IT Modernisation – our vision

A digital university, for a digital world… Imagine our possibilities

"Higher Education is going through a series of changes. Students have greater expectations of value from their education and are also expecting the provision of education to keep pace with their experience elsewhere – digital, always on, always connected. The provision of digital teaching and learning will become even more critical; with the feedback from the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) demonstrating that delivery of digital services is a key factor in student satisfaction – and not just ancillary services but the core of their experience. E-learning and distance learning will blur into digital learning – the delivery of these services will be on view to the world and must be excellent in delivery.

In research, the use of digital technologies is playing a greater role in the way that researchers search for, explore, examine and bring together information. The use of digital collaboration technologies whether for information sharing, joint working or creation of groups and communities is now the norm – together with an expectation that the delivery and presentation of research outcomes will be delivered through digital platforms.

Across all aspects of the University, digital platforms and technologies will continue to play a key part in how our students and staff expect to access services and information. In the near future technologies which include virtual reality, augmented reality, artificial intelligence and voice integration, will all be commonplace and we need to have the capability to respond to these expectations to ensure we provide, particularly to our students, an experience that is contemporary and also comparable with external experiences.

The IT Modernisation programme is about adapting the shape of IT to enable us to do this. We will ensure that our services are best placed to support the delivery of the core areas of teaching, learning and research and focus on activities that add the most value to our University. In doing so, we will ensure that we are able to demonstrate transparency of the costs to deliver each of our services and support the University in seeking to get value for money in the services provided. One of the outputs of IT Modernisation will be a clear picture of what each service costs, enabling a dynamic understanding of how any future University change may impact the cost of our services – this will enable excellence and

transparency in planning and forecasting the future shape and size of each service, and how they may need to change in the future.

In developing a coherent digital experience, we need to recognise that building individual capabilities (such as mobile apps) in isolation will continue to increase the complexity in our technologies and tools. To overcome the risk of being tactically driven, we are adopting a University-wide (enterprise) approach to defining a technological architecture and roadmap – which is being aligned to business capabilities and required business outcomes – all focused around teaching, learning, research, students and staff.

This will enable us to use the same technology to solve the needs of different constituents, in a strategic and sustainable way.

IT Modernisation is taking a service-oriented approach, which means understanding the services that our students, staff and academic colleagues want; mapping our current and future service provision to these, and then organising what we do around delivering those. This will allow us to monitor how well we deliver those services and our consistency in achieving agreed service levels. To do this effectively alongside existing and new suppliers, we will also adopt standard delivery approaches wherever possible using frameworks such as ITIL, PRINCE2 and Agile. This will be further supported by having the appropriate tools in place to support each service, and the flow of work through IT.

Fundamentally, we will map our services directly to customer demand and understand the associated cost to enable the proactive management of services. To achieve this, the programme is working to adapt the shape of IT by defining a new way of working for IT Services – bringing a new operating model with the resource structures, governance, tools and management information, to make that a success."

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Malcolm Whitehouse CBE
Director of IT at the University of Manchester

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