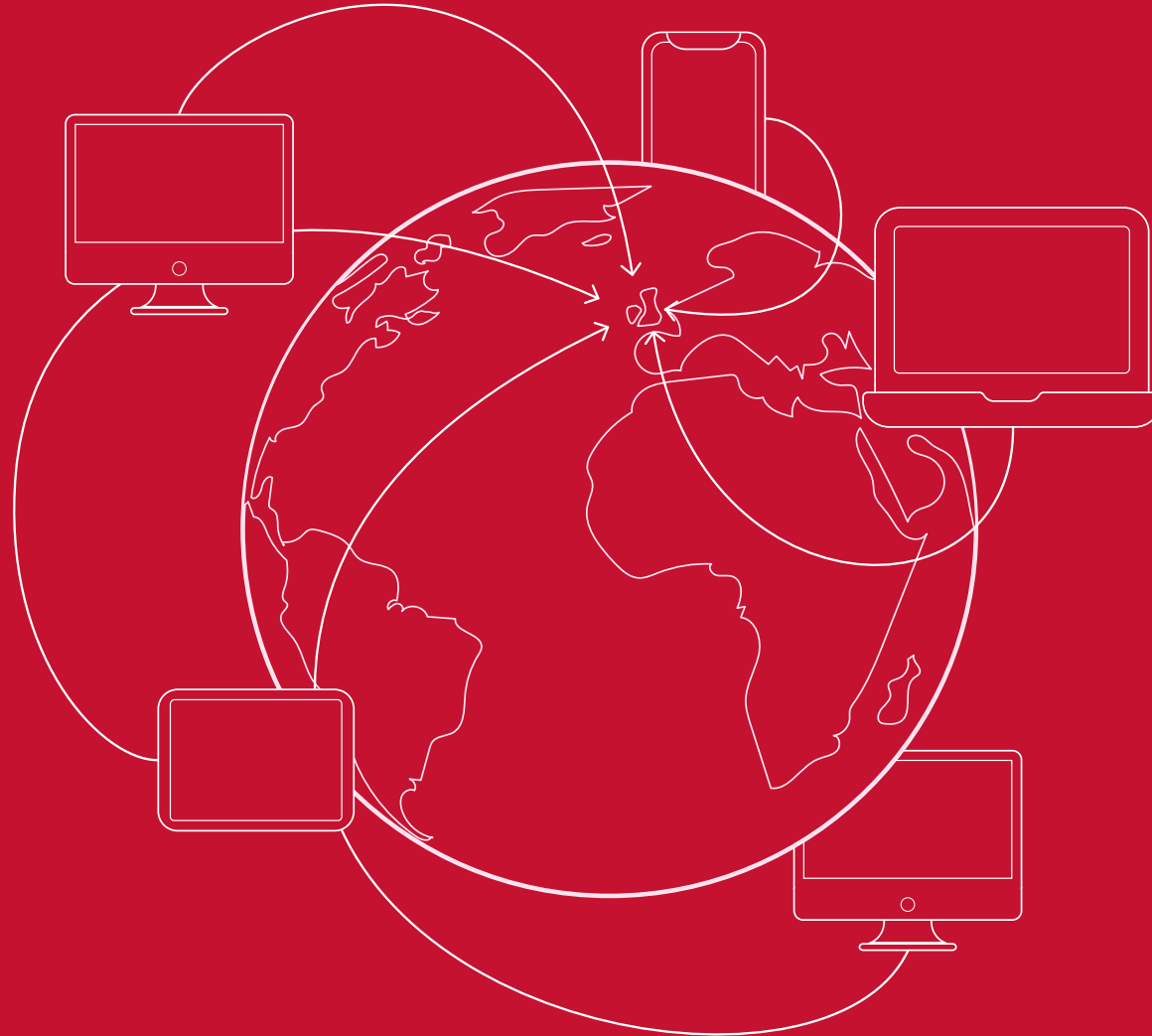


# Digital Education

Annual Report 2021



Digital Education Service  
July 2021

# Foreword

I'm delighted to introduce the first Digital Education Annual Report 2021.

As many colleagues will know, I've been a champion of digital education for many years, through my own research and teaching practice. During that time, I've seen digital education evolve into a core pillar of the University's approach to pedagogical practice and the learning experience for students.

I'm incredibly proud of the way colleagues have worked together to try new tools and ensure that students continued to learn throughout the pandemic.

The focus on digital education, which has taken place with the support of the Digital Education Service, means we are well-placed to accelerate those changes over the next 10 years.

I am encouraged by the progress we are making as a University and predict many exciting developments in the future.



**Neil Morris**

Deputy Vice-Chancellor  
Digital Transformation

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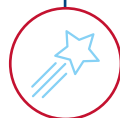
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# Welcome

Over the last year, we have experienced a profound cultural shift in digital education, which places online learning at the heart of how we teach our students. The ongoing impact of Covid-19 has caused all institutions to reflect on what is truly important to enable learning to happen and how we can rapidly evolve to meet the needs of a mobile student population.

In this first Digital Education Annual Report, we focus on activity from 2019/20 and 2020/21, reflect on the impact of Covid-19 and set the scene for a step change next year with the launch of our [Digital Education Service Strategy](#).

Over the past few years, the Digital Education Service (DES) has evolved from a small team of online learning specialists into a Service of over 90 professionals. The Service now combines expertise in online learning with digital education systems and professional services. As such, we are well-positioned to help the University approach digital education holistically, building a digital education ecosystem that puts excellence in student education at the heart of what we do.

Since March 2020, the University of Leeds has pivoted rapidly to embrace new ways of teaching, learning and assessing online. During this challenging time, the Service acted quickly to support academic colleagues with the move to online education, evaluating and implementing approaches for learning and teaching, reviewing existing digital education systems, embedding new tools where needed, and rapidly supporting the upskilling of thousands of staff and students to ensure they could utilise the tools available.

At the same time, our strong foundation in online learning has endured. Over the past two years we have worked closely with colleagues from across the University to develop 83 new modules, courses and resources. This includes a series of 15 courses on digital skills, delivered on the FutureLearn platform, attracting over 800,000 learners. Our relationship with Coursera continues to grow, focussing on the delivery of the Goldman Sachs Foundation 10,000 Women programme. We have also launched two new, fully online degrees – MSc Engineering Management and MSc Artificial Intelligence, working with the Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences and Pearson – with several further new fully online programmes in the pipeline.

Without a doubt, the past two years have shaped the new University of Leeds strategy. We have an ambitious vision for the future as a leader in innovative digital education. The Digital Education Service is proud to support this vision and next year will see an increased focus on growing our portfolio of fully online degrees, supporting blended learning

opportunities and enhancing collaboration with faculties, researchers, students, lifelong learners and external partners.

This has been a challenging period but I am incredibly proud of the way the DES team has risen to this challenge along with the rest of the University. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank colleagues and partners for working with us to achieve so much; next year, together, we will achieve even more.



**Carol Elston**  
Director  
Digital Education Service

# Impact and Achievements

## 2019 – 2021

The Digital Education Service (DES) saw huge growth during this period, increasing learner numbers, engagement and global reach.

Courses and modules delivered in partnership with the Digital Education Service, August 2019 - June 2021 (available on [FutureLearn](#), [Coursera](#) and [Minerva](#)).

August 2019 - June 2021:

**75**

courses on  
FutureLearn

**33**

courses on Coursera across  
3 languages  
(English, Brazilian Portuguese  
and Latin American Spanish)

**6**

discovery  
modules

**12**

fully online degree  
modules on Minerva

Over 2 million learners worldwide

TOP 10 COUNTRIES FOR  
ENROLMENTS ARE:



Enrolments from  
**236**  
**COUNTRIES**  
worldwide, truly  
international reach



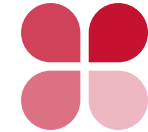
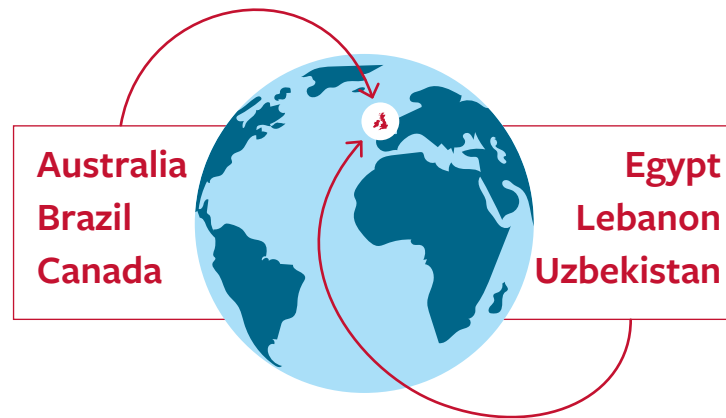


## 75 courses delivered on FutureLearn in 2020

Before the pandemic, in Dec 2019, the University of Leeds had **1,369,496 enrolments** across its courses on FutureLearn. By the end of 2020, this had increased by 60%, resulting in **2,191,856 enrolments**.

