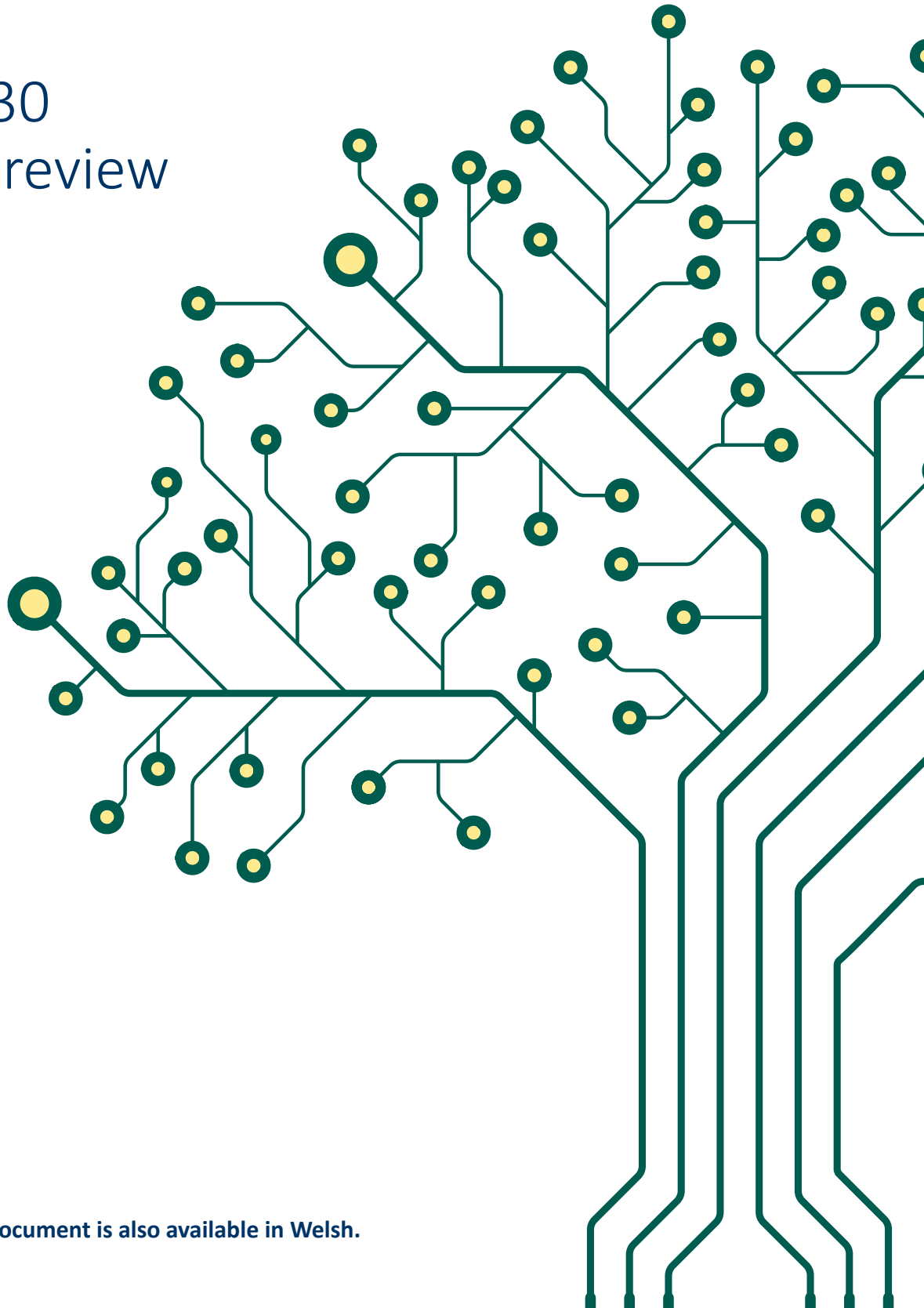
Digital 2030

Medr
Y Comisiwn Addysg Drydyddol ac Ymchwil
Commission for Tertiary Education and Research

