

## Forum Insights for Managers in Higher Education

### REPORT

High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education, Report to the European Commission on New Modes of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (October 2014), [http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/reports/modernisation-universities\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/reports/modernisation-universities_en.pdf).

### Key insights for Managers

*'New and emerging technologies are already starting to have a transformative effect on higher education provision. There is every reason to harness the potential of these developments in the service of high quality higher education. But to do that effectively we need to both widen and deepen our understanding of how these new technologies and pedagogical tools can be an integral part of the way higher education is delivered, and identify what measures can be taken to further stimulate, facilitate and advance it' (p.14).*

#### The transformative potential of new technologies

- 'Traditional degree programmes are modernising. Teachers and students alike have access to a wider range of materials, and new technologies and pedagogical approaches are being "blended" with the traditional classroom setting. There has been a shift in the concept of and attitude towards distance education. Increasingly, people are opting to study online. In tandem, these forms of learning are becoming more recognised and more widely accepted in society. As a result both traditional higher education institutions and new types of providers are developing a range of online offerings' (p.15).
- 'New and emerging approaches to learning and teaching, made possible by new technologies' can enhance the provision of 'high quality, relevant and widely accessible higher education' (p.18).
- Online programme provision and open access to educational resources supports the internationalisation of higher education. 'Internationalising the student and staff body, and developing global partnerships with leading institutions worldwide, enhances the quality of learning, teaching and research, and contributes significantly to the student experience' (p.20).

#### Building digital capacity

- Embracing the potential of new technologies 'will involve significant changes in how higher education institutions operate, as well as a change in culture and mindset' (p.10).
- 'The integration of new technologies and pedagogies needs to be placed at the heart of institutions' teaching and learning strategies, and they should become an integral component of everyday institutional business. [...]

Institutional strategies should set out a coherent framework for the development of new modes of delivery as part of an institution's offering, the embedding of innovative technologies and pedagogies in curricula and the provision of appropriate training for academic staff and students.' (p.27).

- 'Institutional leaders need to consistently communicate the expectation that all staff [...] must become more active, skilled and experienced in using new, innovative pedagogical tools and provide the support they need to meet that expectation' (p.27).
- While 'the use of technology, open and online learning is scalable', the development of an institution's digital capacity 'requires dedicated expert staffing resources, training and professional development for teaching staff, infrastructural investment and [...] significant time and effort on the part of the academics delivering the courses (p.36).
- In order to mainstream new modes of learning and teaching and to expand online learning opportunities, academic staff need training, guidance and support to enable engagement with new technologies and associated pedagogies, both in initial training and continuing professional development (p.31).
- 'Creating hubs [...] in digital learning and appointing senior staff as "champions" can ensure the ongoing [...] development of innovative approaches. Appointing specialist staff such as learning technologists, ICT experts and educational developers will provide institutions with up-to-date professional expertise which can support academic staff across the institution. [...] These types of centralised structures can also ensure that a common institutional approach is taken to the challenging aspects of open and online provision such as copyright, intellectual property and validation of learning' (p.27).
- 'There is considerable scope for cooperation across institutions and across borders in relation to designing digital learning strategies, infrastructural supports and frameworks for pedagogical training' (p.29).
- 'Institutions should also be seeking opportunities to collaborate with external partners. [...] There are a range of companies now providing higher education services such as assessment and certification' and 'developing innovative products which can complement an institution's offering' (p.27).

#### Advancing the open access agenda

- Institutions should 'promote a culture of openness' in relation to education and research, thereby 'ensuring that high quality materials are accessible to all, and can be

adapted and customised to learners' needs and specific circumstances' (p.47).

- 'In public tenders open licenses should be a mandatory condition, so that content can be altered, reproduced and used elsewhere. In publicly (co)-funded educational resources, the drive should be to make materials as widely available as possible' (p.48).
- 'Creative Commons licenses provide a simple, standardised way to arrange copyright by giving public permission to share and use educational material on conditions that can be tailored to specific needs' (p.47).

### Learning analytics and data-protection

- 'Data can capture how students engage in the course, interact with other students and retain concepts over time. It can provide information on the learning process as opposed to just learning outcomes. Teachers can experiment with different approaches and examine the immediate impact. Data can also be used to identify at-risk students at an early stage, assisting in efforts to increase retention rates. [...] The massive availability and usability of data has also great potential for empirical research on learning and teaching' (p.21).
- 'Organisations which collect and manage personal information must protect it from misuse and must respect certain rights of the data owners which are guaranteed by EU law' (p.49).
- While 'almost all European universities use central electronic learning environments, giving access to course documents, multimedia material, simulations, assessment tools, discussion fora and learning communities', the 'absence of clear information on authorised uses of specific online learning deters users' (p.47).
- 'Online platforms should inform users about their privacy and data protection policy in a clear and understandable way. Individuals should always have the choice to anonymise their data' (p.51).
- Institutions should obtain 'the full and informed consent of students' for the collection and analysis of data pertaining to their learning, which 'should only be used for educational purposes' (p.50).

### Engaging with students

- 'Advances in big data and data analytics are [...] creating opportunities for institutions to better understand the needs of students and develop more personalised learning pathways' with 'the potential to transform the learning experience and enhance completion rates' (p.49).
- 'New technologies and communication platforms [...] allow for greater interactivity between the teacher and the student, and between students. [...] While much of the content of programmes can be delivered through "self-administered" e-learning, teachers can concentrate on their role as mentor, developing with students the skills of information management, understanding and questioning, critical thinking and knowledge application. Thus, digital media can facilitate more active, problem-based learning' (p.19).

- 'Digital assessment tools can enable quick feedback on student progress and curriculum adjustment to student needs. Technology's potential [...] to complete the move [...] from the mere transmission of information to a co-partnership in learning' can enhance the student-learning experience (p.19).
- 'Institutions must [...] provide digital skills training for students, especially for first year students' in order to support their learning and enhance their skills-base (p.31).
- 'Institutions must [...] replicate the softer skills [e.g. peer-interaction] acquired during an on-campus learning experience in online offerings', e.g. via Google hangouts (p.31).

### Assessment and accreditation

- Assessing learning outcomes online is challenging because 'it requires trustworthy mechanisms for the verification of online participants' identities'. However 'new forms of authentication such as webcam identification, typing pattern recognition and online proctored exams with online simultaneous supervision are helping to develop credibility' (p.44).
- The recognition and accreditation of the skills acquired through online learning is essential to 'instil confidence in the quality of the learning outcomes'. The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) provides a framework to facilitate this (p.44).

### Quality assurance

- 'Institutions should ensure that quality assurance arrangements apply to all forms of credit-awarding provision' and 'should use the quality assurance system to monitor retention rates and inform the development of appropriate supports' (p.43).
- The growing trend towards the external quality assurance of entire institutions, rather than individual programmes, helps to ensure that 'quality assurance procedures do not act as a barrier to the emergence of creative and innovative pedagogical developments and course design', but rather support 'the integration of emerging technologies and new pedagogies within normal provision' (p.39).
- 'Teaching and learning in digitalised formats allow ex-ante peer reviews of course material and these should become an integral part of quality assurance of online provision' (p.39).