Department for Business Innovation & Skills

**Government Response
to the recommendations from the Further
Education Learning Technology Action
Group (FELTAG)**

JUNE 2014

Contents

Foreword

Technology has the potential to engage more learners, improve the learning experience, enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of providers and continue to meet the ever-changing needs of employers and the community. But it is clear from the FELTAG research and report that there are a number of obstacles which impede the ability of providers to take full advantage of these technologies. Our task is to remove them. Technology is set to transform education over the next decade as much as it has transformed the rest of our lives over the past decade.

Many inter-related factors have prevented the large-scale adoption and innovative use of new and emerging digital technologies. We aim to remove these obstacles and make it easier for teachers to innovate and enhance learning using technology.

We believe in the power of technology to transform education. From disruptive technologies like Open Badges, through to better use of technology to improve the teaching and learning experience, digital adoption can improve standards. Technology can make teaching more engaging for learners and more fulfilling for teachers. Technology empowers good teachers.

I am grateful to FELTAG members for their excellent report and recommendations. We have set out a positive response to their recommendations and recognised that while Government will do what is needed to remove these obstacles, it is for everyone involved to take ownership of new technology. Many actions are for the Further Education sector, too.

We have already been encouraged by the reaction of many providers who have started to plan for a more blended approach to their existing programmes. We have also been encouraged by the response of many agencies, stakeholders and partners in the Further Education and Skills sector.

In this document we have responded to those recommendations that relate to Government. Our responses have been grouped by theme.

I sincerely hope that this response will encourage others to develop a vision for the future which exploits the tremendous potential technology can offer to enhance learning. We can harness the power of technology to improve standards of education, and with it to realise the potential of millions.

**Matthew Hancock, Minister of State for Skills and Enterprise
June 2014**

Executive Summary

The aim of FELTAG was to identify the structural and cultural inhibitors to innovation in the use of technology to enhance learning and to improve learning outcomes. The interrelated recommendations were designed to remove these inhibitors and 'nudge' the Further Education system towards a digital future now expected by learners and employers. Government is already developing a significant agenda for learning technology. In the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) we are piloting technology to deliver English and Maths training and sponsoring assistive technology. The Department for Communities and Local Government recently ran a £6m ESOL competition to support new and innovative community-based projects using technology to improve the English language skills of some of our hardest to reach communities. The six winning projects are now running programmes across priority areas of England aimed at those with the lowest levels of English. BIS, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Government Digital Service is working to develop programs to improve digital skills and to support the assisted digital delivery of public services. We are pleased that Jisc is delivering IT infrastructure and advice to Further Education providers, and has also funded provider projects to engage the sector in developing its own solutions to technology issues. We have also established the Education and Training Foundation to further best practice in teaching and learning.

FELTAG's focus was divided into thematic workstreams:

Technology Horizon-scanning:

The sector has to keep abreast of change.

Informed by research commissioned by the **Institute for Prospective Technological Studies,** FELTAG established that the pace of technological change is accelerating and the impact of digital technology will continue to have a profound effect on the economic and social well-being of England, including the Further Education and Skills sector. It is critical that our policy-makers, teachers, chief executives, principals, governors, and managers fully understand these technological developments and their implications for teaching, learning and assessment in vocational and adult education.

> **Our Response:**
> BIS welcomes this recommendation and will coordinate meaningful horizon-scanning between the sector and researchers to increase awareness and facilitate discussion that will inform providers' learning technology strategies as well as our policy interventions.

Investment and Capital Infrastructure:

Procurement must be appropriate and agile.

Investment in technological infrastructure is critical to ensuring that the Further Education and Skills sector can respond to the rapid changes in digital technology. Infrastructure procurement must be agile, and capable of reacting to fast-changing technologies and pedagogies. Providers will need to consider their education technology strategies along

with their estate and capital investment strategies and ask questions about whether learning can be achieved more effectively online, or virtually, or in partnership with commercial providers. While it is for each provider to decide the appropriate specification of their capital projects, if new buildings or major refurbishment is needed we encourage providers to consider whether they have industrial strength digital infrastructure capable of supporting learning any time, anywhere.

Our Response:

We recognise the need for an appropriate and agile procurement strategy. While decisions on capital expenditure are the responsibility of individual providers, Government will do all it can to support providers to secure the infrastructure needed to maximise value from their investment.

BIS has allocated £5m to upgrade the Jisc broadband network, Janet, to providers to support this objective in 2014-15. This will upgrade the connections and improve resilience to meet the needs for shared services and 'cloud' activity in providers. With Jisc and sector representatives, we will encourage providers to demonstrate that they have researched and considered all modes of delivery, including online and blended learning *before* new buildings are considered. Any new buildings which are approved will have to ensure that best practice 'industrial-strength' technological infrastructure is included in project plans and costings.

Regulation and Funding:

Regulation and funding must not inhibit innovation and its effectiveness in improving learners' outcomes.

