



**UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE  
BIRMINGHAM**

# **Digital Information Technology Strategy 2022 – 2025**

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## 1. Executive Summary

This strategic document sets out University College Birmingham's Digital Information Technology transformation vision and plan for 2022 to 2025. This document details how the University's IT Services will transform its information technology infrastructure into a modern, up-to-date, resilient, flexible and durable architecture, to underpin the operational running of the University. This strategy will align with the University Learning and Teaching Strategy 2021-2024.

The highlight of this strategy will be the fundamental change and transformation required to develop solutions to enhance the student experience across the University through technology. This will include the vision of a "Cloud First" approach and managed services to reflect a more flexible learning environment for the students. A key part of the transformation will be to standardise technological platforms and centralise procurement and support services.

The transformational plan will require cultural shift which will focus on partnerships, collaboration and shared outcomes across the University. This strategy will empower students and staff through digital technologies and services across the infrastructure and platforms.

The University's strategy will be to deliver a robust, resilient and scalable infrastructure which will enable students and staff to access IT services at any time, any place and on any device.

The emphasis of this strategy will be placed on putting the student first, with a digital journey which will be seamless and focus on students' needs and the enhancement of the student learning experience.

Education is undergoing fundamental change, with a shift to blended learning and more innovative teaching methods. The University's strategic actions must be able to withstand cultural and organisational change to continue to deliver exceptional services in an ever-changing educational environment.

This Digital Strategy will be delivered over a 3-year period. The transformation will focus on the following areas:

- The assessment of the current infrastructure, filling the gaps where appropriate, to ensure IT services are operational and resilient in a 24/7 environment.
- The optimisation of systems and applications, focusing on legacy infrastructure and modernising via updates and upgrades.
- The transformation to a cloud-based, student centred digital infrastructure to enhance operations across the University.

The existing infrastructure will be transformed, modernised and updated. Systems will be enhanced and modified for a greater customer experience and to ensure security compliance at all times. The University's key platforms will be hosted off-premise where appropriate, ensuring the ability for operations to function effectively.

This strategy will be at the heart of the student experience and will be student centred, with a focus on enabling wider participation, innovation and partnership. Digital technologies will be at the core of everything we do. We will ensure that the appropriate use of technology enhances our learning and teaching, facilitates innovative research, and improves efficiency in our management and administration activities. Facilitating new ways of delivery, it will expand our current offerings into new markets.

We have already begun our digital journey by introducing new digital, student-centred learning cloud-based platforms. These services are currently limited, and digital behaviours and services need to be embraced and expanded across the IT infrastructure and across the University.

University College Birmingham will aspire to be a digitalised university, providing a class-leading infrastructure, and with a student-centred approach to drive the value of digitisation. The University needs to compete not only locally, but nationally and internationally. This digital journey will build on the state on the art University campuses and innovate further with technology.

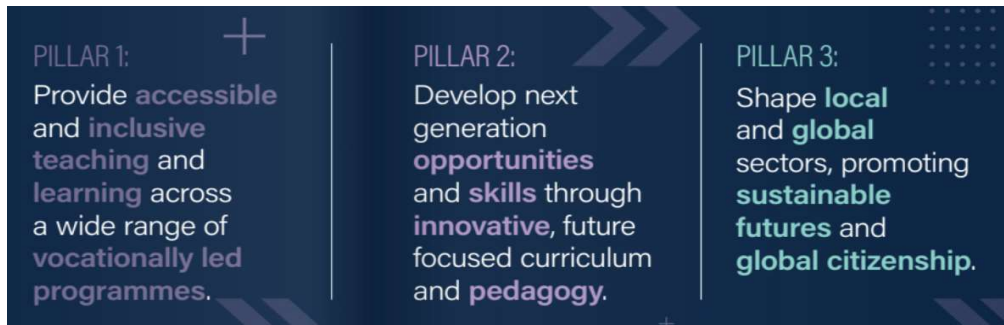
This Strategy outlines how the University will achieve the digital transformation vision, through partnerships, collaboration and innovation, which align with the Corporation’s mission;

#### ***Our mission statement***

*To promote and provide the opportunity for participation in the learning process by those with the ambition and commitment to succeed and to maintain a learning community that meets the diverse needs of our students, the economy and society at large.*

#### **University Corporation**

During the period of this strategic evolution, we will re-evaluate maturing technologies to enable the University to provide a more flexible, agile and responsive IT infrastructure. This Digital Strategy will evolve along with the University’s Learning and Teaching Strategy, aligning with the three pillars:



- University systems will be designed to optimise access and reduce barriers, ensuring all students have the opportunity to engage in educational activities through technology.
- The University will integrate technology as part of the student learning experience, through continued innovation and the introduction of new digital technologies to enhance learning.
- Technology will continue to contribute to reducing our carbon footprint and promoting environmental sustainability by adopting a cloud-first approach, reducing on-premise hardware systems.

The three pillars outline the future direction of learning and teaching at the University, and this Digital Strategy will align with this plan and will enable access and participation through the embracing of technology.

