COURSE GUIDE:
Digital Education Strategy & Policy for Session 2017/18

Contents

Introduction

Welcome to *Digital Education: Strategy & Policy*.

This course looks in-depth at the policy context of digital education and learning. Supra-governmental, national and regional policies for digital education will be examined in terms of their influence on strategies at sectoral and organisational levels.

The course will also explore various conceptual models of strategy-making and how these can be applied to the domain of digital education. The course will examine issues in the management of change and the strategic implementation and management of e-learning and provide you with the frameworks you need in order to formulate effective and timely e-learning strategies for you organisation.

This course guide will give you information on the course structure, the assessments, and other organisational details that you will need. The Course teaching is led by Peter Evans.

Pete Evans

For further details about the course, please contact Peter Evans in the first instance (peter.evans@ed.ac.uk)

Prerequisites

It is assumed that participants on this course will previously have participated in the foundation course for the MSc in Digital Education, *Introduction to Digital Environments for Learning*.

Aims and learning outcomes

The aims and anticipated learning outcomes for *Digital Education Strategy & Policy* are as follows.

Aims

The course is designed for those interested in the development of digital education and learning in post-compulsory education and training, who wish to explore the factors that influence the policies and strategies that guide implementation at national and organisational levels. You will be encouraged to read and discuss some of the theoretical background to policy and strategy setting as these may apply to your organisation, and to contribute discussion materials, either from your own organisation or from publicly-available sources. You will be supported in applying and critiquing the concepts and tools of strategy making to your own organisation.

Learning outcomes

On completion of the course, you will have:

— gained the knowledge and theoretical frameworks needed in order to formulate an effective e-learning strategy for their own organisation
— gained in-depth knowledge of a range of alternative models for e-learning development and implementation
— gained the ability to assess and evaluate the impact of the multiple factors affecting the successful implementation of e-learning
— developed a critical awareness of the local, sectoral and national policy contexts relevant to your own institutional setting and role.

Delivery and workload

The course consists of 11 weeks of teaching from Monday 15 January until Friday 30 March 2018. The course comprises:

• initial orientation on the course commencing from the week of 8 January;
• 11 weeks of work on various topics, and reflection on the course content (see the next page on the course content; and followed by
• work on the final submission of the major course assignment.

The course will be primarily based on guided personal reading, individual tasks supported by 'tutorial' participation mediated through online discussion. All of the essential core readings will be provided online through the course Moodle site, with optional secondary references provided for consultation depending on your own personal interests. You will be encouraged to browse a small number of key journals and e-books (available online through the University Library) to develop a feeling for the issues current in the field. Much of the literature in e-learning policy and strategy is openly available online at public websites, and you will be directed to the main sources. You will also be encouraged to search out

additional relevant material, especially in your own areas of interest and expertise, which will be added to the course collection.

Outline content

Block 1: Week 1 – 2 – introduction to strategy & policy. The course begins with an exploration of the key concepts and language of strategy as well as some initial reflections on the strategies of the organisations of course members. You will begin to analyse the strategic context of such organisations.

Block 2: weeks 3 – 5 - policy dynamics. This block will provide key tools and approaches to the analysis of national and institutional policies on organisational e-Learning strategy. Policy imperatives will be analysed from three perspectives: technology; pedagogy and economics. A specific case of UK higher education institution's policy will be used to explore the interfaces of policy and strategy in-action.

Block 3: weeks 6 – 10 – digital education strategy & change. In this block, we will be exploring the opportunities and constraints afforded by the organisational-context in relation to e-learning strategies as enablers and constraints on strategic choice and change. Practical tools and instruments will be introduced that aid analysis of policy and strategy and the organisational contexts within which they are worked out.

Block 3 involves assessed contributions through a course blog that represents 40% of your final mark for the course.

Block 4: week 11 - synthesis. The final week of the course will be spent in bringing together the key themes from the course and reflecting on the efficacy of the tools, approaches and theories used throughout the course.

Course reading

All core, and many useful secondary, references for the course are provided online either through the University Digital Library or on public websites. These will be linked to from the specific weekly sections of the course Moodle site, and will be gathered together in the Library section of the site.

In most cases these readings are published papers or chapters for which specific copyright clearance has been obtained, and which are held by the University Library as Portable Document Format (PDF) files.

Some general (and openly available) readings which you may find interesting to dip in to are:

> **European Commission**, (2017), *Transforming Higher Education: how we teach in the digital age. Key messages from the joint PLA in Malta,* 18 January (https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/2016-pla-digital-higher-education_en.pdf)*. This document is the output of a peer learning activity (PLA) on digital skills or competences in higher education. The document gives a brief, and easy to digest, overview of prescriptions for effective digital education provision in higher education. This document is useful read alongside another European Commission document from 2013: *Commission Staff Working Document: Analysis and mapping of innovative teaching and learning for all through new Technologies and Open Education Resources in Europe*. [COM(2013) 654 final] (http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52013SC0341) Pages 1 - 40 are particularly useful for the discussion of particular trends in education with a specific interest in open education.