During extensive discussions with sector stakeholders it became clear that regulatory and funding models have a significant impact on providers' abilities to innovate using learning technology. If Further Education institutional cultures are to change, the regulatory and funding regimes must, at the very least, cease to inhibit innovation and ideally facilitate learning technology's optimal use to improve learner outcomes.

Our Response:

For 2015/16 the Skills Funding Agency will introduce an online-only funding rate. During 2014/15 the Agency will collect evidence of costs from 'online-only trailblazers' which it will support using a new field in the Individual Learner Record (ILR) through which providers will be able to record how much online and 'blended' delivery they are already involved in. The information collected will inform the online funding rate, which we will publish towards the end of 2014.

Ofsted has agreed to provide significantly greater guidance and training in the area of learning technology for its inspectors. Furthermore, Awarding Organisations will be encouraged to invest more effort and resources in the development of online and technology-assisted assessment and encouraged to work collaboratively in this area. Throughout the above, we will continue to ensure quality of delivery and rigorous assessment.

Already, Jisc is working with Awarding Organisations to establish the current use of e-assessment among providers aimed at further embedding online and technology-assisted assessment.

Learners:

Learners must be empowered to fully exploit their own understanding of, and familiarity with digital technology for their own learning.

FELTAG's research and conversations consistently referred to the under-exploitation of learners' skills, devices and technical knowledge when it came to the use of learning technology. The greatest resource available to Further Education and Skills providers in this domain is their learners. More effort needs to be made to engage and empower learners' use of digital - and the use of their own devices – in the learning process.

Our Response:

We encourage sharing of the best, replicable, student-led ground-up digital skills that are capable of being used in the teaching environment. To support this, Jisc will extend its work with learners in the sector in 2014-15 and engage with the Education and Training Foundation to promote digital leadership among learners in provider and professional practices. We also encourage organisations, such as the Tinder Foundation, to continue to support those learners who are digitally excluded to develop their basic online skills.

Capability and capacity of the Further Education and Skills workforce:

The entire workforce has to be brought up to speed to fully understand the potential of learning technology.

One of the strongest themes that emerged from FELTAG's commissioned research, its online conversation and its surveys with teachers and managers was the need for significant investment in the knowledge, skills and understanding of learning technology's potential among policy-makers, governors, chief executives, principals, senior and middle management, teachers and support staff. Benchmarks should be established for initial teacher education/training and teachers' continuing professional development (CPD) so that their ability to understand and optimise the use of learning technology can be enhanced and refreshed regularly. This should include the use of assistive technology. Additionally, continuous professional development for teachers needs to be considered when purchasing any capital expenditure for learning technology.

Our Response:

The Education and Training Foundation reflected the importance of learning technologies capability in new professional standards for teachers in the Further Education and Skills sector published in May 2014. The Foundation is now developing a learning technologies CPD offer to the Further Education and Skills workforce based on its learning technologies support programme.

We strongly encourage the Education and Training Foundation and Jisc to spend more of their resources on training the sector's workforce to make much better use of learning technology. We will also encourage them to provide detailed plans to raise the confidence and capability of the entire workforce, including governors, principals, chief executives, senior management teams, learning technologists, technicians, support staff and full, part-time and agency teaching staff. This should include staff working with hard-to-reach groups, including those in UK online centres, Community Learning Trusts and union learning representatives. We have also asked the Skills Funding Agency to consider how they can better support those teaching workforce qualifications which focus on continuing professional development for online learning.

Employers:

Relationships between the Further Education community and employers should become closer and richer, and enhanced by learning technology inside and outside the workplace.

It is clear from the research and sector discussions that a closer relationship should be established between employers and Further Education and Skills providers so that learning technology in and outside work are more effectively exploited. There have been examples of excellent employer-provider partnerships using digital technology innovatively, for example, in some apprenticeships. This needs to become commonplace.

Our Response:

To support education technology innovation, we will encourage the Education and Training Foundation to bridge the gaps between innovators and their market, technology developers and official bodies. We will also encourage the Foundation to work with Local Enterprise Partnerships to forge and develop more effective partnerships between Further Education providers and new and emerging digital technology industries, especially small businesses.

We anticipate an increased use of digital technologies in the delivery and assessment of apprenticeships and look forward to more apprenticeships in digital technology. Among others, Jisc will help to facilitate this engagement through its provision of expert guidance and by widening access to collaborative tools and services, such as Eduroam, aimed at enhancing access to providers' facilities. Jisc will also continue to support research and data-sharing, facilitating a partnership with employers, Further and Higher Education providers in this area.

The next pages refer to the FELTAG recommendations and are followed by our responses:

Investment

Recommendations:

Investment 1: Ensure that prior to the approval of capital expenditure on provider-building expansion evidence is provided that alternative delivery methods have been considered, including those mediated by learning technology; if this is approved, it needs to be 'future-proofed' for learning technology.

Investment 4: Ensure regulatory rules for capital investment keep pace with digital technology.

