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'To enable Fife College staff and students to engage with digital developments, become digitally fluent and enhance their skills and experience for learning, life and work in the digital world'

1. The Context

1.1 The Next Generation

Industry and Government research indicate that digital skills underpin social and economic growth across the world's economy and are vital to ensure that Britain remains productive and globally competitive. Digital skills are needed throughout the population to enable social inclusion and access to public and private digital services. However, market and institutional challenges mean that many businesses are struggling to obtain employees with the necessary digital skills to benefit from these technological opportunities, and many sections of society are missing out on the benefits of the digital economy. There are significant challenges in ensuring that the workforce has the digital skills needed to equip them for job roles that are increasingly becoming digitalised across many recognised industries.

Education and training providers need to better understand and embrace methodologies to address this skills' shortfall. There are clear links between market competitiveness and the uptake and application of digital technology in the workplace. Companies that have a developed ICT infrastructure and take advantage of digital technologies tend to be the most competitive. Conversely, a lack of digital investment (in all its forms) and infrastructure can place companies at a competitive disadvantage.

Fife College, as an education provider and predominately grant in aid funded, is still primarily a business. The challenge it faces is how to become a progressive organisation with a digitally skilled workforce with the skills and ability to provide a high level of service to the local and wider economy. Significant value can be added through planned investment in the digital skills agenda across all areas of the college with a strategic business model which supports development and innovation of digital skills implementation. This not only relates to workforce and pedagogical up-skilling of staff, but also a firm commitment to a progressive transformation of processes, productivity and the overall business model. This requires a clear strategy and vision for the college through effective and positive leadership - empowering workforce efficiency and innovation through strong, clear leadership towards the implementation of a progressive digital skills culture.

Everyone within the education sector needs to recognise and better understand the role of the School, FE and HE digital curriculum and the importance of devising the correct training, in partnership with industry, to best support our customers. This strategy would point to closer working partnerships and new methodologies and improved engagement with primary and secondary schools. The college should continue to develop and build digital skills capacity with industry-relevance across the creative, engineering, science & construction, healthcare, financial services, retail and business areas. This will provide our customers with the skills they need to become employed as part of the modern digital workforce.

As we all recognise, the college outcome agreement places emphasis and focus on skills of strategic importance for Fife and the greater economy addressing the government's 2030 agenda. The college should enhance and further develop closer working partnerships with schools, HE education and industry to deliver training and digital skills which are of particular strategic importance to the Fife economy and beyond. New models require development set against the wider context of innovative and immersive employer partnerships to ensure that college training is contextually relevant to employment. Given the large number of employment opportunities that are likely to be available, significant investment in a digital skills culture and effective business model by the college will ultimately support the Fife economy.

1.2 Digital Skills – Iteration: Doing the same things better

This review sets out to examine current levels of understanding and engagement with the digital skills agenda within Fife College and outlines the risk for the college if the digital skills requirements of businesses and the workforce are not addressed. The findings from a cross section of internal and external consultation meetings throw light on key areas for development, as part of the digital skills strategy for the college. The discussions resulted in reoccurring themes emerging which identified three key areas. There is synergy across these areas, intrinsically linking the requirement to implement a digital skills strategy for the college: - Training, Infrastructure Investment and Culture change.

1.3 Culture – “Develop a culture that educates, supports and encourages new ways of working across digital platforms to support and enhance business productivity”

There are challenges for our institution to fully embrace a digital skills strategy. It should be recognised however that there are many positive progressive areas of customer training and engagement already taking place across the college. Digital skills require continuous improvement across the whole college workforce so that all employees and departments can maximise their potential competitiveness, productivity and efficiency through the application of digital technologies. This can and should align to the new college business and commercial strategy. We recognise there is a need to take action by continuously up-skilling our workforce. This strategy will ensure that the college is best placed to tender and deliver to new markets that require digital skills.

1.4 Workforce Up-skilling & Training

The college requires staff members on all levels to be digitally literate; however this statement should be qualified: our staff members require standardised skills that allow a basic and minimum understanding of digital platforms and applications. CLPL training for staff members requires a new vision and approach. Whilst we all recognise the new and, in most cases, additional digital skills required in the workplace, the training provided should be intrinsically linked to the application of new skills and awareness of global trends and developments which will support new business development and working methodologies. Where skills are acquired by staff members within curriculum areas, this will support a new pedagogical approach within the classroom and across curriculum departments allowing for greater student and staff interactive engagement lesson planning.

The skills required by all staff members are many and varied, however across all departments there is a key minimum requirement linked to the digital information process that is applicable to the business aspirations and vision of the college. An investment in relevant digital skills CLPL for our workforce will challenge our current culture; however, a workforce with new skills and greater awareness of digital technologies and systems will provide a significant uptake in the productivity the college requires to be competitive in the regional and wider business market place. The challenge for college management is the correct implementation, delivery and engagement of new relevant CLPL for the workforce in a supportive yet driven manner through positive leadership and ultimately change management which is clear in its objectives, training and outcomes. This includes skills which are linked to the sustainable development of new products and customer services.

