on digital capabilities to other priorities proved to be an effective approach by presenting a more holistic picture that enabled individuals to make connections with their own development aspirations and approach digital development needs from perspectives relevant to them

» Making time to collaboratively explore the detail within the updated Jisc **digital capabilities framework** (http://ji.sc/digicap_ind_frame) was important, even between learning technology colleagues who were fairly familiar with the topic. It was an advantage to have a ready-made tool supported by other resources and a range of role profiles including those for **higher education teachers** (http://ji.sc/HE-teacher-profile) (mapped to the **UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF)** (http://ji.sc/digital_lens_ukpsf) and **learning technologists** (http://ji.sc/learning-tech-profile) (mapped to the **Association of Learning Technology's** (alt.ac.uk) scheme for **Certified Membership** (CMALT) (.alt.ac.uk/certified-membership)

Next steps

Using the digital capabilities discovery tool is part of a larger project to encourage innovation in learning and teaching across the school of pharmacy. The pilot took place in one school to test out the processes and develop approaches that can be used to roll this out to other schools.

In addition to developing an educational technology strategy for the school, the data generated by the pilot is being used to inform future planning and CPD provision. Existing CPD opportunities and support are being mapped to the HE teacher profile and any gaps will be identified and addressed.

The opportunity for individuals to use the personal profile generated by the discovery tool to support their professional development reviews was flagged up as a possibility which was entirely voluntary. Further research is needed to tease out the issues around this and ensure it is not perceived to be a performance monitoring tool.

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