The number of students who enrol on a FutureLearn course before applying and enrolling on a University of Leeds course has almost doubled from 247 in 2019/20 to 459 in 2020/21.

Learners come from as far away as:



**16,944  
STUDENTS  
& STAFF**  
logged-in to PebblePad  
in March 2021



Over

**12,000**  
students have engaged  
with Top Hat content



**Food Science and Nutrition:  
From Farm to You**  
nominated as 'Best Online Classes  
of the Year' by Class Central, based  
on hundreds of learner reviews



**630,000  
minutes**  
of captioned content  
on Mediasite



Our courses are  
consistently rated  
**'EXCELLENT'**  
on Class Central



Our most successful course  
to date is 'Communication  
and Interpersonal Skills  
at Work' with over  
**100,000  
enrolments!**



2020 saw +395% increase in  
learners on FutureLearn as the  
impact of Covid-19 was seen  
in online learning

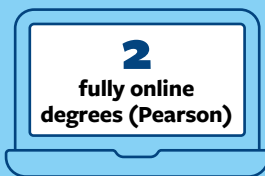
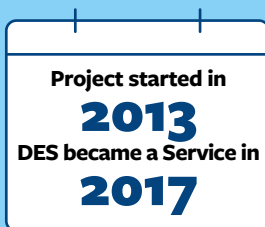


Over  
**4.5 million  
content  
views**  
on Mediasite

In January and February  
2021, the Digital Practice  
website saw an average of

**821%**  
**MONTHLY  
INCREASE IN  
TRAFFIC**  
(compared to January  
and February 2020)

The equivalent of  
**117 YEARS**  
of content has been created  
on Collaborate Ultra!



# Digital Education at Leeds

## What is Digital Education?

Digital Education covers the breadth of technology-enhanced learning - from short courses, modules and full degrees to online systems and tools. It is fully supported by a team of digital education and systems professionals across the Digital Education Service and championed by academics and professional staff across the University. The online courses we create and the tools and systems we adopt, cultivate and utilise are there to help staff and students alike, making it easy to access digital education across multiple platforms.

The Digital Education Service has grown rapidly in the last two years to support the University's Digital Transformation strategy. As part of that strategy, the University is committed to opening up fair and inclusive access to higher education worldwide, through innovative online learning that enriches the learning experience. Whilst still in the early stages of the strategy, the Service is working with staff across the University as well as partners

worldwide (such as through the Global University Network) to build a culture of re-use through open learning materials.

As a result, the Service now supports many more learners including on-campus students, staff, researchers, professionals and lifelong learners. The significant changes over the last two years have laid the foundations for this journey, with much more to come.

## Professional Accreditations



Prince 2  
Project  
Management



Microsoft Professional  
Development  
and Training



Microsoft SharePoint  
Level 1 and 2  
end user



NEBOSH National General  
Certificate in Occupational  
Health & Safety



Certified Member of  
the Association of  
Learning Technology



Senior Fellow, Fellow,  
Associate Fellow: Higher  
Education Academy

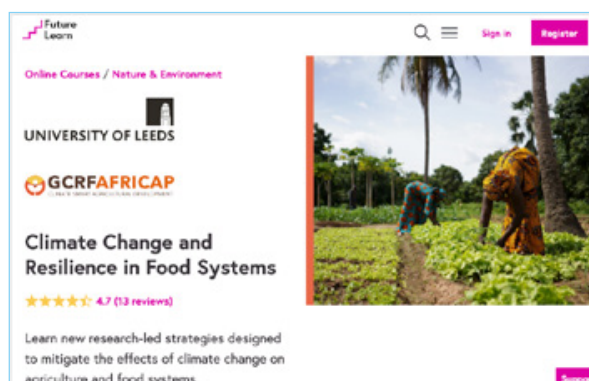
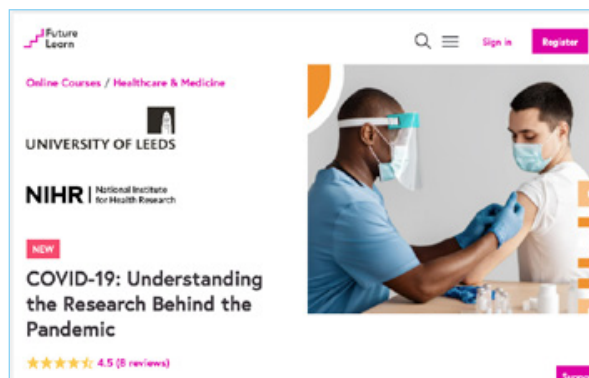
## Quality and excellence

All courses and systems are subject to rigorous quality control processes, to ensure academic excellence at each stage of development.

The Digital Programme Approval Group (DPAG), includes academic and student representation as well as input from marketing colleagues. DPAG reviews the quality of both credit and non-credit bearing online courses/modules at three stages: course proposal, course outline, and course completion. The reviews ensure that courses:

- provide an appropriate developmental and engaging learning experience
- have clearly defined and active learning outcomes
- are appropriately resourced
- have market demand
- are of a high standard

All Digital Education Systems are approved by the Digital Education Systems Group which provides feedback and evaluation of new tools and systems. The group meets every month and is open to any member of the University to join in for updates on systems and tools, services and projects.



## University of Leeds courses feature on Class Central's 'Best online course of all time 2020' list

### **Ecology and Wildlife Conservation**



### **Transport Systems: Global Issues and Future Innovations**



### **Critical Thinking at University: An Introduction**



### **Improving Healthcare through Clinical Research**



\* Class Central is a leading search engine and learner review site for online courses. University of Leeds courses feature amongst the highest rated online courses and MOOCs of all-time from top universities around the world. Based on thousands of reviews written by Class Central users.



## Digital Education Academic Leadership

We are fortunate to work closely with Digital Education Academic Leads (DEALs) for each Faculty to support digital education initiatives. DEALs work closely with stakeholders across their faculties and the University to develop the digital education strategy and champion the enhancement of student education through digital technologies.

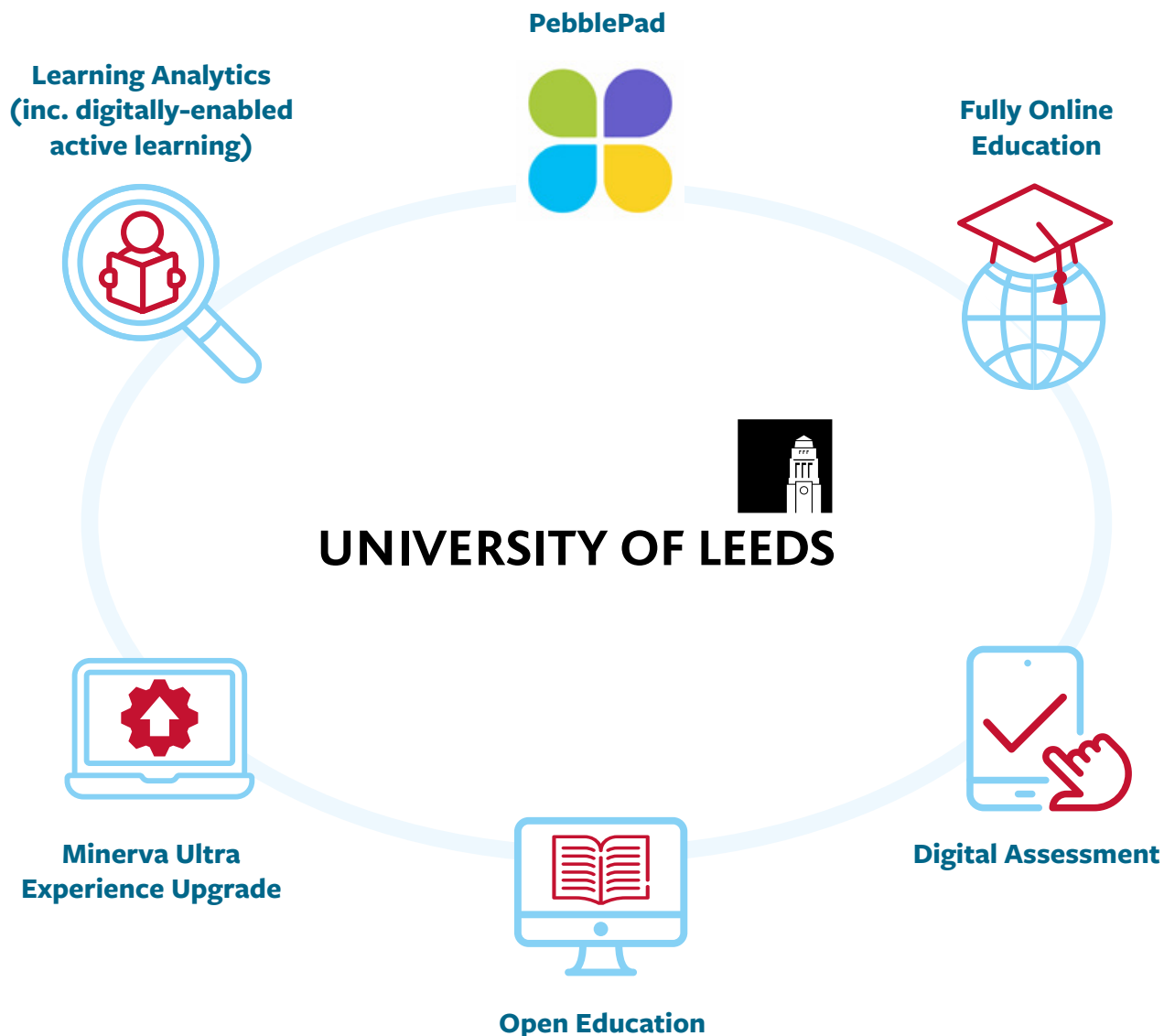
DES also works closely with Academic Leads on key strategic projects to enhance student education through digital transformation. These projects include Minerva upgrade, Learning Analytics, Pebblepad, Fully Online Education and Open Education.