To meet the needs of our student cohort in an ever changing and evolving environment, we will ensure our digital journey follows this plan:

## 2. Digital Vision and Plan

- Digital technologies will be introduced into the University's academic provision, in line with the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy.
- A "Cloud first" approach will be the driving mechanism on the digital journey.
- A culture of innovation and research technologies will be encouraged, including the introduction of systems which enhance academic processes in a safe and secure environment.
- We will accelerate the use of virtual instruction and operations for a more flexible, blended approach.
- Technologies which are no longer conducive to the culture of the University and the student experience will be retired and replaced by more appropriate digital technologies.
- We will develop a digital system across architecture and platforms, in collaboration with stakeholders, focusing on the curriculum.
- We will use cyber security innovation designed to keep students, stakeholders and data safe and secure from external threats.
- We will encourage automation and a paperless environment for an eco-friendlier University.
- We will gradually phase out bespoke, in-house developed systems which pose a high risk to the University.
- We will provide students, staff and visitors with excellent access to digital services throughout the University campuses.
- We will promote inclusivity where deprivation impacts access to digital resources.

## 3. Commitments 2022 – 2025

Our Digital Strategy will be delivered via:

- The launch and re-branding of ITSU to **University's Digital IT Services**, supporting operations, academic structure and student-centred digital services.
- The promotion of collaboration in partnership to develop digital tools and operations.
- The raising of awareness of digital technologies across the University.
- The use of a Cloud-first strategy to integrate and streamline applications and systems.
- The consolidation of data, access, storage, security and governance. Data will be stored and managed according to GDPR guidelines, backed up to comply with disaster recovery policies and encrypted.
- The management of systems, applications and compliance with legal authorities.
- The development of the highly skilled IT Team into a more customer-centred service.

Investment in the digital infrastructure will be strategic and in line with University procedures and protocols, and will support efficiency and effectiveness. The IT services will provide cost savings where possible to ensure the service becomes more agile, and will take advantage of power saving technology wherever possible.

#### **4. Digital Experience for Students and Stakeholders**

- Digital innovation will be encouraged and facilitated to enhance the technological experience.
- Any barriers that exist and any accessibility issues will be removed and streamlined, further supporting collaboration and the provision of digital technological tools.
- Collaboration technologies will be established to enhance University operations, ensuring a positive experience for all.
- Technological infrastructure will be introduced, aligned with the modern University campuses.
- Digitalisation will be utilised to create a positive learning environment and culture.
- Research and investment in technologies will prepare students for future academic and employment opportunities.

Digital transformation will be core of our strategy to align technology with the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy. Current technology will be transformed and enhanced, facilitating innovation and improvements in the wider student experience across the University. Technology will drive and facilitate new teaching methods, and expand current and future facilities for the students and staff.

The digital journey has already begun by introducing new, innovative technologies, new cyber-security protocols and state of the art facilities across the University campuses.

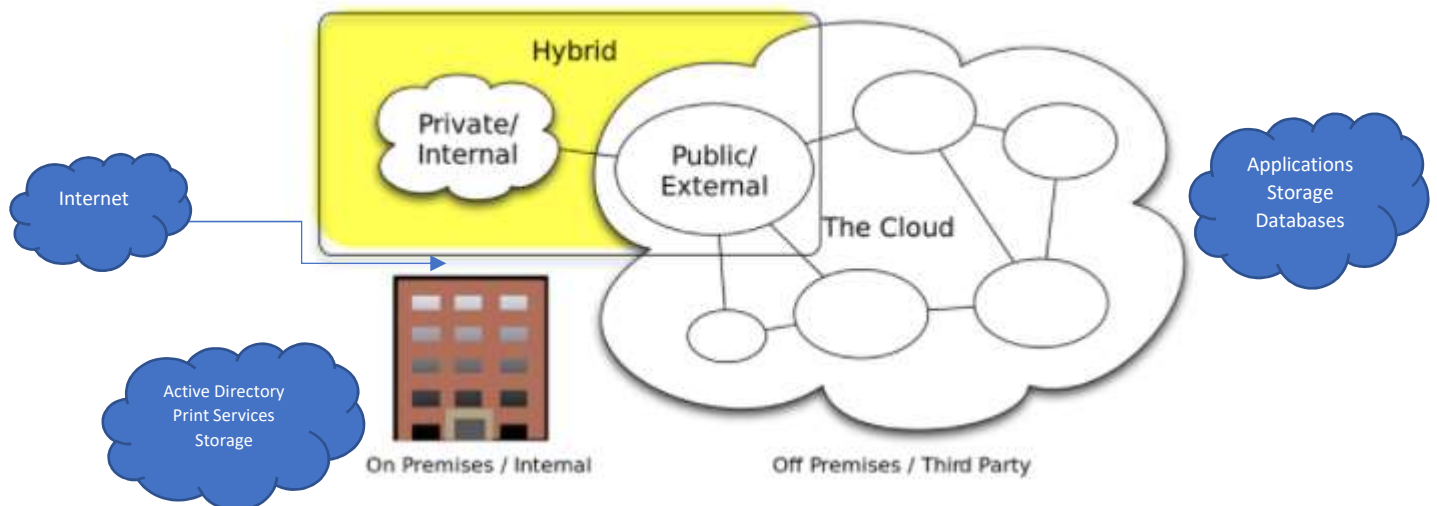
#### **5. Strategic Actions to Deliver Digital Enhancement**