1.5 Digital Skills – Disruption: Doing new things that make the old ones obsolete

The focus for the college management team is to provide a digital skills strategy and innovative leadership which the workforce will respond to and, more importantly, deliver. The other critical role is to focus our strategy on greater partnership, working with schools, local authority and employers to deliver solutions that address the digital skills agenda and provide career pathways for everyone.

The business development team should work to develop new and innovative partnerships with industry to better understand which digital skills are of particular importance for student employment and new business. This partnership working would not only identify emerging trends but also provide an opportunity for the college to proactively inform and support employers that may require up-skilling through commercial training.

Part of the college digital skills strategy should address CLPL in key areas of strategic importance, including cyber security, data analytics, big data, the Internet of Things, mobile apps and e-commerce solutions. CLPL relating to emerging technologies which offer the potential to support self-directed and barrier-free learning such as mobile technologies, VR, AR and MOOCs must be offered.

All of which will allow the college to set in place positive changes that ensure digital skills are embedded in our curriculum delivery and training. This in turn will allow our students, customers and individuals to participate fully in the modern digital economy, whether as tech specialists, leaders of digitally-enabled businesses or workers in digitally-enabled jobs across the economy i.e. computing, engineering, health care, digital marketing, build environment, service industries and creative & digital industries.

A new college CLPL training programme should be developed to provide an innovative approach to setting the minimum standards of digital skills and digital literacy training the workforce urgently requires. Support for staff members to embrace greater understanding of current/new digital systems require supportive work patterns which address and implement new CLPL planning as part of continued new investment in people and infrastructure by the college. This training programme should include the digital skills that are transferable across different roles within the workplace allowing for a digital multi-skilled workforce fit for purpose.

The college has to develop and adapt to meet the changing needs of the digital economy and align to working within the policy and funding frameworks established by the Funding Council, Scottish Government, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Education, and Culture Media and Sport. Establishing partnerships to develop and deliver national standards to raise digital skills levels for our employees and further provide our customers with skills in digital literacy is now a key strategic objective for the college.

Fife College as an educational training provider must ensure we understand how the supply of educational courses, in terms of quality and quantity, can meet the demand for digital skills in the wider economy. As a college, our curriculum alignment to industry through the appropriate portfolio of higher education courses will provide the specialist and digital skills training required for our students to gain employment in key sectors i.e. Data Analytics, Software Development, Marketing, Robotics, Healthcare, Engineering and Service industries. Our FE digital curricula should be devised and further strengthened through closer partnership working with industry, to provide students and staff members with the skills they will need in their roles across the workforce.

The college digital skills and marketing strategy have a responsibility to motivate and inspire young people, particularly females, to consider digital careers. The college academic departments need to encourage more young people, particularly females, to continue digital education and pursue careers in this growth sector. Through our School College Partnership team, we need to better inform school pupils about the advantages of a career in digital, making it an attractive proposition compared to traditional vocations. We should also better promote the advantages of vocational routes such as FA, MA & degree apprenticeships in addition to traditional higher education routes.

2. Conclusions & Recommendations

Digital Skills – Innovation: Doing new things

2.1. Digital Fluency – Giving staff and students the digital knowledge and skills they need

CLPL – A Staff training model to attain a minimum recognised digital skills standard for our workforce is essential. Current CLPL training provided to academic staff by learning technology, whilst informative toward systems such as i-Learn, etc. in the main fail to fully grasp academic delivery needs. The engagement and implementation of these skills by academics do not fully transfer back into the classroom in part due to the continued fear or lack of comprehension by a percentage of staff members to digital platforms, processes and the confidence to support their use in a classroom environment.

In reality the model of a service area driving and providing digital direction, engagement and delivery models for curriculum training can be questioned. There is a role reversal here, staff training needs to be better addressed by academic staff; peer to peer sharing, inter departmental training events? Whilst these models have provided success across academic areas further development is required to fully include digital skills training which will consistently move our workforce culture and raise the minimum standard for everyone to a required level for the business. Digital skill needs across our workforce in both academic and support areas may differ in staff skillsets applications and processes; however the requirement delivery models must remain consistent for all to attain additional digital fluency and skills.

The appointment of a specific digital skills advisor/coordinator to implement staff training is one model to be considered. Further consultation with the appropriate staff members as a working group to explore new models should be implemented and led by senior staff from Digital & Academic areas.

2.2 Digital Services – Providing increasingly intuitive and personalised services based on user needs

The formation of a Digital Skills Academy by the college as a stand alone or in partnership with industry will provide a recognised centre of excellence for digital skills training across the STEM/STEAM sector. The college outcome agreement places emphasis and focus on skills of strategic importance for the Fife and greater economy addressing the government's 2030 agenda. Given the large number of training opportunities that are likely to be available across key STEM areas such as engineering, science and technologies, investment in a commercial digital skills academy business model by the college may provide additional revenue and further support the Fife economy.