User Stories

Digital 2030 mid-term review



August 2026

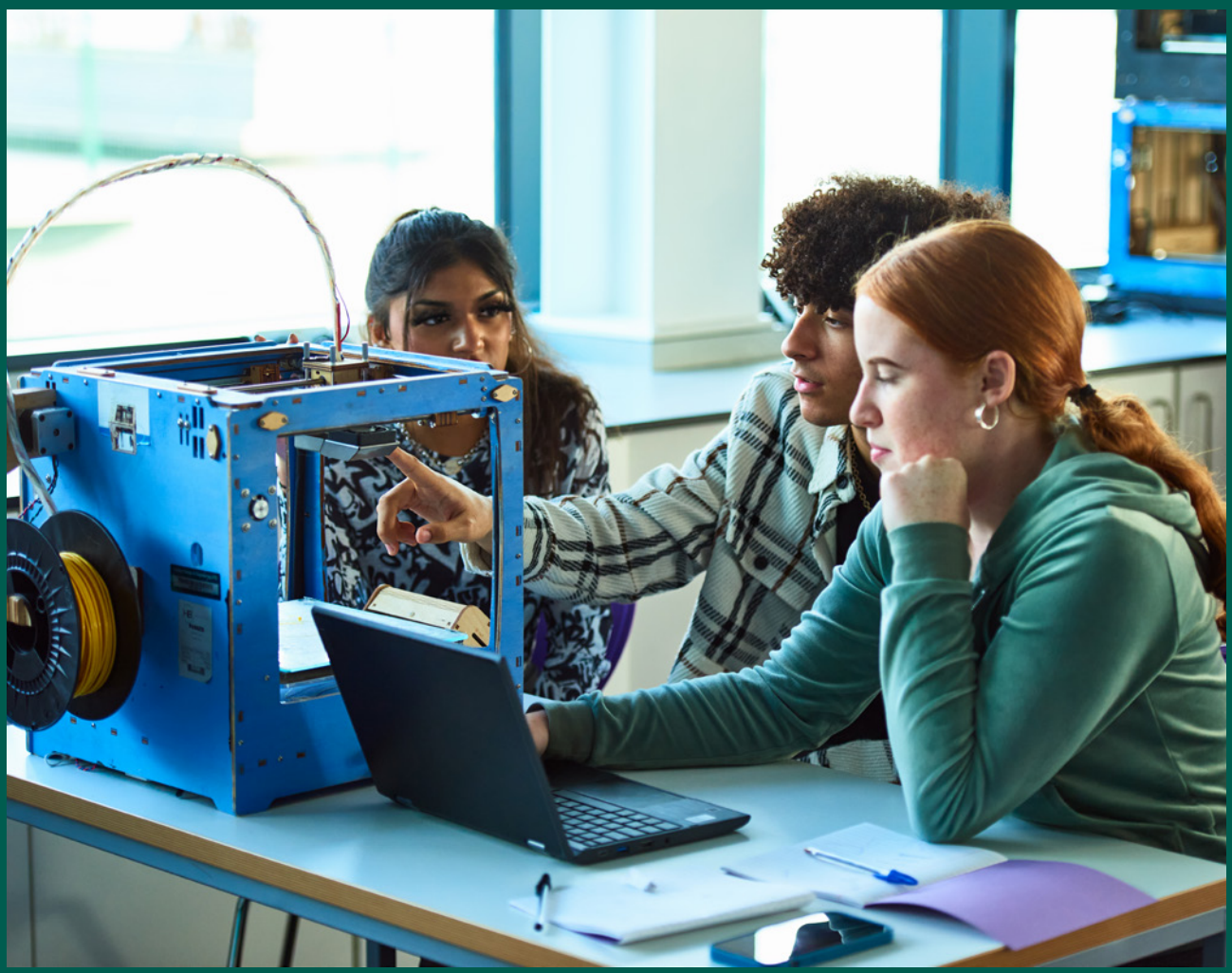
Jisc

This document is also available in Welsh.

Digital 2030 Mid-Term Review User stories from across post-16 digital learning in Wales

Digital 2030 is the strategic framework for digital learning across post-16 education in Wales. These short stories illustrate some of the recurring themes and developments identified through a mid-term review of the framework. Drawing on reflections shared by staff and learners across Wales, they highlight how digital learning is being experienced in different post-16 contexts.

Together, they reflect a system that has made substantial progress, while continuing to navigate the challenges that come with embedding digital learning more consistently and sustainably over time.





Digital 2030 as a strategic reference point

A senior leader at a further education (FE) college described Digital 2030 as a useful strategic reference point rather than a separate initiative to adopt.

The framework broadly aligned with the direction the organisation was already taking and helped bring greater structure and legitimacy to that work by providing a shared language for planning, prioritisation and improvement. Its non-prescriptive nature was appreciated, allowing the college to interpret it in ways that made sense for its own learners, staff and local context.

When funding linked to the Digital 2030: A Call to Action became available, it helped the organisation move more quickly from intention to implementation. Investment in infrastructure and equipment supported priorities that had already been identified, including improving access to digital tools and creating more reliable foundations for blended and flexible learning.

The senior leader also reflected that this kind of investment created space to think more deliberately about longer-term digital development, including staff capability and the wider learner experience. They noted that where funding is tightly linked to capital or short-term delivery, there are limits to how far organisations are able to use it to support the deeper organisational work needed to embed digital practice consistently over time.

Across the review, Digital 2030 was described as something that helped legitimise and accelerate priorities that were already emerging.



A learner experience that feels joined up

A quality lead at a further education (FE) college described how learner feedback had highlighted differences in the way digital tools and platforms were being used across a single programme.