“

The Minerva Ultra Experience Upgrade project plans to implement a new combined portal and virtual learning environment across the University ecosystem over the next 12 months. Based upon the Blackboard Ultra product, the work of DES has been integral to this goal. Whilst taking a leading role in the implementation of the project, the DES team are invested in all facets of execution. From development and staff training, to organisation and communication, DES are a key partner in ensuring the project is delivered successfully.”

**Steven Montagu-Cairns**

Academic Lead Blackboard (Minerva)  
Ultra VLE Implementation





## Working with students

Students are vital in shaping our courses and championing the adoption of educational tools and systems. We work hard to ensure that the student voice is part of our early commissioning and testing of courses and tools as well as providing insight in testing and evaluation.

Paid opportunities for students to become a Student Champion or contribute to the development of courses and systems through short-term work placements help students develop their skills and prepare for their career after graduation.



**23**  
student  
champions



**45**  
students  
employed

“

We interact with a lot of faculties, students and staff. This helps us to not only improve our interpersonal skills, but to raise awareness about digitalisation in education, which is important.”

**Anirudh**

Digital Education Student Champion

“

We’ve had some fantastic student champions in Engineering and Physical Sciences over recent years. They’ve worked on everything from making school organisations more relevant, useful and consistent within the faculty, to working on approaches to embed interactive tools within modules and helping share practice and examples that students have found most effective.”

**Dr Duncan Borman**

Faculty Digital Education Academic Lead,  
School of Civil Engineering

“

Digital education is really important in breaking down barriers to education for people who have disabilities or educational needs. The role of student champion has really opened my eyes to that.”

**Justin**

Digital Education Student Champion

# Online Learning

**2019 – 2021:**  
83 New Courses and  
Digital Resources

The University of Leeds  
is recognised for the high  
quality of its courses:

Average  
**90.5%**  
positive feedback  
on all FutureLearn  
courses

**#1**

ON MOOCLAB  
for online course  
provision during  
Covid-19

WINNER  
of the  
International  
MEDEA award  
for 'Transport  
Systems: Global  
Issues and Future  
Innovations'

Launched  
our first fully  
online degrees:  
Engineering  
Management  
and Artificial  
Intelligence

During the pandemic, the University worked with online platform partners, **FutureLearn** and **Coursera**, to provide staff and students worldwide with free upgraded access to a range of courses as part of the university's response to minimise the impact of Covid-19.



## Our partners

### FutureLearn

FutureLearn is an online platform offering thousands of short courses on a range of topics. The University has been a founding partner of FutureLearn since 2013 and currently has over 70 online courses available on topics as diverse as Academic Skills, Environment, Chemistry, Business and Medicine.



### Coursera

Coursera is an online learning platform offering more than 4000 online courses, created in partnership with world-leading education institutions and organisations. The University of Leeds has a small but growing number of online courses on Coursera.



### Pearson

Since 2016, the University has taken a partnership approach to the development of online postgraduate programmes, working with Pearson on global marketing and frontline student support, while the University delivers all academic aspects of programmes including teaching, assessment and awards.



**FutureLearn courses have made a particularly strong impact on our widening participation goals, supporting students from educationally disadvantaged background onto University of Leeds degree programmes.**

- **35% of all students who progressed from a FutureLearn course onto a UoL degree in 2020/21 came from quintiles 1 & 2 (marked as areas of low participation in higher education).**
- **385 learners undertook an Undergraduate or Postgraduate recruitment course on FutureLearn before submitting an application to study with us.**

# Spotlight on FutureLearn courses:

## Digital Skills for the Workplace, in partnership with FutureLearn and the Institute of Coding

‘Digital Skills for the Workplace’ is a collection of 15 short courses focused on building the communication and digital skills needed for today’s workplace. The courses were designed in collaboration with outreach partners such as #techmums, UKBlackTech and NESTA, to specifically widen access to the tech industry by targeting women and learners from the BAME community.

The Digital Skills for the Workplace collection has helped more than **800,000** learners so far. Selected as part of the UK Government’s Future Skills initiative, the courses were offered to furloughed employees looking to reskill and were also well received by global audiences outside the UK including India, Pakistan, Nigeria and Egypt.

These courses were also utilised by University of Leeds students to support them in the transition to remote learning.

## Building skills

The University of Leeds has been active in supporting all learners to transition to online delivery during the pandemic. In Spring 2020, we launched **Preparing to Learn Online at University**, a short online course which provides guidance about how to be an effective learner in the digital age.

The course has had over 5,000 enrolments and attracted learners from 164 countries.

**32.2%**  
of learners are  
younger than 25

**Over  
5,000**  
enrolments

**164**  
countries

**36%**  
of learners are  
from the UK

\* Based on data available through the FutureLearn platform and a survey sample of 527 responses.

“

The course was perfect - loved it. It was technical and practical at the same time!”

“The course content was totally an eye-opener for me. The educators will walk you from A to Z, so don’t worry if you are totally new to programming or user experience design. You won’t go wrong with these courses if you want to know if a career in tech is right.”

“I was looking for information, ideas and a little guidance after a career break and this more than met my expectations. The course materials were easy to understand and really thought provoking. It really helped me look at my career pathway in a totally different way and feel really positive about moving forward.”

## National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)

The University of Leeds is delighted to have partnered with the National Institute for Health Research on a series of courses focused on clinical and health research. In November 2019, the University launched 'What is Health Research?' followed by **'COVID-19: Understanding the Research Behind the Pandemic'** in May 2021.

Rapidly developed in response to debate about research ethics, consent, and the safety and efficacy of research in relation to COVID-19, the course is a timely example of the way research and online learning can come together to build public engagement on social and health issues.

## Research-led global courses

Over the last year, the University has strengthened its work in designing and developing courses with a global reach and focus. Working in partnership with academics from the Faculty of Environment, Leeds is developing courses which draw on current research into global challenges relating to climate change, nutrition and sustainable development.

These courses showcase interdisciplinary research carried out at Leeds, in partnership with other institutions and practitioners around the world, and designed to tackle some of the most urgent challenges facing society.

## Climate Change and Resilience in Food Systems

**Research project: Agricultural and Food-system Resilience: Increasing Capacity and Advising Policy (GCRF-AFRICAP)**

**'Climate Change and Resilience in Food Systems'** is a 2-week course which highlights research carried out by the GCRF-AFRICAP research programme into food systems resilience in Sub-Saharan Africa. By the end of the course, learners should be able to apply ideas and concepts for building climate resilience in local agriculture and food systems.

The first run of the course attracted 1,276 learners, with enrolments from target countries including Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania and South Africa.

“

Working with the DES team has been a very creative and dynamic process. They created an engaging structure and resources to convey our information about COVID-19 research.”

**Gwynneth Cracknell**

Public Engagement and Involvement Manager, NIHR

“

Throughout the entire process, the team were fantastic! They were engaging, communicated effectively and professionally with project partners and facilitated the remote recording of interviews brilliantly.

They provided excellent technical support and advice for all collaborators being interviewed, and made the process very enjoyable! The team also made the video editing process very simple and efficient, providing me with many opportunities to feed in my own thoughts and ideas.

I'm so pleased with the final outcome!”

**Dr Harriet Smith**

School of Environment

## Building our portfolio of Fully Online Education

In 2019, in partnership with Pearson Education and the Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences, the Digital Education Service launched Engineering Management MSc, our first fully online Masters programme.

From starting the first module to gaining a postgraduate certificate or full degree, online learning allows students to study flexibly, enabling them to fit their academic work around other commitments. As a result, online degrees are an inclusive way to support a more diverse cohort – we've seen learners from all walks of life and all corners of the globe – with one student even studying from an oil rig!

