ALL ABOARD!
Enabling and Empowering Staff & Students to Flourish in the Digital Age

Overview:

This project aims to develop a National Digital Skills Framework for Irish Higher Education that will capture the range of knowledge, skills and attributes that are relevant for the wide diversity of roles and experiences encountered as we work or study. The range of skills is as wide as possible, to encompass the diversity of the sector and is not restricted to academic staff and students, but aims to be of value to everyone in the sector. The project will produce (and release under a flexible CC licence) a set of training materials and resources some of which will be for individual self-study and others aimed at providing tools for learning technologists, staff developers and trainer to run their own workshops. In addition, the project is exploring the use of 'digital badges' as a practical means of capturing and recognizing learning and competences in this domain and is facilitating a number of pilot badge implementations.

We have, thus far:

- undertaken a number of open consultations (and many more are planned);
- contacted experts in relevant fields and other projects (eg. the Badge Alliance, MacArthur Foundation support for badges, Mozilla Foundation, Doug Belshaw, Helen Beetham, Library organisations, etc);
- begun to explore related activities in partner institutions with which we can connect (eg the refinement of Graduate Attributes, employability programmes, student partnerships, etc);
- organized a conference (June 19th) and participated in/ presented at other events (eg EdTech 15 – at which two presentations were made on the project and in which we sought input on the draft skills framework);
- completed a review of Digital Skills & Literacy projects completed (or underway) in other institutions and countries;
- drafted a working model of the Digital Skills Framework and are beginning to populate it with specific items with a view to scheduling the production of supporting materials;
- reviewed, tested and compared a variety of technical platforms for badge issuing and learning materials development/hosting (including BadgeOS implementation on our own server, Credly accounts, use of Articulate & Learn Dash for SCORM compliant packages, etc);
- issued badges on a pilot basis;
- launched our project website (http://allaboardhe.org/ and blog and begun early stage scoping of a more extensive communications strategy (including video podcasts and seminars).

Partners:
The partners in the project are:

NUI Galway
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Key outcomes:

As above in the overview, but specific outcomes/outputs to date include:

- A Draft National Digital Skills Framework
- A growing network of pilot projects for badge implementation
- Hosting of, and participation in events such as conferences and workshops (Visitors & Residents Mapping (Galway, March); EdTech15 (Limerick, May); 'Getting real about virtual learning' (Galway, June)
- Project Website
- Badge Issuing and Learning Materials server

Benefits to the HE sector, nationally:

- Networking and drawing together a range of interests, perspectives, roles and responsibilities;
- Providing a framework to facilitate staff development and student skills
- Development of policy and practice guidelines for the use of a range of tools and teaching approaches such as badges, workshop facilitation and online learning;
- Ensuring that Ireland participates in the growing international interest in micro-credentialing, digital skills development and competency-based education.
- Provision of materials for training, teaching and learning (forthcoming)

Benefits to students:

- Providing a digital skills framework and resources which students can use either on an individual basis or as part of their programmes of study, mapping their knowledge and skills as well as building confidence in the use of digital technologies;
- Providing opportunities to showcase their achievements through the use of (transferrable) digital badges;
- Indirect benefits in terms of the improvement in confidence and creativity (potentially) of those who teach and support their learning in the use of a wide range of digital tools.

Work that complements this project:

- The area of digital literacies is hugely topical and there are a large number of related initiatives in many countries as well as international policies, frameworks and guidelines (eg the work of JISC and UCISA in the UK). Our project is doing its utmost to maintain currency and connection with as many relevant fora as possible, paying particular attention to those at a national and European level.
- The emerging professional development framework for those who teach in HE will also present a number of opportunities for close liaison and cooperation.
- The second call for the Teaching Enhancement Fund also presents an excellent opportunity for collaboration in terms of using and modifying the Digital Skills Framework in addition to being able to offer advice and support on the design and issuing of digital badges for work taking place under the auspices of the national TEL weeks initiative.

Next Steps:

- We are currently preparing the details of scheduling of materials development and release for the training aspects of the project and the coming few months will have a considerable focus on the development of such resources.
- We plan to identify and support a number of pilot implementations across the partner institutions for the coming Academic Year, linking with Graduate Attribute definitions, working with staff development and learning technology units, as well as providing resources for other institutions to utilise.
- The student dimension is one which we recognise needs to be strengthened for the next phase and now that the various SU posts have been filled we are in contact to arrange meetings, plan a series of activities, etc. The TEL weeks will also be a catalyst for much of this work, but we are keen to explore the possibility of implementing variants of models of student-staff partnerships which we think are particularly relevant for digital skills.