Capability and Capacity of Further Education and Skills Providers 6: Providers with new and innovative ideas should use available research, and encourage and support new research before making decisions about the purchase and deployment of digital technology for learning.

Our Response:

The vast majority of provider capital investment is made by providers as autonomous institutions, whether or not with Government funding. We strongly encourage the sector to consider how to incorporate education technology into its capital investment decision-making process. In particular, we encourage the sector to ensure that any major build or refurbishment design incorporates support for online delivery. We will encourage this approach through other areas of our response to the FELTAG report, below.

With regard to online delivery, Jisc will help providers to undertake cost-benefit analysis, total cost of ownership and return-on-investment assessments before making decisions on the purchase of digital technology.

Recommendation:

Investment 2: Providers should aim to provide industry-standard technological infrastructure (including broadband resilience) to maximise the effective use of learning technology.

Our Response:

BIS has made funds available to help Further Education providers to upgrade the resilience of broadband connectivity. Over 120 providers have signed up and BIS is working with Jisc and the AoC to implement the first tranche of upgrades, widening access to Eduroam and enhancing access to data and research resources developed by Jisc.

Jisc has also agreed to ensure that delivery options are widened to make full use of the increased capacity and that resilience will be made available through Jisc's broadband network, Janet. Jisc will explore how this facility can be introduced alongside the upgrading of bandwidth and resilience of broadband connections through the recent funding initiative for Jisc's broadband network.

Recommendations

Investment 3: Create a Technology Exemplar Network using a 'hub and spoke' model, and link to Jisc's RSCs.

Investment 5: Exploit opportunities for low-cost collective licensing for shareable online content.

Our Response:

The Education and Training Foundation's learning technologies support programme (see the Capacity and Capability of FE and Skills Providers section for further information) will create networks and communities of practice to share resources and innovations in the effective use of learning technologies. This will involve training providers, employers, Local Enterprise Partnerships, schools, Higher Education institutions and other educational entities.

In addition, Jisc is working to align its regional entities with a proposed Technology Exemplar Network. Jisc will ensure that every aspect of its organisation has an opportunity to support such developments including its regional presence, connectivity support via Jisc's Janet broadband network and project support and facilitation by its specialist staff.

More widely, Jisc is continuing to identify more opportunities for online collective licences, drawing in sector stakeholders for programme design, assessment of project proposals, support for projects and evaluation of outcomes and impact.

Recommendations

Investment 6: Ensure the Technology Strategy Board's (TSB) innovation funding for digital technology, as agreed in BIS's International Strategy, materialises. Encourage the TSB to develop greater synergy and alliances with providers.

Our Response:

The Technology Strategy Board is working with BIS in a number of areas, including the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) and Jisc TechDis's assistive technology programme in 2013, which delivered two development competitions. The 'Ready Steady STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics)' and 'Good to Go' competitions asked technology developers and designers to invent new products to help those with disabilities and learning difficulties gain independence and access to work, training and education.

In May 2014 the TSB and BIS opened the 'Learning Technologies: Design for Impact' programme with a design phase funding commitment of up to £1.1m to stimulate innovation in education technology. This will focus on excellent design to improve learning products, services or business models and to encourage greater collaboration between technology supply-side businesses and education partners. Solutions will be based on the needs of learners and teachers. They will be easy to use and support good educational practices. Throughout this programme, the TSB will develop greater synergies and alliances with providers and FELTAG member organisations, including the Association of Colleges, with Jisc supporting the work through the Janet broadband network and its regional entities.

Regulation

Recommendations:

Regulation 1: Ensure Ofqual's review of the regulation of Vocational Qualifications and other associated regulatory developments supports, and does not hinder, the use of digital technology in teaching, learning and assessment of regulated qualifications. (See Ofqual's Corporate Plan 2013 - 2016).

Regulation 2: Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB) and Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) to work with Ofqual and others to increase awareness of the optimal uses of digital learning technology and develop confidence to use it in assessment and quality assurance in the awarding industry.

Regulation 4: Encourage awarding bodies to increase the amount of e-assessment across Further Education, including for apprenticeship qualifications developed with industry partners - aim for half of all VET assessments to be online from 2018/19.

Regulation 5: Awarding bodies to explore the use of "open badges" to accredit learning in virtual environments and digital skills.

Our Response:

Ofqual is responsible for oversight of Awarding Organisations and their qualifications. Qualifications need to use the most appropriate approaches to assessment to meet their purpose and promote confidence in them. As Ofqual revises its approach to regulation, and its expectations of Awarding Organisations, it will work with them and the Further Education and Skills sector to remove or avoid regulatory barriers that inhibit or undermine the use of e-assessment.

We agree with the aim of increasing the amount of e-assessment, but until we have done further work in this area, we cannot be sure that a target of 50% of all assessments to be online will be appropriate. Some qualifications are likely to require the demonstration of in-person competency by learners in order to be properly assessed. At present, we do not know the number of vocational qualifications for which, because of this physical aspect, online assessment might not be suitable, or the proportion of overall assessments that they represent. We also need to make a thorough assessment of the likely impact of a move to greater online assessment (both generally and on equality grounds) to ensure that no-one will be disadvantaged by such a change.