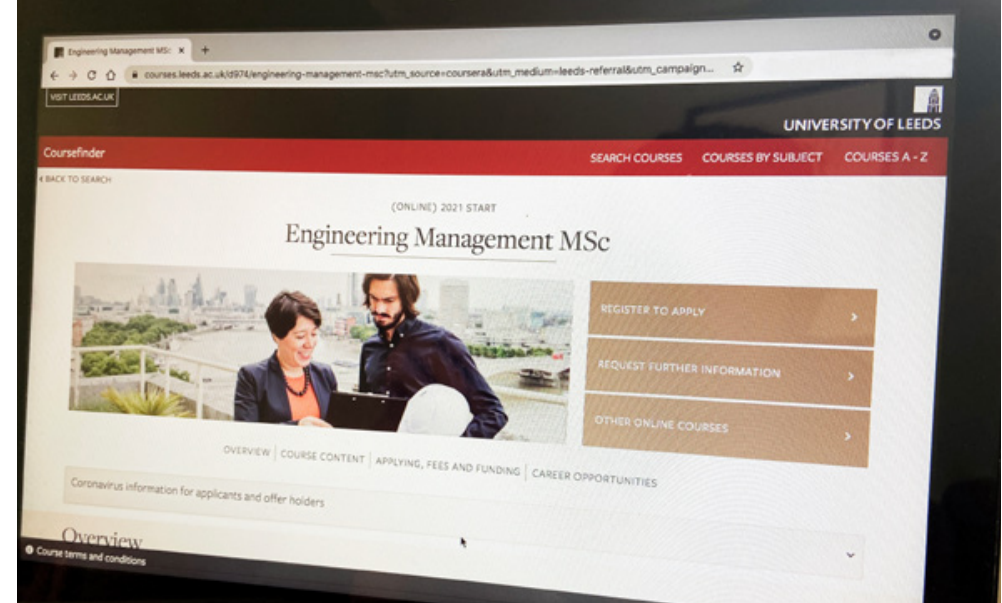
Engineering Management was followed by a new MSc in Artificial Intelligence (AI) in March 2021, developed in partnership with the School of Computing. Launching with over 20 students, the course is ambitious and technically innovative, with multiple access points, allowing flexibility to students with other commitments. The team found new ways to make complex AI concepts and programming languages understandable online such as using customised web pages and new software to render maths notation and snippets of code online.

**11<sup>th</sup>**  
student intake

**251** students,  
all at different stages  
of their degree

**60**  
countries

Average  
student  
age:



“

Working with DES in developing the AI programme has been productive and I would say even inspirational, in helping us to explore new ways of teaching. The new online AI MSc programme is proving a success, with a strong first cohort of students and prospects for attracting hundreds of students around the world.

An unforeseen benefit has been possibilities to explore future opportunities to link our AI research to digital education; to develop research in AI text analytics for digital education, and to work further with DES in integrating AI text analytics methods and tools into Minerva for wider use in teaching.”

**Professor Eric Atwell**

Artificial Intelligence for Language,  
School of Computing



## Growing fully online education

The Digital Education Service is actively supporting the University's ambition to rapidly grow our fully online education portfolio. Working with faculties and their marketing teams, the University expects to see an increase in new, fully online degrees in the next academic year.

“

How I reflect on information and how I think has changed. That for me is the highlight. To have had an interesting and varied career so far, and now to apply my learning from the Engineering Management Masters programme, allows me to put a lot of what I've learnt over the last couple of decades in a completely different context.”

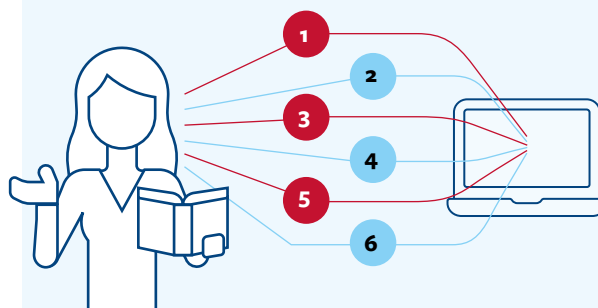
**Andreas**

Oil industry professional, Republic of Ireland,  
Student on Engineering Management MSc

## Student education and administration processes

Launching the first fully online Masters programme in partnership with Pearson was ambitious and required changes to the way we teach distance learning. Our Student Education Service team implemented new student education and administration processes to ensure that students could start their degree at different times of the year and still have the choice of studying a range of modules.

Unlike a traditional Masters programme, students have **6 entry points** in the year and are able to pay flexibly per module, making the programme much more accessible.



This experience in administering online learning was vital at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, when the Student Education Service worked with colleagues across the University to identify areas that were at risk and find creative solutions, whilst ensuring new processes were aligned with University policy.

“

This is an exciting time for the University community as we enter this new chapter of fully online education provision. The Fully Online Education strategy provides the opportunity to develop online degrees and courses in areas of research strength aligned to market demand, and to grow our global reach. As Academic Lead for Online Education I feel privileged to support the implementation of this strategy and to be guiding colleagues as they explore and embed fully online education in their teaching portfolio.”

**Helen Durham**

Academic Lead for Online Education,  
commenting on the University's fully  
online education strategy



# Digital Education Systems

In 2020, the Digital Education Systems team joined the Service, followed in January 2021 by the Minerva team. The DE Systems team bring expertise and knowledge of a vast array of tools that enable great online learning. The team works closely with the University's IT Service to offer a digital education eco-system which underpins the delivery of learning, teaching and assessment across face-to-face, blended, and fully online delivery.

The merging of these teams puts the University in a strong position to approach digital education holistically, from pedagogical support and design through to enablement and delivery. Online education is designed with the right digital tool in mind from the outset, which is particularly important as we upscale our online provision for campus students, researchers and fully online learners.

“

The University has ambitious plans for the enhancement of student education through increased use of digital technology and is upgrading current digital education systems and commissioning new technologies. The Digital Education Systems Team has been brought together to support these plans – we provide a one-stop-shop for support and guidance for all digital education systems and tools.”

**Bo Middleton**

Head of Digital Education Systems



## Minerva

Minerva is the virtual learning environment for the University of Leeds. It acts as a 'first port of call' to communicate with students and provides access to key information and tools for learning, assessment and wellbeing while at Leeds. Minerva hosts information about timetabling, module reading lists and more for both on-campus and fully online students.

Minerva will be upgraded during 2021/22 to provide a more modern, mobile-friendly experience for an increasingly digital student population.

### In 2020/21, MINERVA:

Hosted  
**14**  
million  
materials

Had  
**110**  
million  
page views  
(+39% on  
last year)

Saw  
**increased  
engagement**  
– students are accessing more  
content, for longer on each module

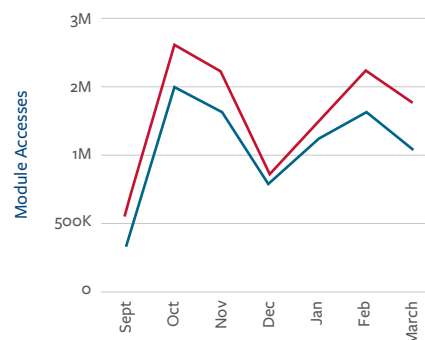


### Ally

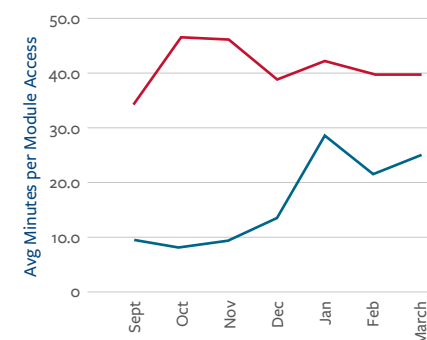
The accessibility tool Ally was launched in June 2020. Ally provides feedback on the accessibility of teaching areas in Minerva, along with advice on how to improve it. Files are automatically converted to different formats, such as audio and electronic braille, to allow users to engage with teaching material in the most appropriate way.

From June 2020 to the end of Semester 1, there were **64,523 alternative format downloads and 17,828 instructor feedback launches** (which give staff tips on how to improve the accessibility of their files).