STEM subject areas require additional support and input from academic specialists to deliver digital skills to a workforce in transition with new and emerging technologies. The shortage for employment in these key sectors is largely based on potential employees lacking digital skills to allow engagement with technologies. The college has an opportunity to develop a commercial Digital Skills Academy model to address this shortfall in digital skills delivery in turn providing an additional source of income.

Further consultation with the appropriate staff members as a working group to explore this Academy model should be implemented and led by senior staff from Digital & Academic areas.

2.3 Model 2

The formation of a Future Skills Academy by the college as a stand alone or in partnership with industry will provide a recognised centre of excellence for digital skills and enterprise training across the business and entrepreneurial sector. The blend of digital skills and enterprise provide training opportunities that are likely to be available across business sector such as Business IT, Social & Digital marketing platforms and enterprise. Development and investment in a commercial Future Skills academy business model by the college may ultimately provide additional revenue and further support the Fife economy by leveraging existing partnerships with CISCO, Microsoft, Fujitsu Adobe, Autodesk, Oracle, Google and the developing new relationships with emerging tech companies such as EON Realities.

2.4 Digital Innovation – Developing a culture that encourages new ways of working

Culture: Digital skills permeate every aspect of our lives. We are inundated with choices from an ever expanding range of digital service providers designed to enhance our lives. Providers recognise the importance of adapting to customer expectations by embracing new technologies. In contrast, some areas of the college struggle with the cultural challenges of adopting new technologies. As a service provider the College must address customer's high expectations and provide a modern digital experience.

The challenge for the college workforce is recognising the potential advantage of incorporating new technologies within their existing professional skillsets and engaging with a dynamic CLPL models to meet our business requirements. Where confidence issues remain, staff must be supported to engage with CLPL through change management processes. Potential benefits must be highlighted to staff as part of this process and linked to the college's vision statement.

Empowering staff through the provision of a clear digital skills strategy, supported by an effective training programme will remove the barriers that currently exist within internal departments and provide the confidence and momentum staff need to embrace the implementation of a progressive (Future) digital skills culture within the college.

The appointment of a digital skills advisor/coordinator to implement staff training and CLPL should be considered and it is recommended that consultation take place with suitable staff members, or an appropriate working group be established to explore new digital pedagogies. This should be led by senior staff from Digital & Academic areas.

2.5 Future Skills – Training staff and students with digital knowledge and skills

Digital Skills – CLPL Academic Staff, Pedagogical Engagement

- a. Greater use of specialist staff – Peer to Peer training
- b. Sharing digital skills & knowledge, what should this look like?
- c. On-line training & Open Learning resources for all students & staff members, qualifications (i.e. Internet of Things, etc.)
- d. Greater emphasis on social media training and social media promotion within curriculum teams, greater understanding of the benefits of social media and marketing. (the more the message is out there)
- e. Workforce capacity to absorb training?

2.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, we, the college, have a responsibility to ensure our students, staff and stakeholders have the opportunity to develop, learn and experience their full potential within a digital skills environment. The outlined detail contained in the paper is the first step toward an all college development to address key resource areas as part of the Digital Skills strategy for the Fife College.

3. Next Steps:

- 3.1 Development of a coherent Fife College future digital skills branding strategy, in partnership with key stakeholders, which reflects global economic growth of this dynamic sector.
- 3.2 Consider and detail within faculty Portfolio Review document how digital skills strategies will be implemented within individual areas.
- 3.3 Creation of a SLWG to innovatively explore further CLPL training models in digital skills to significantly contribute to the development of high quality learning and teaching strategies to transform education in Fife College.
- 3.4 The formation of a Digital Skills Academy in partnership with local, national and international organisations to create a recognised centre of excellence for digital skills and enterprise training across the key sectors.
- 3.5 Development of a digital social media strategy which embraces the shifting competitive landscape of digitisation within the college education sector and fully engages all stakeholders nationally and internationally.

4. Action Plan

Strategic Aim Alignment	Action
Aim 1	Development of a coherent Fife College future digital skills branding strategy, in partnership with key stakeholders, which reflects global economic growth of this dynamic sector.
Aim 2	Consider and detail within faculty Portfolio Review document how digital skills strategies will be implemented within individual areas.
Aim 3	Creation of a SLWG to innovatively explore further CLPL training models in digital skills to significantly contribute to the development of high quality learning and teaching strategies to transform education in Fife College.
Aim 4	The formation of a Digital Skills Academy in partnership with local, national and international organisations to create a recognised centre of excellence for digital skills and enterprise training across the key sectors.
Aim 5	Development of a digital social media strategy which embraces the shifting competitive landscape of digitisation within the college education sector and fully engages all stakeholders nationally and internationally.

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