We will work with Ofqual, Awarding Organisations, employers and learners to identify sectors for which online assessment will be particularly suitable, and develop a programme to increase its use. We will also look at the extent to which Apprenticeship 'trailblazers' use on-line assessment and the lessons we might learn from this. It is quite plausible that in certain sectors we may be able to set targets *higher* than the 50% FELTAG has suggested.

In broad terms, the conferring of an Open Badge on a learner is similar to the award of a qualification certificate, and the same quality standards must be ensured. The emerging opportunities offered by Open Badges in the areas of peer assessment, employer partnership, learning analytics and the engagement of learners means that it should be considered in learning technology at various levels. We will encourage Awarding Organisations, Ofqual and Ofsted to be aware of the potential of this technology.

Awarding Organisations need to be confident that evidence is produced by the learner under assessment before they make an award, and Ofqual will review its regulatory approach as Awarding Organisations develop innovative ways to make awards and communicate this to learners and others.

The Government's apprenticeship reform programme is based on employers being more directly involved in the design and delivery of assessments that ensure that apprentices are occupationally competent at the end of the programme. We have set out an expectation that they will use a range of assessment methods including using online assessment. Groups of 'trailblazer' employers are currently working through their proposed assessment approaches for delivery during academic years 14/15 and 15/16. We will be approving their assessment approaches in due course and expect the use of online assessment to be part of their approach, and anticipate that this will include the use of electronic portfolios.

Recommendations:

Regulation 3: Ofsted's inspection framework to include a requirement for all providers to explicitly embed learning technology in its teaching and learning strategy. Ofsted to increase understanding of quality and effectiveness of technology deployed by providers. Comprehensive training to be provided to Ofsted inspectors to enable them to identify good practice and evaluate the effectiveness of deployed learning technology.

Regulation 6: Ofsted to include a new judgment, 'Capacity to Innovate using learning technology ' or include this under Leadership and Management in the Common Inspection Framework.

Capability and Capacity of FE and Skills Providers 2: All providers to have a learning technology strand in their teaching, learning and assessment strategy, which will form part of Ofsted's inspection framework.

Learners 2: Increasing learner influence in each provider's teaching and learning strategy: in Ofsted's Learner View survey include a technology-enabled personal learning-related question.

Our Response:

Ofsted supports FELTAG's suggested additional question to Ofsted's Learner View survey: 'I am enabled and empowered to use technology and online resources to support my learning'. We intend this to be added to the questionnaire from September 2014. We also accept the recommendation that Ofsted should increase its training and guidance for inspectors around education technology. We will support and encourage Ofsted to undertake the above within its inspection programme.

It should be noted that Ofsted does not have a preferred learning style and measures outcomes rather than methods. Where learning technology has a positive impact on outcomes for learners, or where learning technology has a positive effect on teaching and learning and is successfully rolled out across a Further Education and Skills provider, this will be recognised under the relevant judgment - whether outcomes for learners, the effectiveness of teaching learning and assessment, or the quality of leadership and management.

Ofsted therefore does not consider that an additional judgement of 'Capacity to Innovate using learning technology' is needed in the streamlined Common Inspection Framework (CIF). This is because the use of learning technology is already covered sufficiently elsewhere in the CIF under the above-mentioned areas (to reiterate: outcomes for learners; the effectiveness of teaching learning and assessment; or the quality of leadership and management).

Indeed, Ofsted already evaluates the quality and effectiveness of technologies deployed by providers and has taken a number of other steps to promote improvement in this area. In October 2013 it published the Virtual Learning Environment e-learning portfolio, a suite of materials on Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) reflecting what inspectors have seen on inspection, or as the result of visits and research, and offers resources and ideas for those looking to improve their Virtual Learning Environments. In February 2014, Ofsted and the AoC completed two joint workshops with colleges on the impact of online teaching and learning.

Ofsted considers that there is more it can do to drive up quality in this area and increase the focus on the appropriate use of education technology. Ofsted inspectors will therefore be provided with clearer guidance on how to judge and report on the effective use of technology to enhance learning in addition to continued training of inspectors to keep them 'current'. This is a key priority for Ofsted and will enable inspectors to identify good practice and evaluate the effectiveness of deployed learning technologies. It will include training to understand the potential of differing applications and systems and to highlight good practice seen among Further Education and Skills providers and elsewhere. Where appropriate, other bodies will be invited to help with this work.

Funding

Recommendations:

Funding 1: The funding system must fully support the adoption of new digital technology and learning methods. It must challenge and adapt its quality and success measures in accordance with the leading edge in the Further Education sector.

Funding 2: The funding methodology should encourage 'learning presence' not 'physical attendance'.

Funding 3: Raise the Skills Funding Agency's awareness of courses that maximise effective use of digital technology in learning and assessments.