Within the same course, learners were encountering different ways of accessing materials, submitting work and receiving communication. In some modules, everything was organised clearly within the college's main platform. In others, staff were using different structures or additional channels, meaning learners often had to work out where to find information and what was expected of them each time.

None of these approaches was necessarily ineffective in isolation. The challenge was the cumulative effect of repeatedly having to adjust. For learners balancing study with other commitments, or those still developing digital confidence, the inconsistency created avoidable friction.

The quality lead reflected that staff had been acting with good intentions, but there had been less shared discussion about what a coherent digital experience should look like.

This prompted the curriculum team to act. Time was set aside to agree common expectations around how materials were organised, how communication was handled and how work was submitted. Staff did not have to teach in identical ways, but the shared framework made it easier for learners to navigate their learning across the programme.

The review identified that the challenge is less about whether digital approaches were being used, and more about how coherently and predictably they were experienced by learners across programmes and courses.



Inclusion, starting points and appropriate digital practice

A senior leader at a further education (FE) college described how improving digital inclusion had required the organisation to think beyond basic access and focus more closely on how learners experienced digital learning in practice.

One area of change involved reducing learners' dependence on staff to access devices. Instead of relying on tutors to issue equipment when needed, the college introduced a more flexible approach that allowed learners to collect and return devices independently. The organisation also began moving away from the assumption that digital learning had to happen in fixed IT rooms, experimenting with more mobile and adaptable learning spaces.

The changes were intended to support flexibility, but they also had a clear inclusion benefit. Learners who might previously have struggled to access devices consistently were better able to take part in learning with less friction. Staff observed that digital access was increasingly becoming part of the normal learner experience rather than something that had to be specially arranged.

The senior leader reflected that this kind of progress depended on recognising learners' different starting points and designing around them. Effective digital practice, in this context, meant creating conditions in which learners could participate more independently, more confidently and with fewer avoidable barriers.

Several participants reflected that digital inclusion is not only shaped by whether devices and connectivity are available, but by how access is organised and experienced in practice. Designing around learners' actual starting points, rather than assumed ones, emerged as an important part of creating more inclusive digital learning opportunities.



Digital progress in apprenticeships

A leader working in apprenticeships described how digital approaches had clearly improved access and flexibility.

Remote meetings, blended delivery and online communication had reduced unnecessary travel and made it easier to stay connected with learners across a wide geographical area. Some aspects of support and review could now happen more efficiently than would have been possible a few years earlier.

However, learners were often based in workplaces with very different digital environments, expectations and restrictions. In some sectors, access to devices or systems during the working day was limited. In others, employer policies, information governance requirements or the practical nature of the role shaped what could realistically be done digitally.

The leader reflected that digital ambition always had to be balanced with the realities of delivery. Effective practice depended on understanding the learner's context, the employer environment and the constraints of the qualification itself.

Across the review, providers described the importance of balancing digital ambition with the realities of employer environments, sector expectations and delivery constraints. Progress was often shaped as much by these wider conditions as by provider capability alone.



AI uncertainty and changing expectations

A practitioner working across an apprenticeship partnership described the challenge of navigating AI in a practical, day-to-day sense.

Guidance existed at organisational level, but expectations were not always consistent across the different settings in which teaching and assessment took place. Learners were sometimes receiving different messages about what was and was not acceptable, depending on which part of the programme they were engaged with.

The practitioner reflected that staff were trying to respond thoughtfully and responsibly but the pace of change meant that institutional guidance was struggling to keep up with what was actually happening in classrooms and workplaces. In many cases, experimentation was informing practice rather than the other way around.

At the same time, the same practitioner described real and tangible benefits. AI tools had made certain aspects of feedback faster and more accessible and had reduced some of the administrative workload that had previously absorbed significant time. The issue was less about whether AI was useful and more about how its use could be understood, communicated and governed consistently across different learning and assessment settings.

Participants consistently described AI as something already shaping day-to-day teaching, learning and assessment practice. The challenge was increasingly about how its use could be understood, communicated and governed consistently.



Building digital confidence through participation

A digital lead at a further education (FE) college reflected on a learner who became involved in supporting wider digital activities within the organisation outside of the formal requirements of their course.

What began as occasional involvement during practical sessions developed over time into a more regular volunteer role supporting the digital team with activities, troubleshooting and learner engagement.

The learner became increasingly confident working with digital tools and supporting others who were less familiar with them. Staff described them as someone who had become a trusted and visible part of the wider digital environment within the organisation, despite this not being something formally planned as part of the learner's programme.

After completing their qualification, the learner moved into a digital role in industry. They later described these experiences as an important part of building confidence, practical capability and a sense that digital work was something they could actively contribute to.

The member of staff reflected that this had not been a planned outcome. It developed from a learning environment in which digital practice was visible, purposeful and shared openly between staff and learners.

They noted that confidence with digital tools often develops through participation and everyday experience rather than through formal digital skills training alone.