Digital literacies institutional audit: notes

General note: about this audit
This audit was developed to support a JISC-funded study into [Learning Literacies in the Digital Age](#). Many of the auditors involved in that study found that the process of gathering information was helpful for raising the profile of digital literacy work in their institution, and for generating discussion across roles and departments.

You may feel frustrated that the audit does not capture the nuances of practice in different departments, or any direct evidence from learners and academic staff. In the LLiDA study we gathered over 40 ['best practice' snapshots](#) to communicate this kind of evidence, and there are now ten ['Supporting Learners in a Digital Age' case studies](#) which explore institutional responses to the digital literacy agenda in more detail. We invite further 'best practice' submissions to the LLiDA web site (contact lou.mcgill@gmail.com) and to the digital literacies discussion list (contact helen.beetham@googlemail.com). The audit itself is a broad-brush approach to capturing and moving forward practice in an institution or large faculty/school.

General note: carrying out the audit
We designed the audit to help you raise awareness of digital literacies at your institution, as well as collecting data to benchmark the current situation. We suggest you use sections 2 and 3 to help you identify individuals with responsibility for digital literacies, and sections 4 and 5 to identify individuals who are doing innovative work in their own contexts without necessarily having a special role or responsibility. These people will be able to provide the information you need to complete the relevant sections of the audit, along with some institutional documents which we help you to identify in section 2.

We suggest that you invite as many of these people as possible to a focus group or meeting to help you complete sections 6 and 7, which involve more reflection and judgement. It would be particularly valuable to involve student representatives at this point in the audit process. However, it is possible to complete these sections by drawing on existing evidence and the views of a small number of people closely involved in digital literacy support.

You are welcome to adapt this word document to meet your institutional needs, and to translate it into other media to support discussion and data capture.

General note: terms and scope
In this audit we use the term 'digital literacy' to mean *the range of practices that underpin effective learning in a digital age*. These practices may be described by your institution in many different ways. We would definitely include in our definition:

> - Academic practice, study skills, learning skills, learning to learn, learning development etc, *as these are changing to meet new digital demands and opportunities*
> - Information literacy, research skills, critical information literacy
> - (multi)media literacy, critical media literacy, communication skills
> - ICT skills, digital skills, techno-literacy, e-skills

Box 1: example skills, attributes and practices

Less specific terms you may hear include digital fluency, digital citizenship, digital scholarship, and employability/graduate attributes (for a digital economy and society)

Section 2
This section is intended to capture your institution's strategic priorities as they relate to digital literacies. It is not concerned with how well the institution meets those priorities in practice (there is room to explore this later!). Rather than quoting from strategic documents, try to list the key points that are relevant. Just identifying the documents that have something relevant to say is an important first step to developing a coherent institutional approach.

Question 2.1

By strategic documents we mean published strategies and policies such as an e-learning strategy, learning and teaching strategy, student skills strategy or ICT strategy. However, you might also find that important statements are made in less public documents such as the strategic plans of services, internal briefing papers, and academic frameworks such as a learning skills or competences mapping. Use your judgement to decide which are most relevant.

If strategic planning is highly devolved e.g. to colleges or departments, we suggest you choose one or two devolved strategies as examples to illustrate the most common priorities.

Question 2.2

Refer to Box 1 if this is helpful.

Question 2.3

For example, you might include:

- By whom is support to be provided (roles, responsibilities)?
- To whom is support to be provided (all students, students identified as being at risk, self-selecting students etc)?
- What kind of support (skills modules, drop-in surgeries, online resources etc) in what contexts (library, computer lab, teaching sessions)?
- Is the focus on central services, schools and departments, or both (or neither)?
- Are there any resource commitments, for example funding or staff development?

Box 2: strategic details

Section 3

In this section we are concerned with ongoing, centrally-located support to learners. Section 4 will deal with special projects and initiatives. Section 5 will deal with support that is integrated into programmes of study. However, if your institution operates a 'hub and spoke' model for some aspects of provision, with staff in departments that share a local and central role (and/or funding), you could include the 'spoke' staff here.

Question 3.1

Supporting learners' digital literacy might be the responsibility of a wide range of different departments and services, for example:

- Library or learning resource centre
- Learning development, learning support
- e-learning team
- ICT support staff
- Personal tutors
- Advice and guidance services e.g. careers, employability
- Outreach and widening participation
- Accessibility and inclusion
- Staff involved in supporting work-based learners

Box 3: student services

We are concerned principally with services provided directly to students, but there may be central services e.g. e-learning, staff development, that support *staff* to support and develop learning literacies more effectively. Do include these services if they are active and relevant at your institution.

Question 3.2

Refer back to Box 1 if this is helpful.

Question 3.3

The following types of support are often provided, but this section can also pick up on innovative ways of providing support which might be cascaded to other areas.