Our Response:

We accept the need for a fit-for-purpose regulatory and funding system for the Further Education and Skills system that is outcome-based and recognises learner progression, learner destinations and achievement and retention. For adult learners BIS is currently developing a suite of wider measures of success which will show learner destinations, progression, and earnings-change by provider and qualification levels. We are engaging with the sector on how these measures will be defined and used and will be publishing these measures as experimental data in July 2014. DfE has recently consulted on a wide range of performance measures for providers of education and training for 16-19 year olds. The Government's response was published on 27 March 2014, where a full range of outcome-based performance measures for the 16-19 age group was confirmed.

We will ensure that information on performance meets Open Data standards and will explore the use of new business intelligence tools to improve accessibility and user experience. Jisc is already orienting its development work in this area to engage directly with the needs of employers and the Further Education and Skills sector.

We will also ensure that the funding regime more effectively supports the delivery of online programmes and from 2014/15 we will introduce an online only funding rate. During 2014/15 the Skills Funding Agency will work with a small number of Awarding Organisations, employers and providers to take forward 'online-only trailblazers'. We will invite 'expressions of interest' to be a part of the 'online-only trailblazers,' which will initially be focused on vocational qualifications. The 'trailblazers' will allow us to understand better the funding and audit implications of online delivery and how we can move away from a system based exclusively on 'contract and contact' to a system that is adaptive and more responsive to the use of technology in the learning process without a reduction in quality. We want the 'trailblazers' to be innovative and open so that we can learn more about delivery and costs. While we will focus initially on vocational qualifications we will, as part of the broader reforms around provision announced in 'Getting the Job Done', look at how we can support online delivery in programmes which are *not* built around a single substantial vocational qualification. For instance, looking at provision offered as part of the offer for the unemployed or for adult learners working at lower levels. Leading on from the 'trailblazers' we will look to prioritise those vocational qualifications which meet a threshold of online content through our business rules for approving vocational qualifications for funding. We recognise that we may initially need to incentivise the take-up of these qualifications through a differentiated, preferential rate. We will use the 'trailblazers' to determine what the threshold for online content will be for a qualification to be approved and assigned the online rate.

We are also exploring how more new providers could enter the system. Building on our existing approach of an open, competitive and diverse provider base that includes providers, training organisations and the third sector, we are looking at how we might bring greater diversity and innovation to the provision of adult skills. We know that many providers are already developing, using and investing in technology and online learning; we want to share the good practice that already exists in the sector but also see how we can encourage more providers to offer learners the facility to learn anytime, anywhere. Together with the 'online-only trailblazers', referenced above, the Agency has already put in place a facility to collect information about online learning.

For 2014/15 a new field has been added to the Individual Learner Record (ILR) specification through which to collect the proportion of online delivery across six bands ranging from 0% to 100%. As well as the information from the ILR we will also look at how we can take a 'temperature check' of those providers on the Register of Training Organisations to understand what the current baseline might be for online delivery and how and when we will be able to raise this baseline as we move towards the starting gate of a minimum of 10% of publicly-funded programmes with a wholly online component by 2015/16.

We are also aware that there will be a need to support providers in assessing their capability and capacity for online delivery as well as further embedding technology in the learning process. To do this we will make available continuing professional development opportunities for providers engaged in the Agency's trailblazers.

Recommendation:

Funding 4: Mandate the inclusion in every publicly-funded learning programme from 2015/16 of a 10% wholly-online component, with incentives to increase this to 50% by 2017/2018. This should apply to all programmes unless a good case is made for why this is not appropriate to a particular programme.

Our Response:

Revisions to current Guided Learning Hours (GLH) definitions will encourage providers to take forward the development of high-quality online learning programmes and increase the proportion of online learning in all programme delivery.

We welcome and strongly encourage providers to increase the amount of on-line learning in their programmes to create a 'blend' between face-to-face and online delivery.

During 2014/15 the Skills Funding Agency will support 'online-only trailblazers' which will start us moving towards the 10% standard minimum. We know that online learning and assessment will not be appropriate for all learners and in all circumstances, but where it is appropriate we want to ensure it becomes the norm rather than the exception and that it enables high quality and high demand vocational education and training to be delivered in a way which is more responsive to both learner circumstance and employer need. For 2015/16, together with an online-only funding rate, the Agency will also introduce a business rule for the approval of qualifications for funding focusing on an online threshold. This threshold will be confirmed in Autumn 2014 together with the online-only funding rate. As indicated in the section on regulation, the Agency will look to the work of Ofqual and Awarding Organisations and take account of those Awarding Organisations that are already producing qualifications that can be delivered online.

We recognise that some providers are already delivering GCSE courses 100% online and some, like Sheffield College, have been doing this for over a decade. We need to better understand which programmes and which learners will benefit most from online learning. We also anticipate that online delivery may not always be appropriate or suitable for all types of learners or all types of programmes.