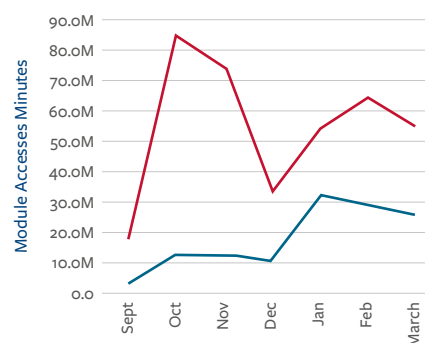
### Module accesses



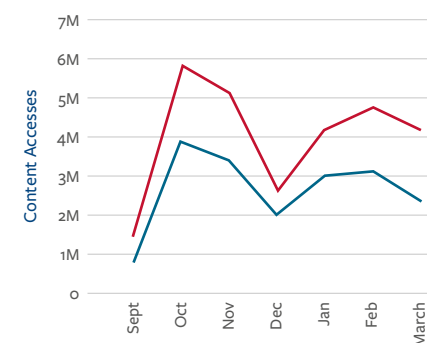
### Avg minutes per module access



### Module accesses minutes



### Content accesses



### Date by Academic Year

— 2019/20 Sept - April  
— 2020/21 Sept - April

## Gradescope

Online assessment has been a key priority for the University of Leeds for some time. In June 2020, we launched Gradescope, a completely new digital assessment tool.

This was particularly important for the Lifelong Learning Centre, which works with students from under-represented groups. Gradescope supported matriculation exams in English and Maths, allowing mature students without existing qualifications to access university courses.

Currently over

**21,000  
STUDENTS**

have used Gradescope to submit work and receive feedback online.

“

With the help of the Digital Education Service, we managed to run all matriculation exams in a timely fashion on Gradescope over summer 2020. Applicants found the system easy to access and use, and marking was fast and efficient. We were able to process all exams within 3 working days. The exams worked so well in 2020 that we planned all our matriculation exams on Gradescope in 2021.”

**Helen Bowman**

Academic Skills Development Manager,  
Lifelong Learning Centre

## Turnitin

Turnitin is a plagiarism detection and marking system which identifies matches between pieces of writing and produces an originality report. It also facilitates online marking and student peer reviews. Over the last year, there has been increased use of Turnitin.

Over 1.3 million submissions

**+51%**

2,206 voice comments

**+216%**

176,106 inline text comment

**+142%**

1,431 peer reviews created

**+103%**

## Top Hat

Top Hat was implemented as the University's new institutional mobile voting solution in summer 2019. The tool enhances the student learning experience by providing quizzes and polls including multiple choice, click on target, sorting/ranking and long-answer questions.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, faculties have used Top Hat to support new forms of assessment. The interactive functionality has enabled the assignment of formative and summative assessments which can be 'open book' and time limited or remotely monitored.

Today, over

**12,000  
STUDENTS**

are using Top Hat.



## PebblePad

PebblePad offers a fresh, reflective approach to Academic Personal Tutoring, which allows students to lead their own experience and make the most of face-to-face time with their tutors. Delivered as a digital workbook, students work through the content and highlight areas for discussion with their Personal Tutor. It provides a consistent, baseline student experience for tutoring, supporting the personal and professional development of all students.

### PebblePad supports LeedsforLife themes of:

- Sense of belonging - checking-in and wellbeing
- Student success - academic
- Future ambitions - meaningful outcomes
- Skills and attributes - curriculum and beyond
- Development - making informed choices

## Virtual Classrooms: Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, Zoom and Microsoft Teams

Virtual Classrooms offer live video and audio interactions between students and teachers to support learning online. The University was already using Blackboard Collaborate Ultra, and in 2020 we added Microsoft Teams and Zoom to support the move to remote teaching. Since then, further updates and integrations have been added as the University continues to invest in core education systems, such as integrating Mediasite and Zoom to support automatic recording of scheduled teaching.

All platforms enable academics to host a range of online learning activities such as seminar discussions, small group collaborative learning and interactive lectures.

**2,105**  
Class Teams

“

As a Systems Champion I work across different faculties to embed new ways of digital learning and to ensure that current ones are working as best they can... The best thing about being a champion is seeing how much work goes into delivering online learning tools. It's easy to take for granted the type of education we have access to here at Leeds.”

**Debra**

Digital Education Student Champion

“

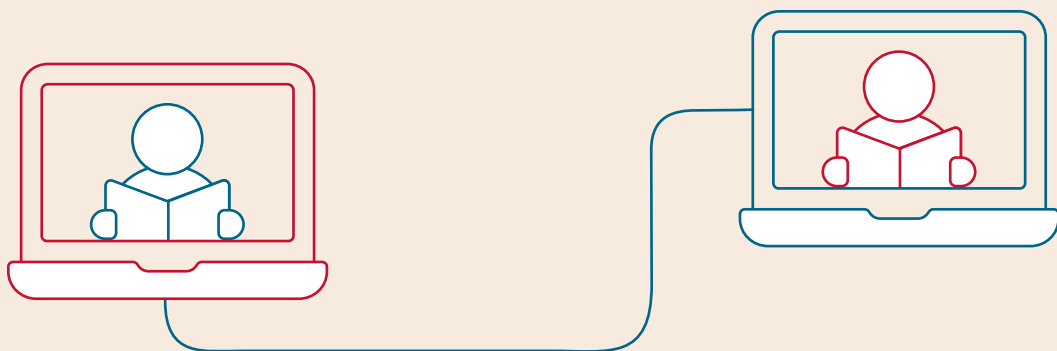
It was good to get used to using different apps - I'd never used Teams or Zoom before and now obviously they're becoming really important in the workplace, so I've already found that really useful.”

**Molly**

Taskforce member

# 2020: The Year Digital Education went Mainstream

This last year has been a time of change worldwide. In March 2020, Covid-19 disrupted all aspects of our personal and professional lives. During this time, the first priority for the University of Leeds has been the wellbeing of its staff, students and researchers. As the institution took steps to protect health and safety, the Leeds community shone as academics and students worked together and embraced a radical rethink of the way we teach and deliver learning and carry out research.



## Shifting to Digital Learning

The University of Leeds was fortunate, having already invested in the tools and infrastructure needed to support digital education when the pandemic hit. But the scale of the task to pivot all aspects of academic provision online was huge. Within weeks, all staff and students had to become skilled at teaching and learning online - from delivering seminars and building active learning practices to developing new forms of online assessment.

As experts in online learning, the Digital Education Service worked closely with staff and students to share expertise in digital education and rapidly support the adoption of new learning practices. Our approach had to ensure that online learning followed a student-centred, active learning approach (SCALA), the principles of which were developed in collaboration with Pro-Deans for Student Education and Faculty Academic Leads for Digital Education.

## Online support for staff

Need help or support with online teaching, learning and assessment? There's a wealth of resources, courses and support services available to you.

Here's a quick-view guide to the resources you need to teach remotely at the University of Leeds.



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS



### 'Adapt your teaching for online delivery' course on Minerva

Take the specially designed three-unit course to learn how to design, develop and deliver online learning, including developing materials and media and engaging students online.



### Digital Education Service Helpdesk

Have a query or issue relating to online teaching, learning and assessment? Log it with the Digital Education Service Helpdesk to get the support you need.



### University of Leeds Coronavirus website

Get advice on remote working, travel, working on campus, plus answers to staff and student FAQs from the regularly updated dedicated Coronavirus website.



### Digital Practice website

For online teaching resources, guidance on remote teaching, information on online assessments and FAQs on taking your teaching online, visit the Digital Practice website.



### Online development sessions from OD&PL

Get up to speed with tools and techniques for remote working and online teaching, and continue your professional development online with a wide range of courses from OD&PL.



### Buddy support for live online sessions

Access one-to-one advice and support in planning and delivering your online sessions with an experienced buddy – on call when you need them.



### Skills@Library resources for students

Get support with embedding academic skills development into your modules. Direct students to Skills@Library webinars on a range of academic skills topics, plus online resources and 1-1 appointments.



### Online courses for use in teaching

Access free online courses on FutureLearn, Coursera and LinkedIn Learning, and point students to additional resources to support their learning.

## Throughout the pandemic, the Digital Education Service has continued to provide enhanced support for staff and students, including:

- Buddying support for 610 live teaching support sessions in Semester 1 2020/21
- 34 members of staff and 12 students trained to support the new live session service
- 1,200 copyright cleared images moved into an online repository for use in teaching
- On-campus filming – our support team delivered 123 videos in time for Semester 1
- Adapted support to accommodate two new platforms - Microsoft Teams and Zoom - with one week's notice
- The DES helpdesk responded to 364 requests for support in Semester 1

## Within a few weeks, the University launched:

- A Digital Education Helpdesk with 50 fully trained staff and students
- Personal buddying support for more in-depth needs
- Live session support for Zoom, Teams and Collaborate Ultra sessions
- 'Adapt Your Teaching for Online Delivery' – a bespoke course to support academic staff with design and delivery of online learning and teaching
- On-demand advice and guidance through the Digital Practice and Coronavirus websites



# In-depth

## Digital Practice website

In just ten days, colleagues from Organisational Development and Professional Learning (OD&PL) and the Digital Education Service worked together to redesign the Digital Practice website - an online hub with tips, advice, guidance and toolkits so that staff had the help they needed, when they needed it.

The website uses a problem-solving framework to signpost academics to guidance as well as pedagogic training.

