UNIVERSITY OF
LIMERICK
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

UL Enable
Stage-2 IT Strategy
THE NEXT STAGE OF THE DIGITAL JOURNEY

Achieving greater **efficiency, productivity** & **innovation**

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Director's Foreword

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to present University of Limerick's IT Strategy, UL Enable Stage-2, which sets out a five-year vision for information technology in University of Limerick as we emerge in a post-Covid world.

This ambitious plan was developed to provide a roadmap outlining the initiatives we aim to undertake to improve our services and enhance our technical capabilities. The objective is to become a digital leader of change, to promote good governance, and most importantly to continue to align our efforts with the university's overall strategic goals.

As the university marks its 50th anniversary this year, it is safe to say the information technology environment in UL has undergone significant changes since the campus was initially formed in 1972.

In the last three years alone, innovation and service delivery within the department has evolved at a rapid pace.

It is important to acknowledge that the transition to a virtual teaching, learning, and working environment in March 2020 would not have been possible without the initial investment in infrastructure arising from Stage-1 of our IT strategy, UL Enable, over the period 2018-2021. This investment oversaw significant upgrades to existing IT and digital capabilities and ensured the foundations were laid to accelerate UL into the digital and online space at the onset of the pandemic.

Fundamentally, this investment enabled us to continue providing support to the university in delivering its nationally and internationally renowned education programmes and to uphold its reputation for research excellence as we faced the 'new normal' of life in a global pandemic.

Now, as we move into the second stage of our ambitious plan, our focus is on leveraging innovative technology to continually improve our operational capabilities and provide excellent service to all stakeholders across the UL community.

As we look to the future and consider the university beyond UL@50, it is paramount that we continually invest in our digital ecosystem, landscape and architecture to ensure we are fit for purpose and at the cutting edge of technology.

An emerging consensus across the higher education sector internationally since Covid-19 is that investment in the short-term with a view to the long-term is crucial to ensure a consistent pathway to digital transformation.

For many years universities have made significant investments in their physical estates. The experience of the pandemic has demonstrated the importance of sufficiently investing in the digital estate to support and grow online learning and teaching capabilities.

However, greater reliance on the use of technology can also introduce a heightened threat of cyber security incidents. The cost of measures to mitigate the likelihood of incidents cannot be underestimated.

That is why, at the core of this strategy, is our commitment to strong governance, which is an essential component that ensures our operations comply with regulatory requirements, mitigates risks, and delivers the desired outcome for our stakeholders. We also believe that by working in partnership with other university departments, we can leverage our collective strengths and expertise to achieve greater efficiency, productivity, and innovation.

We are confident that this strategic plan will serve as a guide in achieving our goals and help us to continue to deliver excellent IT services to the wider UL community. We look forward to the exciting opportunities and challenges that lie ahead and are committed to delivering high-quality, reliable, and secure IT services to support the university's growth and success.

Sincerely,

Liam O'Reilly
Director, ITD

Vision Statement

Our vision is to create a **world class digital ecosystem** and associated services to support the strategic goals of the University of Limerick, empowering its staff, research and student communities to achieve their full potential.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to leverage transformative technology, adopting a data-driven approach to decision-making and implementing systems and processes that enhance the experience of our stakeholders. We aim to become **leaders of digital disruption**, supporting excellence in education, research, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

UL Enable Stage-2 IT Strategy at a glance

IT Capital Development funding approved 2018

Six month consultation and research project of ITD at UL carried out in 2017 with findings presented to Executive Committee.

UL Enable Stage-1 launches 2018

Substantial upgrades to foundational digital infrastructure across campus commences.

Covid-19 pandemic hits in March 2020

UL campus goes online. Investment in digital capabilities over previous three years ensures university can move to a virtual campus.

UL Enable Stage-1 concludes 2021

100+ projects completed. Major infrastructure projects include campus wifi, IT security enhancement, Cloud enablement capabilities.

UL Enable Stage-2 2022 –2027

Major programme of work established for the campus in alignment with the university's strategic goals, ensuring the institution is at the cutting edge of technology.

Introduction

The **UL Enable IT Strategy** encompasses a two-stage pathway for the University of Limerick to evolve and mature its digital and IT capabilities in line with the university's mission in the areas of teaching, learning, and research.