Jisc is committed to providing resources, training and project activity to bring the above aspiration to fruition. It will support providers with resources and guidance on the use of digital technologies to improve access to providers' programmes, as well as to freely-available resources on the Internet for those with physical, perceptual or learning difficulties, including Access YouTube. Access YouTube is Jisc's development of YouTube, which allows learners with limited or no vision, or who have other disabilities, to access learning resources on YouTube, including provider learning channels, while protecting them from unsuitable or offensive material. This service reaches over 25,000 users in the UK each month and is being piloted in schools in Holland, with other versions in other languages planned.

Learners

Recommendation:

Learners 1: Scaling up the Digital Leader: empowering learners with digital technology by encouraging participation in 'Digital Leader'-type schemes.

Our Response:

We expect Jisc and the Education and Training Foundation to develop and support the digital leader and digital champion projects that have been so successful in schools and in the Further Education and Skills sector. In response to this recommendation, Jisc is already undertaking a major piece of work on learner innovation and is committed to working with digital learners via its 'Changing the Learning Landscape' project, as well as on digital illiteracies, which will include phases of work that will involve Further Education learners, providers and teachers.

Recommendation:

Learners 3: Assistive Technology: Providers need to raise levels of awareness and use of Assistive Technology. Link to Jisc's Techdis.

Our Response:

Jisc and its service Jisc TechDis have been working closely with NATSPEC to draw on their expertise in the Further Education and Skills Programme. Jisc will encourage providers to make better use of its accessibility and inclusion products and ensure that the sector has every opportunity to use the tools and expertise across Jisc that relate to accessibility concerns, including the addition of sector-developed resources and related embedding and promotional activity.

BIS is currently part way through two Small Business Research Initiative competitions, jointly funded by BIS and the Technology Strategy Board, which aim to give learners with disabilities or learning difficulties much greater independence and access to education and future employment. Winners of these competitions are now being supported to develop products for the market that will enhance the ability of learners with disabilities to make best use of digital technologies and enable providers to offer appropriate support.

£2.6m has already been provided over the last two years to fund product development, training resources and web services, including the Jisc Tech-Dis Toolbox, new voices for text to speech software and tools to enable learners to cope with unfamiliar environments.

Capacity and Capability of Further Education and Skills Providers

Recommendation:

Capacity and Capability of Further Education and Skills Providers 1: Encourage the development of programmes to professionalise Further Education governors, principals', managers' and teachers' use of learning technology, building on the best current models.

Our Response:

Governors are responsible for setting the strategic direction of the provider. Principals, chief executives and senior management teams (SMTs) are responsible for implementing the strategic plans that realise the Governors' vision. There is currently a lack of governors with sufficient experience and vision about how technology changes the way people live and learn in the digital age. We strongly encourage senior managers to provide enough time for training and to embed the use of learning technology into their teaching and learning strategy.

We expect senior management teams to recognise that time will be required to determine which areas of curricula can be optimised for online delivery and how this might be done. Time will also be needed on an ongoing basis to train staff to create and write pedagogically-sound online modules and to understand how innovative developments in education technology can best be used.

The Education and Training Foundation is leading work on professional development with, and on behalf of the sector. Though its competitive tendering arrangements it has been inviting proposals to develop a major programme to support and develop the use of learning technologies by the sector's workforce - its leaders, managers, teachers, trainers, and support staff. This will focus on four themes:

- the development and provision of high quality resources to support leadership teams to develop their own knowledge, awareness and understanding of how to secure improved outcomes for all learners through the effective use of learning technology, as well as the development of 'whole organisation' approaches to incorporating digital pedagogies within curriculum design and planning/teaching and learning strategies.

- support to enhance teachers' and trainers' confidence and expertise in the effective use of learning technologies, including the development of modules in teacher training qualifications and certification through continuing professional development programmes to recognise and reward achievement.

- support to improve the capacity and capability of technical teams to support emerging technology and early adopters.

- support for 'two way street' collaborative arrangements between employers and providers including securing access to and use of industry-standard technologies within vocational programmes and exploring the potential to develop the vocational equivalent of Massive Open Online Courses, as proposed by the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning.

In addition, Jisc will make available its management and governance resources and delivery mechanisms to support the Education and Training Foundation and providers. Jisc will also make available its new teacher education resources and will continue to fund activity to sustain existing work and extend it in light of this FELTAG recommendation.

Recommendations:

Capacity and Capability of Further Education and Skills Providers 3: Raise profile of appropriate and relevant accreditation schemes, such as ALT's CMALT, which accredits the learning technology capability of staff, and the RAPTA self-assessment tool, which assesses how effectively an organisation uses learning technology.

Capacity and Capability of Further Education and Skills Providers 4: Jisc to consider the realignment of its Regional Support Centres (RSCs) to play a bigger role in Further Education; Further Education providers to strengthen their relationship with the RSCs.

Capacity and Capability of Further Education and Skills Providers 5: Colleges to simultaneously run a national annual 'Learning Tech Development Day', centrally-coordinated by Jisc's RSCs with streamed Ministerial input, where tutors and learners are trained. Include REal Deal /TechDis In Book - Social Media platform for learners with difficulties; use this to spearhead provision to permanently allow disabled learners to communicate across provider institutions.