The Digital Practice website quickly became the go-to place for teaching staff and continues to evolve to meet the needs of staff.

**85,000**  
page views  
in 2020 → **1300% more**  
than 2019

### Teaching and Learning Online

Guidance to support you with the move to online and hybrid delivery.

SEE MORE >

GUIDANCE FOR HYBRID DELIVERY

WELCOME

DIGITAL LITERACY

“

The DES - OD&PL combined expertise, and our collaboration on the website and self-access course, was essential in providing timely support to colleagues. This experience provides a good basis for further collaborations as we move forward with the new University Strategy.”

**Louise Woodcock**

Director of Academic Practice, OD&PL

“

I found the case study videos very useful throughout. They gave me lots of ideas for my own practice and made online learning seem an attainable goal (i.e. if others can do it so can I).”

Academic learner

## Adapt Your Teaching for Online Delivery

This Minerva short course was designed to rapidly support academic staff in digital learning and teaching practice in response to Covid-19. The course was based on research, funded by Leeds Institute for Teaching Excellence (LITE), to enhance institutional readiness for digital learning and teaching. It focused on three key areas:

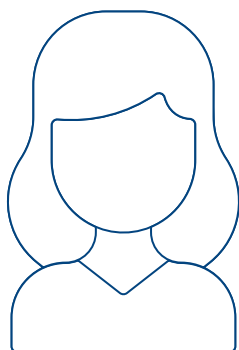
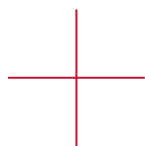
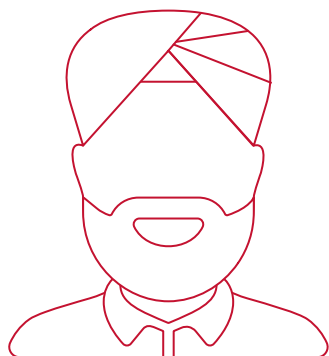
- Learning design for digital education
- Learning materials and media
- Online student engagement

Built in just a few weeks, the course was a fantastic example of cross-institution collaboration, with support and input from 30 subject matter experts, interviewees, and consultants at Leeds, including colleagues from Schools and Faculties, the Digital Education Service, and OD&PL.

**90%**  
of staff agree course  
was relevant

**1,320**  
staff  
enrolled





## Student Taskforce

During the pandemic, the Service was able to quickly draw on students as a key part of our Student Taskforce, dealing with helpdesk enquiries and providing crucial buddying support to staff as they transitioned to online learning.

### Student Taskforce feedback

“

Communication within the teams was very effective and the teamwork was the most positive aspect. Everyone tried to be helpful and support others.”

“I feel the communication is great, the team leaders are really kind and helpful, the overall project has huge potential.”

## Buddying sessions

Buddying sessions were designed to help academic colleagues feel comfortable delivering teaching sessions online without ongoing live support. It also supported colleagues delivering complex sessions such as those with large student numbers, multiple breakout groups, student presentations or assessment sessions.

### Buddying feedback (academics)

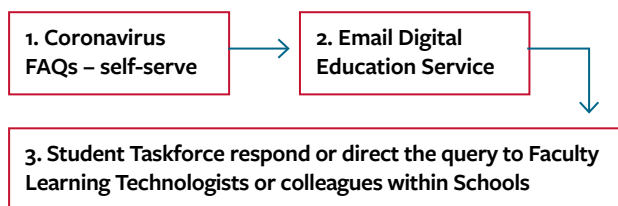
“

I really had no idea what to expect and was pleased for the first few sessions just to have someone around who I knew was there to help if needed. My assigned buddies were calm and very helpful - and with so many things to keep an eye on at once (polling, sharing files, whiteboard, breakout groups, recording, checking audio/video etc.), having someone on hand was really useful.”

“After having buddy support I now feel much more confident. I was fine on my own after these and was able to troubleshoot things that did happen in future events on my own. So I feel confident now with Collaborate.”

## DES Helpdesk enquiries

Over 40 Taskforce members worked in shifts to ensure all queries were answered within 24 hours.



During the first few months of the national lockdown, the Helpdesk was promoted widely as the quickest way to access support for online systems such as Collaborate Ultra, Minerva, Personal Capture, Mediasite, Top Hat and Gradescope, and for any other enquiries relating to online teaching and learning, assessment, and course design.

## Implementing digital assessment

The timing of lockdown in March 2020 meant the University needed to rapidly review its plans for assessing students remotely.

The Digital Education Service, along with colleagues from central services, worked with Faculty teams to support the unplanned use of digital assessment.

Within 6 weeks, the team implemented Gradescope for the whole institution. Gradescope extended and enhanced our digital assessment capabilities and helped maximise the use of other systems such as Top Hat, Minerva Test and Turnitin.

## Gradescope usage

	May 2020	2020/2021
Submissions	17,466	190,000+
Active students	4,415	8,476
Assessments	406	1990
Modules	221	659



## Student engagement and wellbeing

During the pandemic, data from Minerva was routinely shared with Schools to support Faculty Student Success Officers and Student Support Teams in developing thresholds for engagement. Using that information, they were able to monitor engagement levels and escalate students most at risk, based on non and low engagement levels.

This innovative, data-led approach meant the University was able to focus on wellbeing, despite students and staff working remotely. It has also been vital in informing our approach to learning analytics and academic personal tutoring as part of the Access and Student Success strategy for 2021/22.

“The use of learning analytics has been central to reimagining the academic personal tutoring experience for both staff and students at the University of Leeds. By providing real-time engagement and resource use data, students can have informed conversations with personal tutors about their progress, and develop action plans based on their own measures of success. The data is instrumental in providing students with the increased ability to self-regulate their learning and set realistic goals.”

### Professor James Pickering

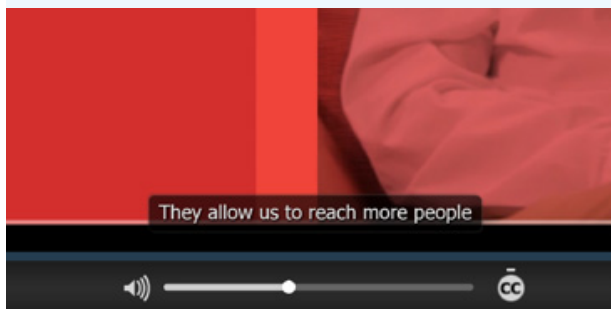
Academic Lead for Learning Analytics System Implementation, School of Medicine.

## Accessibility

As a result of the rapid shift to online teaching, the Captioning Task and Finish Group sped up and increased in scope. In September 2020, the University introduced automated video captioning for all content on Mediasite, with the option for human captioning if needed.

Captioning benefits all students as an enhancement to learning, supports equal and inclusive access and can particularly support students who don't have English as their first language.

So far, over  
**630,000**  
**minutes**  
of content have  
been captioned.



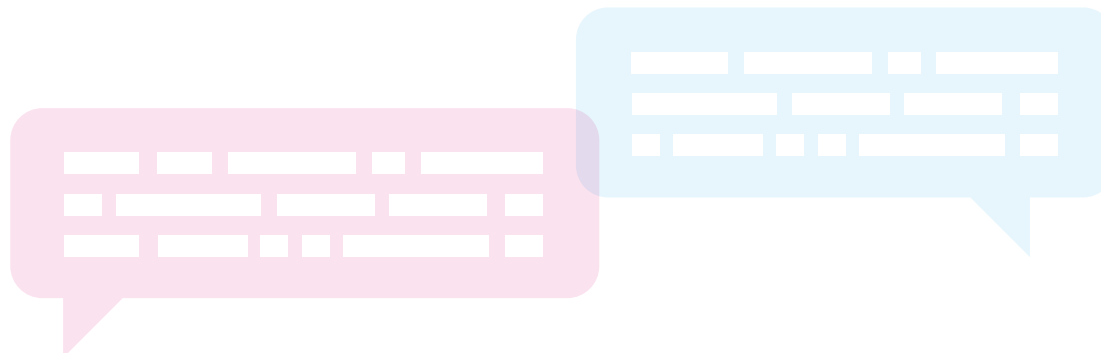
## Getting Started at Leeds: Welcome, Induction and Transition

As the pandemic progressed, focus turned to providing the best possible experience for new students joining in September 2020. A cross-collaboration of staff, working in partnership with Leeds University Union, created the Welcome, Induction and Transition (WIT) group, using digital tools to deliver a consistent, engaging online experience for both postgraduate and undergraduate students.

Working together to think differently about how students become part of the Leeds community, the group pioneered the use of new tools including Pebblepad, and used platform-based copywriting and filming skills from the Digital Education Service to create a unique and engaging product.

“WIT has been a significant project for the university in terms of embedding good practice in an inclusive way for all our students, and the digital team has been fundamental to this transformation.”