The **UL Enable Stage-1 IT Strategy** was developed following a six-month long consultation and research project led by the director and deputy director of the Information Technology Division (ITD) in UL in 2017. During the consultation and research phase, reviews were conducted with other sample universities in Ireland and the UK to compare services, resource levels, strategy and approach.
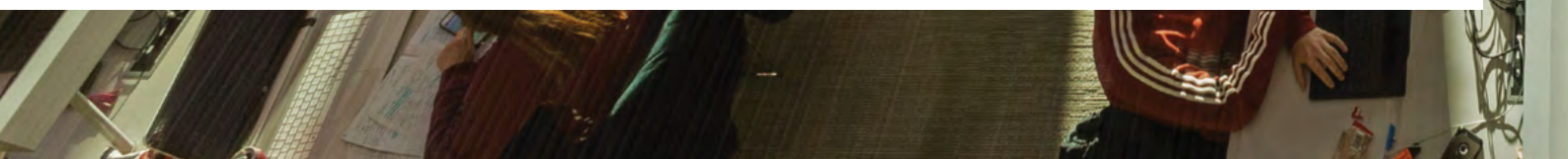
The first phase in the UL Enable IT Strategy was implemented from 2018-2021 following approval of a three-year IT Capital Development programme totalling €6million. The main objective of UL Enable Stage-1 was to begin aligning IT capabilities with the strategic priorities of the university and deliver on foundational digital infrastructure. During this period a major focus was placed on upgrading central digital and IT capabilities, the central IT services model, and the central IT services function to support the university's objectives. Substantial investment was placed on upgrading critical equipment that was reaching end-of-life. Emphasis was also placed on stakeholder engagement to better understand the needs of the campus community in an era of rapidly increasing digitisation.

To date this initial investment has delivered tangible impacts and benefits for the institution and has considerably matured UL's digital and IT capabilities as the campus navigates its digital journey.

During Stage-1, core infrastructure transformation focused on developing enterprise architecture and IT security capabilities, business intelligence systems capabilities, business engagement partners for digital, a vendor manager for the management of IT vendors and the creation of a project management function for the central IT services function.

Stage-1 also impacted on service delivery transformation in how daily services are managed. Metric improvements in service performance and customer satisfaction reflect that this service transformation has been a success.

Teaching, Learning and Research

UL Enable Stage–1 Achievements

The objectives of **UL Enable Stage–1** were to modernise and stabilise UL's existing digital infrastructure and to establish key new digital capabilities.

The results from Stage-1 of the strategy delivered on the following strategic objectives:

— **Re-alignment of the central IT function and associated service model** to strategically align with the University mission in the areas of Teaching, Learning and Research

— **Successful delivery of transformative digital technologies,** comprising more than 150 projects within a broad and diverse University project portfolio

— **Transformation of the IT service model** to be increasingly customer centric

— **Business intelligence and analytics platform development & capability creation**

— **Governance and adoption model for cloud services and technologies in UL**

— **Digital transformation** of the teaching and learning technology ecosystem

— **Establishment of new and enhanced digital professional capabilities in the areas of:**
  - Enterprise architecture function
  - Campus engagement team
  - Digital project management capability
  - IT vendor management capability and associated best practices
  - Cyber security capability and investment programme

— **Student record digital transformation capability**

"UL's IT team has delivered projects to transform our *working* environment, streamlining efficiencies and allo*wing* us to spend our time more effectively to deliver impact"

Karen Kemmy
Executive Administrator, Office of the Associate Vice President
Academic Services & Deputy Registrar, Academic Registry

UL Enable Stage–2

Purpose | People | Collaboration | Impact

Strategic Goals — The Digital Evolution

In UL Enable Stage-2 there are eight strategic principles at the core of our mission in the delivery of services to the UL community. In developing these foundational principles, a strong emphasis was placed on the interconnecting themes of purpose, people, collaboration and impact. The pathway for UL Enable Stage-2 has been developed to strategically align with UL@50 objectives for a digital university and UL's overarching digital enhancement.

By working closely with the UL community and our stakeholders, we aim to identify opportunities for co-creation to drive meaningful impact and create sustainable change in the areas of teaching, learning and research.

UL Enable Stage –2 Strategic Principles

Enhancing teaching, learning and research	Cyber security ethos
Transforming customer experience	Enabling innovation
Empo ering data driven decision making	Digital Governance
Digitialisation	Sustainability

Strategic Principles UL Enable Stage–2 IT Strategy

Enhancing teaching, learning and research
Enable the transformation of education across teaching, learning and research by delivering digital services and technical capabilities that enable enhanced research performance, measurement and reporting.

Transforming customer experience
Support UL in delivering a world class experience for students and staff by fostering a culture of digital innovation and adoption of new technologies to help the UL community reach their full potential and educational goals.

Enabling innovation
Be innovative in our solutions by identifying opportunities to improve efficiencies, bolster the user experience, determine cost savings and a return on investment.

Digitalisation
Focus on digital enhancements and digitalisation of processes and work practices to increase efficiencies and help the university achieve its environmental targets.

Cyber security ethos
Strengthen the cyber risk environment and governance within UL.

Empowering data-driven decision making
Facilitate a data-driven environment where data is accessible, measurable, and reliable, thus enabling performance improvement initiatives.

Governance
Embed an IT governance framework for the university to ensure all operations comply with regulatory requirements and deliver the desired outcome for our stakeholders and UL community.

Sustainability
Leverage sustainable technology to create greater operational resiliency and reduce our impact on the environment.

Digital Governance
Steering Committee

A key element of **UL Enable Stage–2** is the effective governance of digital and IT investment across the university.

