

Collaborating for Success

HeLF's Annual Report on Advancing Digital Education Practice in 2024-2025

The Heads of eLearning Forum (HeLF) is pleased to present its Annual Report for the academic year 2024-2025. This report highlights the achievements, collaborations, and strategic initiatives undertaken by our network of 136+ nominated Heads from UK Higher Education institutions.

The Heads of eLearning Forum is a long-established network of senior staff leading technology enhanced learning (TEL) and digital education across UK higher education. Through peer exchange, collaborative activity, events and research, HeLF provides members with a trusted space to share practice, respond to emerging challenges, and shape strategic approaches to digital education.

This report has been created as a record for members and so that other organisations can identify areas of mutual interest and opportunities for collaborative working.

HeLF Mailing List

The HeLF mailing list remains one of the community's most valued spaces for rapid peer support and sector insight facilitating open exchange and collective problem solving. During 2024/25, members exchanged more than 450 messages covering strategic planning, emerging technologies, procurement, assessment, policy development and operational challenges.

Conversations reflected both the rapid pace of change across digital education and the practical challenges institutions are navigating in response to evolving technologies, financial pressures and changing expectations around teaching, learning and assessment.

Via the mailing list the HeLF community

- Encouraged collaborative working across institutions through calls for participation in surveys, research projects, and staff networks.
- Facilitated service improvement through collective vendor engagement
- Encouraged open exchange and collective problem solving

Community Webinars

HeLF enables **peer exchange** and shared practice across the UK HE Sector. Throughout the 2024/25 academic year, HeLF delivered a programme of online events responding to emerging sector priorities identified by members. Sessions combined strategic perspectives, institutional

case studies and practical discussion, enabling members to explore shared challenges and learn from peers across the sector.

Key Themes

These were some key themes which emerged in the email list and webinars:

1. **Artificial Intelligence in Assessment and Teaching**

AI continued to be a strong theme throughout the year with growing interest in **AI ethics, data use, and transparency**. Members shared approaches to assessment redesign, AI literacy, academic integrity, and institutional guidance in response to rapidly evolving generative AI tools.

- Mainstreaming of AI tools
- **Policy responses** to generative AI.
- **Supporting staff AI literacy and student guidance**.
- Ethical and responsible use of AI

2. **Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) and Platform Transitions**

Members shared experiences of managing and evolving institutional digital learning environments in response to organisational change, budget pressures and the need for more sustainable digital ecosystems

Platform usability challenges, particularly **Blackboard, Canvas, Brightspace, and Moodle**.

- **Integration challenges** (Turnitin, Teams LTI, Zoom, Collaborate Ultra).
- **Institutional migration projects** and platform consolidation.
- **Review of digital ecosystems** to reduce costs and improve compatibility

3. **Digital Assessment and Academic Integrity**

Discussions around digital assessment focused on balancing innovation, scalability and academic integrity, and the implications of generative AI for institutional assessment policy and practice.

- **Online exam systems, BYOD for exams, and invigilation tools (ProctorU, Inspira)**.
- Sharing of **assessment workflows, peer assessment models, and originality data** management.
- Emphasis on **trust, transparency, and fairness** in digital assessment.

4. Staff Development and Digital Capability

Members explored approaches to developing digital confidence and capability across their institutions, including staff development models, evolving professional roles within TEL teams, and strategies for supporting sustainable digital practice at scale.

- Value of training/support platforms such as LinkedIn Learning, CPD tools, Eesysoft/Impact
- Team **structures**, **TEL service justifications**, and **job roles**
- Cross-departmental support

Community Building

Members consistently highlight the value of trusted peer networks within HeLF, particularly during periods of rapid change and institutional pressure. Informal coffee catch-ups and smaller peer groups provide space for open discussion, reflection and collaborative problem-solving.

Coffee and catch-ups

Held monthly, these informal online forums help strengthen relationships and contribute to cross-sector networking. Typically these have been attended by 5-10 colleagues each time.

Triads

Institutions are clustered into small, self-managing peer groups that provide informal support, reduce institutional isolation and encourage collaborative problem-solving. We currently have 24 triads (although some quads exist) representing 71 different institutions. Members are positive about the value the triads bring: “It’s a good opportunity to get to know other institutions in depth and get a different perspective on the problems we face.” and “It’s a way to talk about common problems and potential solutions.”

What’s in your Toolkit?

This annual survey provides an overview of the digital tools, platforms and support approaches used across member institutions. It helps members understand emerging sector trends and identify opportunities for collaboration with institutions using similar digital ecosystems.

HeLF Research

The HeLF Research Group explores topics of shared interest across the community, helping members contribute to wider sector conversations around digital education, professional practice and institutional change.

HeLF Lecture Capture Survey 2024

In 2024, HeLF published a follow-up to its 2017 Lecture Capture Survey, examining how UK higher education institutions are evolving their use of lecture recording and educational recording technologies. The survey highlighted changing institutional approaches to accessibility, policy, retention and student expectations, and provided an updated picture of sector practice.

Following publication of the report, HeLF hosted a community discussion session to enable members to share experiences and practical approaches.

Turner, J., Voce, J. and Lafferty, N. (2025) [HeLF Lecture Capture Survey Report 2024](#)

Third Space Professionals in Higher Education: Understanding Agency and Value

HeLF members continue to contribute to collaborative research exploring the experiences and professional identity of senior digital education and educational technology staff working in higher education.

Working with partners including Surrey, City St George's, University of London, UCISA, Nottingham Trent University and Edge Hill University, the project explores issues of recognition, influence and professional agency within institutions. The research has also contributed to wider sector discussion through presentations and conference activity, including the Association for Learning Technology (ALT) Conference.

HeLF and Friends Research Development Series

HeLF continued its collaboration with the Evaluations of Learners' Experiences of e-Learning Special Interest Group (ELESIG) through the "HeLF and Friends" Research Development Series.

The series supports digital education practitioners and professional services staff who wish to engage in research activity by providing accessible sessions on research methods, ethics, evaluation and practical project design. The initiative contributes to wider sector efforts to strengthen research capacity and professional development within digital education communities.

Key contributors: Rob Howe, Julie Voce, Jim Turner and Laura Milne

Looking Ahead

Future research activity will continue to explore digital education leadership, professional identity, and sustainable approaches to technology enhanced learning across higher education.

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