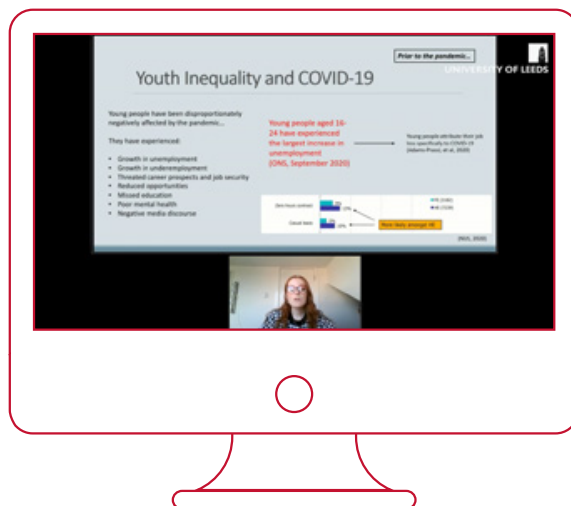
**Professor Anne Tallontire**  
Project Lead and Professor of  
Sustainability and Business



## **State of Emergency: Social Science and the COVID-19 Pandemic**

The immediacy and impact of Covid-19 makes it an exciting subject for academic study and public engagement. Colleagues from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Digital Education Service developed a brand-new module for September 2020, which explores the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on society, and the role of social science in exploring, reporting and investigating social change in this climate.

The interdisciplinary module was designed to showcase research being conducted into the social, political and regulatory elements of the Covid-19 pandemic. Working with the academic team, the Service provided design and development support, advising on how different elements of the module could be structured to support active learning. The team designed an innovative module which includes synchronous and asynchronous methods of delivery, and innovative approaches to assessment, including a video submission from learners role-playing a policy brief to a minister.



392 learners took part in the module, from a range of programmes and subjects including politics and international studies, sociology and social policy, and law.

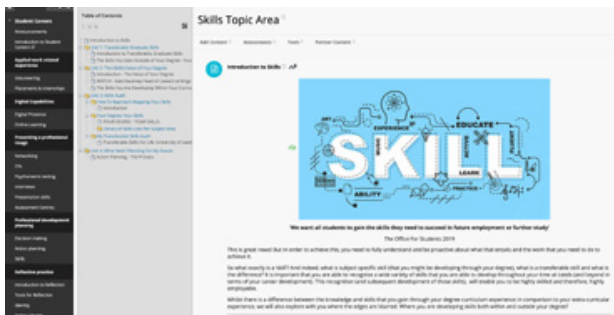
“The Digital Education Service provided expert advice in digital pedagogy to help us shape the delivery of the module. They also worked with us to produce a first week of learning that all staff members then used as a model. We then worked with another team in DES to develop some public facing general interest lectures on various social issues related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Again, the team was outstanding to work with, and we were all proud of the final product.”

**Dr Tom Campbell**  
Associate Professor in Social Theory

## Language Centre pre-sessional

Less than a month before the first cohort of pre-sessional students were due to arrive in March 2020, Covid-19 travel restrictions were imposed. Within three weeks, the Language Centre and DES worked together to move the pre-sessional courses fully online. The online pre-sessionals remained faithful to the interactive classroom experience whilst using digital technology for communication, collaboration and course administration. Most importantly, built-in preparatory courses and scaffolded activities enabled students and staff to build confidence in the process from the very start.

This scalable model enabled the first cohort of 340 students to progress onto their chosen Master's degrees in September 2020 and benefitted a further 1,793 students over the summer.



## Online Career Development Teaching Resource:



Winner of a Collaborative Excellence Professional Services Teaching Award and winner of a University Teaching Award.

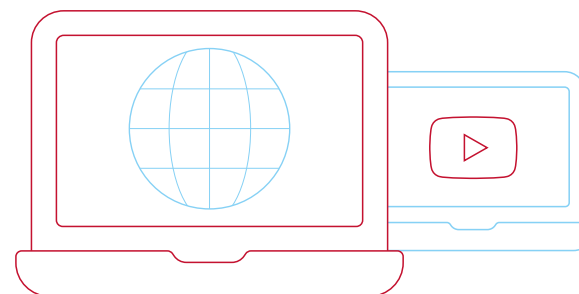
Collaboration with DES enabled Careers Centre staff to develop the skills to create a comprehensive set of online teaching and learning resources. This was important because it helped to strengthen the quality and consistency of careers teaching across the university.

“

As someone new to teaching and managing courses online, working with colleagues in DES to develop the pre-sessionals was illuminating and insightful. They were able to help us think through the differences and challenges of teaching remotely and support the Language Centre to develop meaningful and innovative solutions to our situation. There was a strong sense of collaboration and mutual respect that made the process satisfying and enjoyable.”

**Laura Richards**

Teaching Fellow, School of Languages, Cultures and Societies





# Innovation: At the Heart of What We Do

The University of Leeds has a proud tradition of curiosity and challenge, seeking solutions and trying new things. Innovation is a key pillar for digital education as the University uses creative tools and ways of working to reach and engage new audiences worldwide.

## Virtual Open Days

Using digital tools and live online lectures, the Virtual Open Days team aimed to create an interactive experience that still captured the engagement and excitement of Leeds. To help deliver this huge feat, the Marketing team led a cross-service project with staff from Marketing, Communications, Faculty teams and DES. The objective was to deliver a Leeds-focused experience virtually, allowing students to get a flavour of the city, University and to find out about subjects of interest to them. The first Open Day in June was developed and executed in just twelve weeks and a key focus was the ability to reach an international audience through a fully online event. DES played a crucial role in familiarising staff with the platforms and programmes needed to deliver talks and seminars to budding students, as well as providing training and filming support.

In all, the team delivered 15 technical training sessions for over 500+ academics, students and staff, provided multiple training videos tailored to different staff roles and set up 120 live event consoles with speaker information, resource links and slide decks in just 2 weeks.

## Impact



**INCREASED REACH  
OF OPEN DAYS**  
over 100 countries  
represented



**17,500**  
prospective  
students



Improved engagement  
**5,000**  
**questions**  
**in Week 1**

**MOST WELL  
ATTENDED  
VIRTUAL EVENT**  
'Accommodation  
Talk' with over 1,000  
prospective students  
in attendance

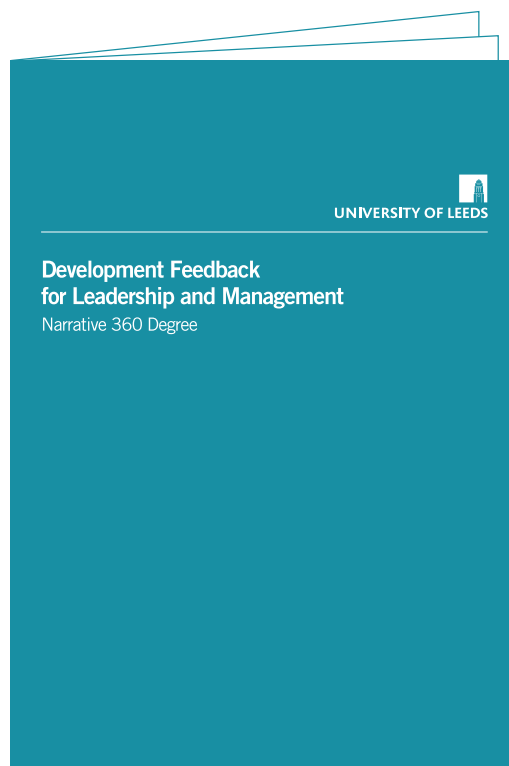


## **Developmental Feedback for Leadership and Management: Narrative 360 for School of Medicine**

In 2020, the Digital Education Service worked with the School of Medicine to publish our first e-book via Amazon Marketplace. The new book delivers accessibility benefits for learners particularly for students with visual impairments and is a long-lasting, inclusive and global resource. A new, challenging project, this was valuable in building skills within the team, equipping the Service to deliver more of these projects in the future.

**Challenge:**  
Converting  
existing  
hard-copy  
booklet

**Solution:**  
Fully accessible  
ebook, available  
worldwide on  
Amazon Kindle



## **YouTube Live: Public engagement in academic research**



Several modules were supported by live, interactive sessions hosted on YouTube. These YouTube Live sessions showcased current research and made it accessible to a wider audience. During sessions supporting the new module 'State of Emergency: Social Science and the COVID-19 Pandemic', academics explored crucial subjects such as inequalities in healthcare, the impact of the pandemic on disabled people, and the knock on effects of COVID-19 for the judicial system.

“

It is a real privilege to be contributing to this series of lectures hosted by the University of Leeds. It is more important than ever to share our expertise and research as we all struggle to adjust to the new circumstances. I am really excited to break down the walls of the lecture theatre to share my ideas with a much wider audience.”