In 2022, the University of Limerick Digital Governance Steering Committee (DGSC) was formed to support the President and the Executive Committee to ensure governance oversight for the approval, planning, and management of business change and digital investment on a university-wide basis.

The DGSC is a subcommittee of the UL Executive Committee and agrees to its Programme of Work on an annual and/or longer-term basis before submitting it for noting to the Executive Committee.

The DGSC also assists the university's Executive Committee in ensuring all major activities relating to digital assets requiring strategic or capital investment are aligned with the overall UL strategy.

Key role of the Digital Governance Steering Committee:

— To review enterprise level digital/IT and business project initiatives and to prioritise projects accordingly

— To review progress on and delivery of all approved projects and report on these to the Executive Committee

— To advise on matters relating to the ongoing management of the digital platforms/systems ecosystem

— To review current and previous digital/IT strategies in the context of all future digital development projects aligned with the university's strategic plan

— To provide the executive governance oversight for critical issues and risks related to IT and cyber security

The Digital Governance Steering Committee is made up of representatives from the university including the:

Chief Financial and Performance Officer (Chair), Director ITD (Deputy Chair), Provost and Deputy President, Chief Corporate Officer, Vice President of Research, Director HR, 2 x Executive Deans (nominated by the President), Deputy Director ITD, Corporate Secretary, Associate VP Academic Services and other stakeholders as requested by the Chair from time to time to attend meetings of the committee for a specific period or project.

A defined process has been developed to help with the prioritisation of projects by the DGSC committee. This process categorises projects and digital investments under specific criteria which are aligned with the university's overall objectives in teaching, learning, and research.

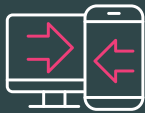| **Portfolio Categories**	Mandatory	Priority Development	Improvement	Maintenance
Project Types	Compliance Security Critical	Transformation Core Differentiation Growt	Operational Efficiency Capital Efficiency	Maintenance

UL Enable Stage–2
Work Programmes

To deliver the strategic objectives identified under **UL Enable Stage–2**, a portfolio of work programmes have been developed in alignment with the UL@50 strategic plan and the strategic IT needs of the institution.

Digital Business Applications

Teaching and Learning Systems Transformation

IT Infrastructure and Systems Integration

Student Records Transformation

Enhanced Cyber Security and Data Protection Environment

Research Enablement

Digital Innovation and Change Initiatives

Programmes:

— **Digital Business Applications**
Investment in digital business applications will enhance the digital ecosystem of the university, including the implementation of new systems and upgrades to existing systems.

— **Teaching and Learning Systems Transformation**
Initiatives and projects to digitally enhance the teaching and learning environment within UL.

— **IT Infrastructure & Digital Systems Integration**
Implement enhanced central tools for managing the IT infrastructure of the university as well as upgrading and replacing core UL central IT infrastructure and UL network components.

— **Enhanced Cyber Security and Data Protection Environment**
Improve UL's IT security posture and defences to mitigate the risk of a successful cyber-attack on UL.

— **Research Enablement**
The Research Enablement programme focuses on business and associated IT resources to improve the IT services, systems, and supports available to the research community.

— **Students Records Transformation**
Ongoing investment and transformation of the student records ecosystem.

— **Digital Innovation & Change Initiatives**
The creation of a Digital Innovation Programme to enable the trialling and piloting of identified technologies as prioritised by the DGSC.

Looking to the future –
What will enablement look like?

In line with our **UL Enable Stage–2 IT Strategy** vision and mission, we aim to evolve and enable UL to realise significant institutional benefits from the digital investments and resources allocated towards implementing UL Enable Stage–2.

The following summarises the envisioned outcomes of the UL Enable Stage-2 IT Strategy:

1. Alignment with UL institutional goals: The UL Enable Stage-2 IT Strategy significantly contributes to UL realising its strategic objectives across teaching, learning and research.

2. Enhanced capabilities for UL research: Researchers have access to advanced computing resources, data analytics tools, and collaborative research platforms, enabling them to pursue new avenues of inquiry and achieve breakthroughs in their fields.

3. Transformed teaching and learning environment: Digital transformation of the teaching and learning environment that enhances the experience for academics and students for online learning, blended learning, and classroom-based learning.

4. Mature and embedded Digital Governance Structure: Established process and associated governance structure to ensure best practice oversight of digital and IT investments and projects and ongoing institutional strategic alignment.

5. Improved student experience: Students are equipped with digital resources and tools, including online learning platforms, and collaboration tools - all enhancing student engagement, satisfaction, and retention rates.

6. Robust cyber security: Cyber security is prioritised, ensuring the institution's data, networks, and systems are protected from cyber threats. This is achieved through implementing strong security protocols and systems, conducting regular risk assessments, and providing ongoing cyber security training to faculty, staff, and students.

7. Increased operational efficiency: Routine tasks are automated and administrative processes are streamlined, providing staff with better access to data and analytics.

8. Sustainability: Technology solutions are environmentally responsible and financially sustainable over the long term.

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