- Induction session(s)
- Workshop(s)
- (Input to) specialist module(s)
- Drop-in services
- One-to-one tutorials

- Assessment/diagnostic service
- Email or telephone support
- Online resources
- Information, advice and guidance
- Staff development (support for staff supporting students)
- Peer mentoring (students supporting students)

Box 4: types of support and provision

Section 4

Initiatives covered here might be externally funded initiatives such as CETLs, subject centres, JISC or HEA projects, or institutional initiatives designed to effect change around a specific agenda.

Question 4.3

For example: which staff and students are involved in the initiative, who is expected to act (differently) to achieve the aims, what new opportunities or resources are being made available?

Sections 5, 6 and 7

In these sections we are concerned with general or typical practice, i.e. outside of special projects and initiatives. These are the sections we strongly recommend that you complete through consultation and/or a focus group approach with colleagues across the institution, as the picture may be very diverse. In addition to the specialist staff identified in sections 3 and 4, you could cascade your audit to people *they* are in contact with, i.e. teaching staff, senior managers, student reps and others, who have taken a particular interest in the digital literacies of learners.

An important aim of doing the audit is to promote discussion around a change agenda and to hear different points of view. However, the audit does not need to be a major consultation exercise. Two or three people with a good overview of the situation can still provide a very useful 'state of play' if time and resources are constrained. It is important, however, to look beyond those parts of the institution where digital literacy is in common use as a term. One way of thinking about these sections is that they test section 2 (what policy documents say is happening in digital literacies) against what is really happening on the ground.

Section 5

This section deals with skills and literacies that are embedded into programmes of study, whether in separate modules and sessions with a skills/literacies focus, or embedded in the teaching and learning approach.

If your institution does not design and validate its own programmes, go straight to question 5.4

Question 5.1 As well as the people identified in section 3, please make a particular note if *learners* or *employers* are ever involved in curriculum design.

Question 5.2

Refer to Box 2 if this is helpful. You may be repeating information from section 2 here, i.e. the documents referenced in that Section may be where the skills/literacies to be taken into consideration are mandated.

Question 5.3

It is helpful to describe the range of practice, ideally with examples, e.g. a subject area where the literacies agenda has been addressed in great detail and with attention to changing requirements, and one in which skills/literacies are largely ignored.

Question 5.4

Again it is helpful to describe the range of practice, which may be very broad. Which departments lead in such practices? Please also note which skills/literacies are most likely to be covered in specialist sessions.

Question 5.6

Examples might be: staff development workshops, secondments, mentoring, direct support from specialist central services staff (as per section 3). Please include central services staff here as well as in section 3, if relevant. We know this is potentially a very large question so please only give *brief* details of any support for staff digital literacies at your institution.

Section 6

It can be a research programme in itself to gather evidence of learner-led practices, as much of this activity takes place below institutional radar. This section looks for evidence from your focus groups and consultation, as well as any existing evidence you may have e.g. from student surveys and student representatives. The audit only covers a limited number of issues in this very complex area and we suggest you add in other questions, relevant to your institutional type and situation, to capture how learners are developing their skills informally.

Question 6.1
Such opportunities might include e-portfolios and PDP sessions, personal tutorials, skills 'labs', careers guidance. Are such opportunities elective or compulsory?

Question 6.2
Does your institution make any assumptions about learners' skills, or apply formal pre-requisites e.g. concerning English language or study skills? Is there a learning 'contract' covering learners' responsibilities for their own development?

Question 6.3
Resources might include other students on their courses, online materials, social networks, family and friends, 'help' functions in software, books and magazines, work-based learning…

Question 6.4
Examples might include buddying and mentoring, peer support (e.g. through social software), student-led helplines and helpdesks, skills coaching, outreach work etc. Groupwork could be included here if there is an explicit intention to use groupwork for peer coaching in digital skills and practices.

Question 6.5
Access to their own software, services and devices is known to have a significant impact on learners' experiences of learning. Issues to consider here range from whether learners can use their own laptops on institutional networks, and can access the internet and web-based services freely, to whether the institutional architecture is open enough to allow staff and students to choose which devices and software they use for learning. Also, do learners have support in accessing these opportunities, if they are available?

Section 7
In this section again you are asked to use your own experience and judgement. As with all such judgements, it helps to canvas opinion from other people involved in learning literacies provision, and this section is particularly rewarded to undertake as a collaborative exercise. If you can use this audit as a way of generating debate, please do so. We also suggest you draw on evidence collected from learners wherever possible.

Question 7.2
Consider whether practice you identify here could be submitted to our best practice database.

Question 7.3
Please try to identify whether particular skills and literacies are not being supported, or whether the support offered is not being as effective as it could be.

Question 7.7
Along with question 6.3, this can be a particularly valuable question to approach as a collaborative exercise. Both questions will generate a considerable amount of debate among those most closely involved in learning literacies provision.

Questions 7.9 and 7.10
We suggest these questions are used to close out a meeting or focus group, with action points collated for circulation. This can be an opportunity to take the momentum of the audit forward into real action for change.