> **Davies, S., Mullan, J. and Feldman, P.** (2017). *Rebooting learning for the digital age: What next for technology-enhanced higher education?* Higher Education Policy Institute, Report 93. (http://www.hepi.ac.uk/2017/02/02/rebooting-learning-digital-age-next-technology-enhanced-higher-education/). This report gives a useful overview of current issues and practices in UK higher education. It contains a number of fairly shallow descriptions of emerging practices at different UK universities but frames these alongside the wider policy context which is helpful.

> **Siemens, G., Gasevic, D., and Dawson, S**. (2015). *Preparing for the Digital University: a review of the history and current state of distance, blended and online learning.* Athabasca University, Canada. (http://linkresearchlab.org/PreparingDigitalUniversity.pdf). This is a large literature review on the current situation in digital education including: distance education; blended learning; online learning; and assessment and certification (credentialing). The report also examines research on Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and on technology infrastructures for learning. The section on Online Learning (p93-132) as a good starting point with the diagram on the factors that frame educational experience in online learning (p120) is a useful visual representation of the holistic considerations of digital education strategy implementation

Allan, E., and Seaman, J. (2013). *Changing Course: Ten Years of Tracking Online Education in the United States.* Babson Survey Research Group and Quahog Research Group, LLC (http://www.onlinelearningsurvey.com/reports/changingcourse.pdf). This is the tenth annual survey on the state of digital education in Higher Education in the USA and shows a number of key trends from 2002 - 2011. Of particular interest for you may be the sections asking "Is Online Learning Strategic?" (p16) indicating the extent to which Institutions consider digital education to be important to their core strategy (and the gap between the survey findings and the content of strategy documents!).

Rivera-Velez, L.M. and Thibault, F. (2016), *Public Digital Policies in Higher Education*, (http://www.dtransform.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/O1_A1_Eng.pdf). This is an output of the ERASMUS funded project, D-Transform. The report provides a useful overview of public policies for digital higher education in the UK, Spain, France and Italy. The first two sections pages 3 – 13) give a useful perspective on some policy issues for digital higher education in Europe in the context of the wider Europe-wide policies on economic and social development (the Lisbon Strategy and then Europe 2020).

You are really not expected to have read all of these texts before the course starts! However, you may find it interesting and useful to have a look at some sections of one or two of these that look particularly interesting to you.

Participation

Participation in the course activities using the Moodle discussion boards and through your programme WordPress blogs will be expected of all course members.

The **assessed contributions** will be made using your programme WordPress blogs and will require your active participation. The quality of your participation will contribute 40% to the overall course grade. This is outlined below under the 'Assessment' section, with further details provided online within the course Moodle site. You are, of course, welcomed and encouraged to drive online discussion in those directions which seem relevant to them within the defined aims of the course, stimulus to discussion will be provided from:

− details of the course reading;
− specific questions for general discussion offered on a one or two-week cycle.

In your regular contributions to the class discussions the basic rules of 'netiquette' will apply. While robust debate is to be encouraged, please ensure that your contributions are polite and supportive. Someone who expresses an opinion with which you profoundly disagree is doing you a great service; he or she is helping you to articulate an understanding that you may previously not have had. As a recipient of robust criticism understand that the critic is doing a courtesy in engaging with your ideas, and is helping you to refine them.

Some more detailed recommendations about the structuring of your online contributions are provided on the course Moodle site. In the mean time, general guidance can be summed up in the words 'little and often'. To quote from the course guide for *Introduction to Digital Environments for Learning*:

> *Contributions to the discussion don't have to be beautifully structured and written in formal, typo-free academic prose, but they should be reasonably clear and – very important – should function to drive the discussion along in a positive way. Try also to keep your discussion postings reasonably short and to the point – long, very intricate contributions tend not to be read, and can put others off contributing themselves.*

Reflect on your experiences of participating in an *Introduction to Digital Environments for Learning* and what worked best for you in supporting your own learning and that of others on the course.

Assessment

Assessment of the course will be based on two elements:

1) participation in the course activities in Block 3 (40% of your overall mark); and
2) a final course assignment (60% of your overall mark).

1) On-going course activities. The exercises held throughout **Block 3** of the course on the blog and discussion boards will be assessed for 40% of the overall mark. Formative feedback on your contributions in this Block will be provided by the course tutors' and your fellow students' comments on your posts.

While regular and frequent contributions are assumed over the entire period of the course and in particular in Block 3, it is understood that some inevitable gaps will exist due to other commitments or technical difficulties. Please, therefore, keep the tutor informed when your engagement with the course will have to be interrupted. Your contributions should be both original postings (containing new observations and comments), as well as commentary on the postings of other students/ tutors, and be generally helpful in stimulating and supporting the on-line discussion.