Our Response:

A major reshaping project is underway to strengthen and realign Jisc's Regional Support Centres. Their regional presence supports providers and is underpinned by specific subject matter expertise, coordinated and supported at a UK level to play a bigger role in Further Education. We expect Further Education providers to enhance their relationship with the RSCs in order to strengthen their own capability and credibility.

The Education and Training Foundation will develop a provider self-assessment tool with sector representatives, including practitioners, aimed at benchmarking providers' capability and skills in using and applying learning technology and identifying opportunities to support and share best practice.

Jisc will take a strategic role in initiating and supporting a Learning Tech Development Day and will work with key stakeholders, including membership and umbrella bodies such as AoC, AELP, NIACE and the Tinder Foundation, to bring this proposal to fruition. Discussions have already started with these bodies and Jisc is determined to take this forward.

Recommendations:

Capacity and Capability of Further Education and Skills Providers 7: All Further Education sector staff should ideally have minimum basic online capabilities and be on a progression path towards more advanced online tutoring skills.

Capacity and Capability of Further Education and Skills Providers 10: 'Teach-the-teachers' how to design on-line learning materials on their own websites using open-source packages.

Capacity and Capability of Further Education and Skills Providers 11: Mandatory (practical) module on all teacher training courses on effectively using digital technology tools for teaching and learning, including online.

Our Response:

New professional development awards delivered online will help to support this initiative. They will be referenced to the updated professional standards for teachers in the Further Education and Skills sector published by the Education and Training Foundation. Focus will be given to the development of new teachers.

We welcome the development of the UfI Trust's Vocational Open Online Course, which aims to provide a blended learning package to develop the skills of the Further Education workforce. We understand the first of a series of modules will be available in September 2014. We also welcome the work of the Tinder Foundation, which will make available its 'Learn My Way' programmes for the Further Education workforce.

Employers

Recommendations:

Employers 1: Employers should play a more integrated role in the development and delivery of Further Education curricula. These employers should specify which digital skills they need.

Employers 2: Identify to what extent digital technology can help get greater engagement of employers in the design and delivery of learning.

Employers 4: Employers and Further Education providers should work together to scale up existing 'best practice' learning technology network-building.

Employers 6: Consider how SMEs can build the digital capability of their staff and discuss findings with a partnership formed from local FEIs and Local Enterprise Partnerships.

Capacity and Capability of Further Education and Skills Providers 12: The Education and Training Foundation to model ways to help Further Education providers and employers to create Learning Technology Innovation Partnerships with Local Enterprise Partnerships.

Our Response:

Awarding Organisations need to continue to work with employers to develop customer-centric qualifications, and employers need to know which digital skills will be of benefit to their businesses.

We will ask the Education and Training Foundation to create learning technology innovation partnerships with Local Enterprise Partnerships and explore ways to forge better partnerships between Further Education providers and new and emerging digital technology industries. Jisc will support this activity through infrastructure support and its regional support and advice. Jisc is also currently exploring how employers, particularly those providing training, can be supported through the Jisc network and associated services such as Eduroam.

We recognise that it is important for providers and employers, especially small businesses, to build the digital capability of their staff and to work closely together to develop and deliver Further Education curricula. We will strongly encourage the Education and Training Foundation, as well as individual providers, to facilitate the creation of local, innovative partnerships.

Online English, Maths and ESOL

English and maths ability can make a real difference to a person's life, both in terms of employment outcomes and their general well-being. This is why BIS is exploring how innovative uses of learning technology can be used to help people develop these skills for a range of different learner groups. By harnessing the advantages of learning technology, we will be able to find new ways to make learning more accessible, engaging and personalised. There are already good examples in the Further Education sector of how technology is being used to enhance learning and teaching. We want this best practice to become more widespread.

In the autumn, we will launch a pilot to test the impact on skills and employment outcomes of mandating new 18-21 year old Jobseeker's Allowance claimants with English and maths below Level 2 to English and maths training. The training offered will either be blended with some face-to-face tutor support or purely online with virtual tutor support, and is expected to be delivered by consortia of Skills Funding Agency-registered providers and learning technology companies. This pilot will give 10,000 young jobseekers in Kent, Mercia, Devon, Cornwall and Somerset an opportunity to engage with learning in a different way and to work towards either a Functional Skills or GCSE qualification. We want to change how learning feels for these young people and give them a real sense of owning their learning journey.

In addition to these pilots, we have begun to further our understanding of the value of technology-rich approaches for successful adult English, maths and ESOL learning. A literature review is already underway and the findings will inform a series of demonstration projects that we will use to identify the conditions under which online English and maths provision could be scaled up to increase capacity within the Further Education sector and bring in new learners. The projects will also contribute to the development of material to build provider capacity and capability in online learning and the use of various learning technologies.