**Professor Jonathan Pitches**

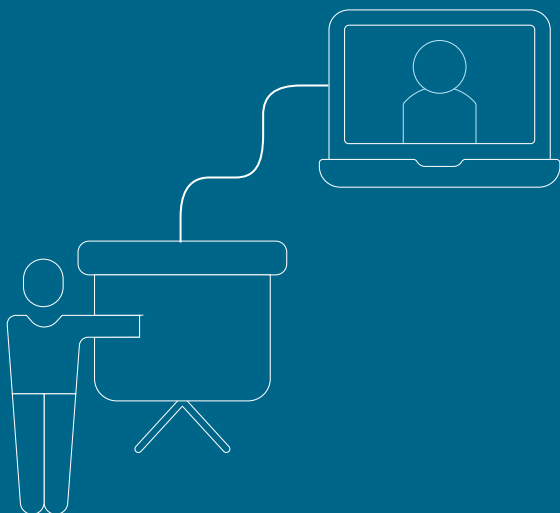
Head of School of Performance  
and Cultural Industries



## Innovation in online teaching during Covid-19

During 2020, students who usually participate in laboratory work or field trips never got the chance. The Production Team helped by filming staff at work in laboratories within the Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences, Faculty of Environment and the Faculty of Biological Sciences.

For the Faculty of Biological Sciences, filming supported their move to deliver experimental skills teaching in an online format. The team wanted instructional videos that showcased activities, providing both context and something for the students to critique.



“

We commissioned several short videos showcasing practical techniques encountered by undergraduate students. We were delighted with the efficiency and support provided by DES, from the original scoping meetings through to advice on storyboarding and discussions on the day, to finding the best shots for a particular activity. Our students have reacted positively to seeing University staff deliver content tailored to their teaching, rather than having to pick out information from a generic video delivered by a stranger. From an academic perspective, we now have a suite of videos that can be used for years to come as part of a blended learning strategy, and an awareness of the quality which can be delivered by DES.”

**Dr Chris Randall**  
Faculty of Biological Sciences

## Enhanced use of online platforms

Through our relationships with online course platforms we have been able to provide students and staff with access to a wide range of new learning opportunities.

### **LinkedIn Learning**

LinkedIn Learning offers over 15,000 short courses across business, creative and technical specialties. Through the University of Leeds institutional license, staff and students have access to all courses on the platform.

### **FutureLearn Campus**

Students and staff at the University of Leeds have free, upgraded access to University of Leeds courses on FutureLearn via FutureLearn Campus. Upgraded access includes access to the end-of-course tests, digital certificates of achievement, and access to courses for as long as they exist on FutureLearn. This adds to our existing relationship with FutureLearn, making courses even more accessible to those who want them.

### **Coursera Campus**

The University of Leeds on Coursera gives staff and students free access to all Coursera courses created by participating institutions. This includes 3,800 courses and 400 Specializations (collections of courses).

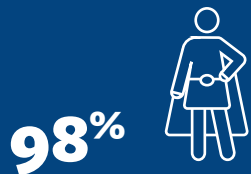
# Collaborating with Business

## 10,000 Women, Goldman Sachs Foundation

The Goldman Sachs *10,000 Women* programme fosters economic growth in emerging economies around the world, by providing women entrepreneurs with a business education, and networking opportunities.

The Digital Education Service has worked with the Goldman Sachs Foundation since 2017, to design, develop and deliver a suite of online courses on Coursera, as well as active learning support such as online course moderation, monthly webinars and alumni events. Free of charge and open to all, the courses help to widen access to business education for women, particularly those in emerging economies across the Global South.

So far, the courses have attracted over 98,500 learners from more than 208 countries worldwide. As a result of the courses, alumni report:



feel more confident in their ability to be a successful business owner



feel that the programme has prepared them to better face their business challenges in future



feel the programme improved their leadership and management skills



would recommend the programme to other business owners.



## A global mission

Having been further developed during 2019/20, the courses are now available in English, Brazilian Portuguese and Latin American Spanish, making them more accessible to learners in target countries, including those who have suffered significant social and economic crises following Covid-19.

## Case study

### Growth Fellowship

The Goldman Sachs Growth Fellowship is an opportunity for alumni of the *10,000 Women* courses to receive focused mentorship, business coaching and support in developing their business. During 2021, the University supported the Goldman Sachs Foundation to offer an initial three-day training event that could

be accessed remotely, a further three-month coaching period and a final virtual graduation day event. This allowed more alumni to benefit from the scheme, accessing real-time synchronised support, across different countries and timezones worldwide.

“

I can certainly say that the [10,000 Women] Growth Fellowship is the most in-depth, practical and thorough business and leadership training I have had so far as a business leader. As a Growth Fellow, I got to practically look into major challenges my business was facing [...] Together with experienced individuals from Goldman Sachs, Bloomberg and University of Leeds we were able to devise solutions that my business is implementing already.”

**Haoma**

2021 Growth Fellow

“

Being a [10,000 Women] Growth Fellow is very beneficial [...] The Fellowship helped me realise the value I had already created in [my] business, but also made me aware that in order to scale I need to change my approach.”

**Mantsha**

2021 Growth Fellow



## Case study

### Securing Funding: National Heritage Lottery Fund

The University of Leeds has recently been awarded funding by the National Heritage Lottery Fund and Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) to participate in the Digital Skills for Heritage initiative, which aims to improve digital literacy and increase confidence in employees and volunteers across the UK heritage sector.

The Leeds project, 'The Question of Digital - Building the Digital Capabilities of the Heritage Sector', is one of 12 grants awarded to address three distinct areas:

- **Driving digital innovation and enterprise**
- **Providing answers to organisations' most pressing concerns**
- **Building Collaborative Communities**

Using its extensive experience of co-produced research, Leeds will work in partnership with Museum Development Yorkshire, Cause4 and the Welsh heritage sector to identify the most pressing questions related to digital leadership and develop resources to answer those questions and needs.

# Digital Education Strategy – *What's Next?*

**In March 2021, the University of Leeds launched its new strategy 2020 – 2030: Universal Values, Global Change. Drawing on the institutional approach, the Digital Education Service has developed a comprehensive strategy which will support the University's ambitions in digital transformation and student education, guiding our activity for the future.**

From vision to action, the Digital Education Strategy provides a blueprint for what we will achieve and how we will achieve it. Tracing a clear line from Vision and Mission to Priorities, Enablers and Values, the strategy outlines the practical steps we need to take to support the University's vision.

As a new and growing Service, the strategy also considers the needs of our team - a focus on development and wellbeing are just as important as support for strategic projects such as the growth of fully online education.

Everyone in the Service has had the opportunity to feed into the strategy and the result is a tangible action plan based on values that the whole Service can endorse.

In putting this strategy into practice, the Service will work closely with Academic Leads for Digital Education and Faculty-based Learning Technologists. We will collaborate with colleagues to play a leading role in growing our provision of accessible, inclusive and inspirational digital education, underpinned by our principles of quality, excellence, innovation and impact.

**View the [Digital Education Service Strategy](#).**

## VISION

Our vision is to be a sector-leading provider of technically and pedagogically innovative digital education

## MISSION

Our mission is to assist the University in achieving its digital transformation, playing a leading role in the strategic aim of growing our provision of accessible, inclusive and inspirational digital education opportunities for all students and professional learners

### Our priorities are:

Efficiently and rapidly grow our fully online education portfolio of degrees, sub-degree qualifications and short courses for online learners and professional learners worldwide, helping generate revenue for the University.

Continuously innovate, invest and develop online learning and systems to enhance the digital education experience of our taught students and postgraduate researchers, on campus and online.

Working in partnership with global universities and technology partners to co-create open, community-based, sustainable online education that supports lifelong learning aligned to the University's research strengths.

### To support our priorities, we are focused on:

#### Service Excellence

Across everything we do, from learning to stakeholder engagement

#### People Development

Supporting our staff to reach their full potential through development and job security

#### Robust Process

Efficiently managing our operations and effectively communicating across teams

#### Wellbeing

Promoting a healthy work-life balance for our teams, leading with excellence in line management

#### Continuous Improvement

Embedding evaluation and continuous improvement Service-wide

#### Income Streams

Establishing new revenue streams to support the financial sustainability of the Service

### Throughout everything we do we are committed to:

#### Trust

#### Integrity

#### Care

We are a team who support each other's wellbeing and empower each other to be proactive and take responsibility for our work

#### Accessibility, Inclusivity and Impact

We understand and adapt to our user's needs

#### Quality and Excellence

We are experts, adding value and finding solutions

#### Innovation, Creativity and Flexibility

We are change agents, leading innovation, learning from our work as we continuously improve

#### Partnership and Community

We are a collaborative community, working in partnership with others

Strategic Priorities

Strategic Enablers

Values

Principles

Get involved Get involved  
involved Get involved Get  
Get involved Get involved  
involved Get involved Get  
#yearofdigitaledu #yearofdigitaledu  
@UoLdigital @UoLdigital @UoLdigital



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