New Directions for Work in Digital Scotland

A Knowledge Exchange Programme

This programme is funded by the Scottish Universities Insight Institute which has as its general aim to create new knowledge by bringing knowledge together. More specifically, the aims of the Institute are to:

- Exchange and mobilise knowledge to the benefit of participants engaged in the development of policy and practice;
- identify gaps in practical and theoretical knowledge that can be filled by further knowledge exchange and new research collaborations;
- grow networks between academics and those outside the Academy.

New Directions for Work in Digital Scotland

The questions addressed in this Programme relate to the future of adults' working lives that are affected by rapid technological change and new work formats. We take as our central problem how Scotland’s digital knowledge and skills can be strengthened to respond to challenges that derive from its geography, from the threat of digital exclusions and from new learning demands. The programme mobilises knowledge to address these concerns for academic disciplines, business, policy-makers and the public. The aim of the Programme is to exchange knowledge and generate new insights into how digital working lives may be improved and sustained for the future. Its objectives are:

- To share and disseminate knowledge on how present digital strategies and innovative work practices can be developed to support jobs and new learning in the future, including beyond the Central Belt;
- to identify barriers to digital working, related to age, ability, gender, and suggest ways that these may be overcome;
- to show how new learning methods and theories can be used in digital working, particularly to sustain work in distributed contexts.
Details of seminar programme

Seminar 1 – The Nature of Digital Work

Dates & times:

- Friday 20th April at 10.30 – 17:30
- Saturday 21st April at 10:00 - 15.30

Venue: Room 2.13 & 2.15, Royal College, University of Strathclyde, George Street, Glasgow

Aim
This seminar considers innovative strategies and practices for sustaining work

Content
The focus of the seminar is on creating and sustaining work and learning using digital technology to overcome challenging conditions, including those that derive from social and physical geography. Seminar attendees will share multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary knowledge of how digital technology strategies and practices are developing. The seminar will offer insights into key aspects of the Scottish Government’s digital strategy for sustaining work and relevant learning. The seminar will take account of wider, critical strategy discourses and practices in Scotland. It will consider specific projects that have been funded to promote digital working as well as the opportunities and challenges they entail. It will examine innovative company practices in the private sector and consider their potential contribution in strategy implementation.

Outcomes
A key outcome of this seminar will be a working paper that identifies how policy and practice need to develop to meet opportunities and challenges in sustaining work. It will describe areas where further knowledge exchange and research may be needed, generating questions “from the bottom up”; it will recommend actions and relevant stakeholder groups for these.

Day one

10.00 Coffee on arrival

10.30 Introduction to the day: Dr Irene Malcolm, University of Dundee

Session 1: New directions in digital working

The goal for this session is to obtain an overview of strategy and practices that are innovative and internationally significant for sustaining work in digital society. Each speaker will provide thinking points or questions to seminar participants.

- 11.00 Mr Joe Lockwood, Glasgow School of Art: “Design Innovation”

11.15 Working groups “Speed-dating”: One-to-one discussions with other delegates in a 5 minute ‘speed dating’ format. The goal is to share expertise, with each pair identifying a knowledge gap, or suggesting an opportunity related to digital work. Questions: 1. What do we need to understand better about digital society? 2. How would you, together, address this?
Session 2: Sustaining digital working through new thinking

The goal of this session is to consider detailed approaches that are being used in sustaining work in the face of challenging circumstances.


13.45 Working groups: “Knowledge tables”. The goal is to examine the questions and opportunities suggested by speakers and to summarise these in three sentences on a sheet of paper that distils the points raised and the groups' responses. Participants will be asked to work in groups of 4 and move round the tables to discuss the ideas on each sheet.

14:30 Tea Break

15.00 Mr Derek Robertson, National Adviser for Emerging Technologies and Learning, Education Scotland: “Can games-based approaches stimulate new thinking that helps adults to sustain work in digital society?” Discussion questions:

• Is the growing clamour for and emphasis on gamification appropriate for and transferable to the ‘everyday’ workplace?
• What would be the benefits of embedding STEM subjects in contexts - such as app/games design -that are culturally relevant for learners?

15.15 Mr Ewan McIntosh, “No Tosh” educational entrepreneur and small business mentor: “How are companies inspired to embrace new developments that sustain work?” Thinking points:

• The VSSME (Very Small SME), and what’s holding back their growth?
• Opportunities for inspiration, networking and learning to improve the chances of SMEs and larger companies.

15.30 Working groups “Distilling our ideas”. Working in groups of 4, the goal is to seek synergies or identify differences in the content of presentations. Participants are asked to draw on the sentences from the previous group-work, together with speakers’ questions and thinking points, and each group is asked to produce 4 recommendations or questions.

16.30 Thematic summary, Professor Bente Elkjaer, Aarhus University, Denmark

17.00 Discussion and questions “What goals did we set ourselves? Are we addressing them?” What do we think has to be done and by whom? Chaired by Mr Donald Jarvie, Scottish Parliament

17.30 Close

Day Two

10.00 Introduction Dr Irene Malcolm and Professor Vicki Hanson, University of Dundee

Session 3: Addressing critical problems
The goal of this session is to offer a critical analysis of digital strategies and practices. The session will support participants' analysis of these and answer the question as to how new ways of working can respond to critical issues, gaps or opportunities.

10.15 Professor Michael Fourman, University of Edinburgh: “A Critical Analysis of our Digital Strategy and Practices” Discussion questions:

- How can Scotland's opportunities for rural isolation contribute to creativity in the digital age?
- What role can technology play in building sustainable communities?

10.45 Discussion and questions

11.00 Professor Claire Wallace, Dr Leanne Townsend and Dr David Emele, University of Aberdeen: “New Ways of Doing Business Through Digital Technology”

11.30 Working groups – Refining Ideas – Working in groups of 4, participants are invited to critique the sets of 4 recommendations produced on the previous day, to analyse and crystallise these. What recommendations should be made and for which stakeholder? Each group is asked to develop and refine the recommendations from the previous day in the light of their critical analysis from this session.

12.30 Lunch

Lessons learned: Going forward

13.30 Introduction to working groups, Dr Irene Malcolm

13.35 Working groups – Finalising Ideas: The goal is to reflect on, critique and summarise what has been achieved.

   1. What are our key messages? What has to be done? What are our key recommendations so far, and for which stakeholder groups are they intended? In what areas will further knowledge exchange and research be needed? What research and knowledge exchange questions have been generated?

   2. What are the implications of Seminar 1 for inclusion and learning - the themes of the next two seminars?

14.30 Thematic summary and key questions identified in the exchange: Professor Bente Elkjaer

15.00 Questions and discussion: “What goals did we set ourselves? Did we address them?” “What do we think has to be done and by whom?” “What recommendations will we make and to which stakeholders?” “Is there a key question that requires further research?” chaired by Ms Marion Beattie, Skills Development Scotland

15.30 Close

Preparatory activity: reading of a summary document, proposed by the Programme Team, will be uploaded to the Programme website.