Finally, we also intend to test the impact of mandating new 18-21 year old JSA claimants with English and Maths skills below Level 2 to English and Maths training that is predominantly online.

Annex A: Glossary and Acronyms for some of the words used in this response

AELP: the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, a key trade association for vocational learning and employment providers.

ALT: Association of Learning Technology, an important membership organisation in the learning technology field whose purpose is to ensure that use of learning technology is effective and informed by research and practice.

AoC: Association of Colleges, a membership organisation set up by colleges to act as a collective voice across further education, sixth form, tertiary and specialist providers across the UK.

Assistive Technology: refers to 'any device or system that allows an individual to perform a task they would otherwise be unable to do, or increases the ease and safety with which the task can be performed' (Royal Commission, 1999).

CMALT: a peer-based professional accreditation scheme developed by ALT to enable people whose work involves learning technology to have their experience and capabilities certified by peers and demonstrate that they are taking a committed and serious approach to their professional development.

Digital Champion and Digital Leaders: digital leaders in schools are learners who are appointed and trained to provide support for using of education technology in teaching and learning within schools. Digital Champions are appointed by each European Union member state to help the European Commission and the member states to promote the benefits of a digital society. They also advise the European Commission on the implementation of the Digital Agenda for Europe.

Eduroam: ('education roaming') a secure, worldwide roaming access service developed for the international research and education community to allow students, researchers and staff from participating institutions to obtain Internet connectivity across campus, including when visiting other participating institutions using their wireless broadband facilities.

Janet/broadband: Jisc's Janet network connects UK universities, Further Education providers, Research Councils, Specialist Colleges and Adult and Community Learning providers. It also provides connections between the Regional Broadband Consortia to facilitate the DfE initiative for a national schools' network. Over 18 million end-users are currently served by the Janet network.

Jisc: an educational charity that supports the use of digital technologies in UK Higher and Further Education and Skills to maximise the use of modern digital empowerment, content and connectivity.

MOOCs: Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) aimed at unlimited participation and open access via the web. In addition to traditional course materials such as videos, readings, and problem sets, MOOCs provide interactive user forums that help build a community for learners and practitioners. MOOCs are a recent development in distance education which emerged in 2012. A variant of MOOCs are VOOCs, Vocational Open Online Courses focused on training and employment. The UfI Trust is sponsoring a VOOC for training and teaching staff in the Further Education and Skills sector to help improve their digital skills and literacy for learning and teaching.

NATSPEC: the Association of National Specialist Colleges is a membership association for Specialist Colleges. Specialist Colleges enable young people with a learning difficulty or disability to become more independent and to learn in an environment with enhanced personal support.

NIACE: National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education is an educational charity in England and Wales, dedicated to promoting adult learning.

Online centres: there are more than 5,000 UK online centres, which help people to make the most of digital technology.

Online learning: definitions that emerged of online learning during the FELTAG project included the following - qualifications that have the capacity to be delivered online where there is the facility to undertake learning any time and any place and offer greater independence to both employer and learner; a structured learning activity that uses technology with intranet/Internet-based tools and resources as the primary delivery method for content, instruction, research, assessment, and communication in which instruction and content are delivered primarily via the intranet/Internet; where the majority of learning takes place away from a provider location, such as a learner's home or workplace, and there is no direct material physical contact between the learner and the teacher/tutor. This learning could be delivered to the learner electronically, such as through the internet, or through the use of learning materials, such as work books given to the learner. Finally, learning which involves assessment of competencies in the workplace by the provider, or any form of 'homework' set by a teacher/tutor, would not be considered to be distance learning.

Open Badges: a digital reward relating to an achievement which can be stored inside a student's 'digital backpack/portfolio'. The badges can be achieved by completing tasks and goals set by an issuer, such as a learning provider.

RAPTA: 'Review And Planning of Technology in Action,' a tool that supports strategic decision-making by learning providers around the deployment of technology in the context of Ofsted's Common Inspection Framework.

REal Deal/TechDis–In Book: a self-assessment service for libraries and other provider services that enable them to evaluate how accessible their content and services are for learners with disabilities.

Jisc RSCs: Regional Support Centres across the UK which help learning providers in the Further Education and Skills sector to improve their performance and efficiency through the use of technology.

SMT: Senior Management Team responsible for the operations of providers.

Jisc TechDis: a Jisc advisory service on technologies that explores and promotes inclusive practices, resources and advice for learning and teaching in UK Higher and Further Education and Skills, as well as independent and specialist providers.

Tinder Foundation: a not-for-profit social enterprise that focuses on digital inclusion and learning and community action through digital resources.

TSB: Technology Strategy Board, whose purpose is to accelerate economic growth by stimulating and supporting business-led innovation.

Ufi Trust: a charity created out of the sale of Learndirect. The UfI Trust provides funding for initiatives that improve the accessibility and delivery of adult learning through the use of technology.

VET: acronym for vocational education and training, a term used to designate education and training provision focused on employment, and which includes practical and management skills used in work environments.