- Current on-premise infrastructure will be assessed and transferred to the Cloud.
- Applications and systems will be synthesised, removing overhead burdens and current frustrations.
- The extensive data across the University will be consolidated onto a uniform platform facilitating better ease of access and delivery.
- Innovative teaching methods and approaches, using advanced technological solutions, will be encouraged.
- Digital technologies will align with and adapt to an evolving educational programme of delivery.
- We will adopt a regime of infrastructure refresh, ensuring systems and applications are updated and remain in support, whilst not posing a risk to operations.
- We will develop and transform to a digital printing environment for all, both students and staff, to minimise the use of paper and reduce the University's carbon footprint.
- We will remove IT as a frustration and a burden, promoting a more enhanced and positive experience.
- We will review the strategy regularly and modify as appropriate to the needs of the University.

## 6. Strategic Timeline and Financial Costings

2022/23		2023/24		2024/25	
Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5	Phase 6
Cloud Assessment	Proof of Concept	Data Migration	Application Migration	Leverage Cloud Services	Optimisation
Architecture Assessment Secure Security Protocols Engage Cloud Partners Assess Costings Engage Stakeholders	Build Cloud Architecture Train IT Team on Cloud Technologies Pilot Project Testing Phase	Leverage Cloud Storage Options Migrate Infrastructure	Devise Migration Strategy Adopt Hybrid Solution Lift & Shift Operations Assess Operations Performance	Automation of Tasks High Availability Redundancy, Resilience & Scalable Efficiency of Systems	Monitoring Systems Re-engineering Systems Performance Uplift Utilisation
Estimated Financial Costs					
£150,000		£200,000		£200,000	

## Diagram of Proposed Cloud Solution



## 7. Performance Measures

The following will be measures of success on the digital transformation journey:

- Key performance indicators, reporting system downtime and accessibility.
- Availability of infrastructure at any place, any time and any device.
- Cyber security protocols to create a safe working environment for students and stakeholders with data security and integrity, and no data breaches.
- User satisfaction surveys to measure IT provision every 12 months.
- IT Service Management to use timeframes in closing out service requests and incidents.
- The delivery timescales of new technological solutions to meet the needs of the University operations.

## 8. Digital IT Services Mission

Our strategic objectives will be to ensure University students and staff are equipped with the technological digital tools which enhance learning and teaching.

- Digitalise Processes
- Train and Develop Staff
- Enhance and Nurture Student Experience

This digital strategy is the beginning of a new journey for the University, and will require commitment from all sections across all departments, schools and businesses. The strategy is ambitious and the roadmap will require development throughout the journey through to transformation. Emerging technologies will provide exciting opportunities to expand, grow and diversify operations and to build on current successes of the University. The direction of travel at this appropriate time is to safeguard the future of the University, especially in economic and socio-challenging times.

## 9. Strategic Alliance

We will work with our partners and the wider community to deliver exceptional educational services with technologies and form strategic alliances. The new, exciting partnership with Warwick University will open new avenues and knowledge-sharing with a world class institution, establishing good practice, which will benefit our students and teaching staff.



Our partnership with JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) will enable value for money in procurement, and the ability to share knowledge and technological trends across the educational sector. JISC's Janet Network (Joint Academic Network) will enable the University to access teaching and learning resources more efficiently with this high-speed network. This network has the capacity for modern, resource-hungry University customers, is scalable and highly secure.





Collaboration and strategic partnerships will be central to this strategy, enabling the development of a stronger University which supports delivery of services to our core customers. This collaboration will not only be internal with students and staff, but will extend outside the traditional boundaries of the University to suppliers, partners and industry.

#### **10. Strategic Governance**

The University's IT Committee has been established and includes members and representatives from across the University. This committee will act as the gatekeeper for digital IT services, and to provide advice and guidance to the Executive Management Team, and will ensure IT projects and activities are aligned to the strategic aims of the University.

- We will review and sign off new projects and activities, and prioritise activities according to the demands of the academic community.
- We will manage and control IT expenditure, ensuring value for money and review investments.
- We will standardise systems and protocols across the institution.
- We will align controls and protocols according to government guidelines; for example, the National Cyber Security Centre's advice regarding cyber security threats.
- We will collaborate and create partnerships University-wide, aligning to the Learning and Teaching Strategy.

We will work to establish an appropriate prioritisation and governance process that considers all investment initiatives across the University.

#### **11. Wider Participation and Engagement**

This strategy has been developed through consultation with our students and staff. It has drawn evidence and comments from the User Satisfaction Survey. The themes that emerged highlighted the direction of travel for technological transformation across the organisation, to ensure our customers have an enhanced experience of using technology within teaching and learning.

This digital strategy aims to improve the overall services the University provides to students and staff. The transition to a standardised and centralised technical estate will vastly enhance operations throughout the University, enhance learning and teaching and student experience through digital technology. This strategy will be updated through experience, the changing environment of technology and the needs of our stakeholders.