The approach to the assessment of discussions and commentaries between participations and contributions will be based on that described by Ravoi (2000) 'Online and traditional assessment: what is the difference?' *Internet and Higher Education*, 3, 141 – 151.

The core criteria for the assessment of the exercises will be:
− Knowledge and understanding of concepts
Does the writing show a critical engagement with the concepts and theories that it introduces?
− Knowledge and use of the literature
Have the relevant key references been used? Have other relevant sources been drawn upon and coherently integrated into the analysis?
− Framing and analysing practice
Does the writing show a developed analytical discussions of practice framed in appropriate theory?
− Development of professional practice
Does the writing show a sound rationale for the purposes of developing practice and for the approaches used.

Detailed instructions on setting up your blog for this course are provided on the course Moodle pages.

2) Assignment. This is a final assignment of 3,000 words and is worth 60% of your final mark. You should select one of the two assignment topics listed below.

Select either:

(i) **An organisational strategy for e-learning.** You will produce a strategy for e-learning development within your own organisation or one of your choice. Guidance will be provided as to the necessary level of detail and scope of this piece of work.

(ii) **An in depth investigation of a specific topic from the course** The specific topic is subject to approval by the course tutors and you should discuss your ideas for this assignment option with us as early as you can.

The three core criteria for the assessment of this work will be:

− Knowledge and understanding of concepts
  Does the writing show a critical engagement with the concepts and theories that it introduces?
− Knowledge and use of the literature
  Have the relevant key references been used? Have other relevant sources been drawn upon and coherently integrated into the analysis?
− Constructing academic discourse
  Has the writing been produced with careful attention to the quality of expression and presentation, and with skilful exposition of ideas?
− Framing and analysing practice
  Does the writing show a developed analytical discussions of practice framed in appropriate theory?

Submission dates

A summary of the submission dates for the two assessed elements of work is given below:

1) **Online discussion.** Compliance with this assessment requirement for Block 3 will be an automatic consequence of participation over the period of the course

   You should expect the feedback and grade for this component of the assessment by **16 April 2018.**

2) **Final assignment.** Submission is due **Monday 23 April 2018.**

   You should expect the feedback and grade on this component of the assessment and your overall course grade by **14 May 2018.**

The postgraduate common marking scheme

Grades will be awarded in line with the University's postgraduate common marking scheme:

Mark	Grade	Description
70% - 100%	A	An excellent performance, satisfactory for a distinction
60% - 69%	B	A very good performance
50% - 59%	C	A good performance, satisfactory for a masters degree
40% - 49%	D	A satisfactory performance for the diploma and certificate, but inadequate for a masters degree
0% - 39%	E	Fail

Further details on the University's common marking scheme can be found in the Examination Regulations on the Web at:
 http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/registry/exams/regulations/common-marking-scheme

For more detail on the regulations that govern the course and the programme you should consult the University's *Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study* (DRPS) which are to be found on the Web at:
  http://www.drps.ed.ac.uk/

Follow the links from there to the general regulations, or to those regulations that apply particularly to taught postgraduate programme.

Credit and continuation of study

Successful completion of this course will give you 20 Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) points at postgraduate level 11. More details of the SCQF can be found on the Web at:
  http://www.scqf.org.uk/

The regulations governing satisfactory progress for continuation to Masters level by work on, and submission of, a dissertation are given in your Programme Handbook.

Course evaluation

There will be a formal, questionnaire-based evaluation at the end of the course and we will greatly appreciate your contributions at that point. Please do not allow any day-by-day concerns to go unaddressed however and please feel free to raise any questions or issues with the tutor when they arise, be they academic or technical, and we will do our best to amend, or work around. We want you to get the most possible out of the

course, and all feedback will be valuable for the future development of the course, and of the programme of which it is a part.

Computer skills and equipment / software that you will need.

There is no assumption that participants on this course, or the programme, will be advanced computer users, although you will be expected to be a regular user of the computer for communication, information search and retrieval, and for writing.

To participate you will need regular access to a computer capable of connecting to the Internet and to the courses' Moodle site and related resources. You should consult the Programme's Technologies Handbook for further, more specific advice and guidance.

You may wish to print copies of the recommended reading materials – unless you are comfortable reading from the screen – in which case access to a printer will be necessary. Although it is perfectly possible to participate in the course through a dial-up connection to the Internet, a broadband connection is likely to provide a more satisfying experience of access.

The basic software applications that you will require will be:

— a Web browser to access the Moodle resources and other recommended sites;
— Acrobat Reader to access course readings
— a word processing application for your writing.

Contact information

For help or advice on any aspect of the course, please contact Peter Evans in the first instance. The normal academic business of the course can be conducted through the Moodle Discussion Forums, and the Moodle mail system within the course. To attract attention more urgently it will be better to use regular email to the address below.

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For help and advice about the wider MSc in Digital Education programme you should contact the Programme Director, Christine Sinclair.

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