

Beyond digital foundations: understanding digital maturity across UK higher education



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Overview

- How we are defining digital transformation
- Introduction to Jisc's framework and maturity model for digital transformation
- Jisc's 2026 UK HE digital maturity assessment
- Findings
- Way forward



Digital transformation

Definition, sector engagement,
framework for digital
transformation in higher
education



Digital transformation

Jisc definition

Digital transformation is the coordinated development of people, practice, processes, data and technology to achieve strategic priorities and improve organisational outcomes. It succeeds when leadership, organisational culture, workforce capability, trusted data, connected infrastructure and investment are aligned to **enable sustainable business change**. This coordinated approach is essential because people's digital experiences are shaped by the interaction of organisational, social and personal factors. Understanding and responding to this complexity sits at the heart of digital transformation.

Who we collaborate with across our areas of work



ASSOCIATION
FOR LEARNING
TECHNOLOGY



 **AdvanceHE**



ahep
Association of
Higher Education
Professionals



SCONUL 



Medr
Y Comisiwn Addysg Drydyddol ac Ymchwil
Commission for Tertiary Education and Research



Universities UK



RLUK Research Libraries UK

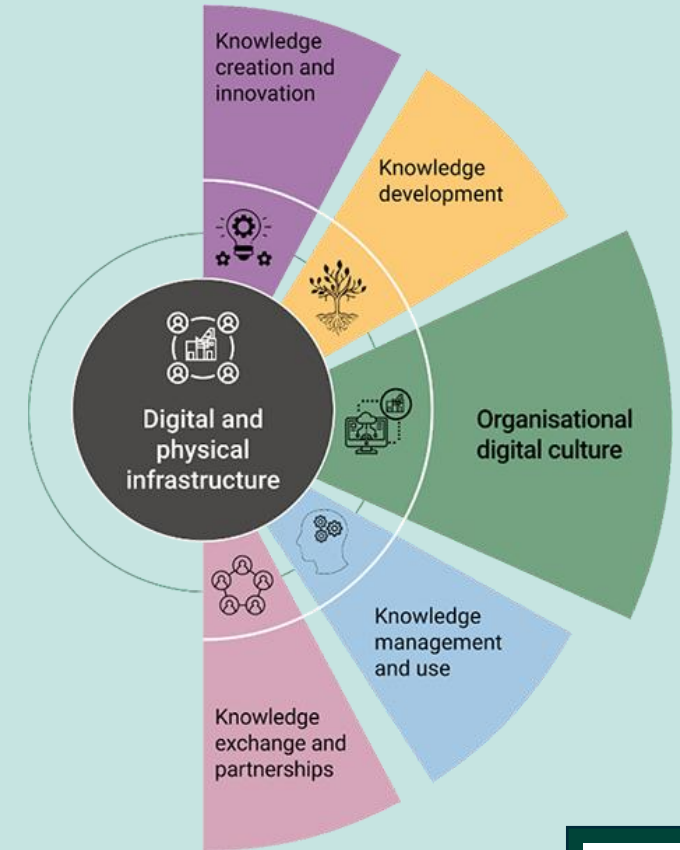
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Framework for digital transformation (DX) in higher education

The framework provides a structure and common language for all aspects of DX in higher education

Use it to:



Available from [ji.sc/digital-transformation-framework](https://jisc.digital-transformation-framework)



Digital transformation in higher education toolkit



Guidance and support

Steps to take towards DX in your organisation, terminology, tips and advice



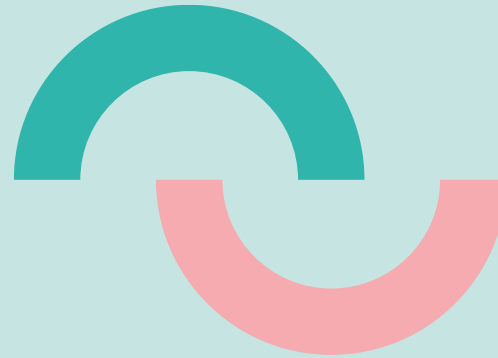
Framework

A holistic structure for digital transformation across all areas of business



Maturity model

Digital maturity assessment tools



Action plan templates

Adaptable templates for roadmaps and action plans



Engagement tools

Taster surveys for senior leaders, presentation templates, ideas for stakeholder engagement



What others are doing

How other higher education providers are doing digital transformation



<https://ji.sc/HE-digital-transformation>

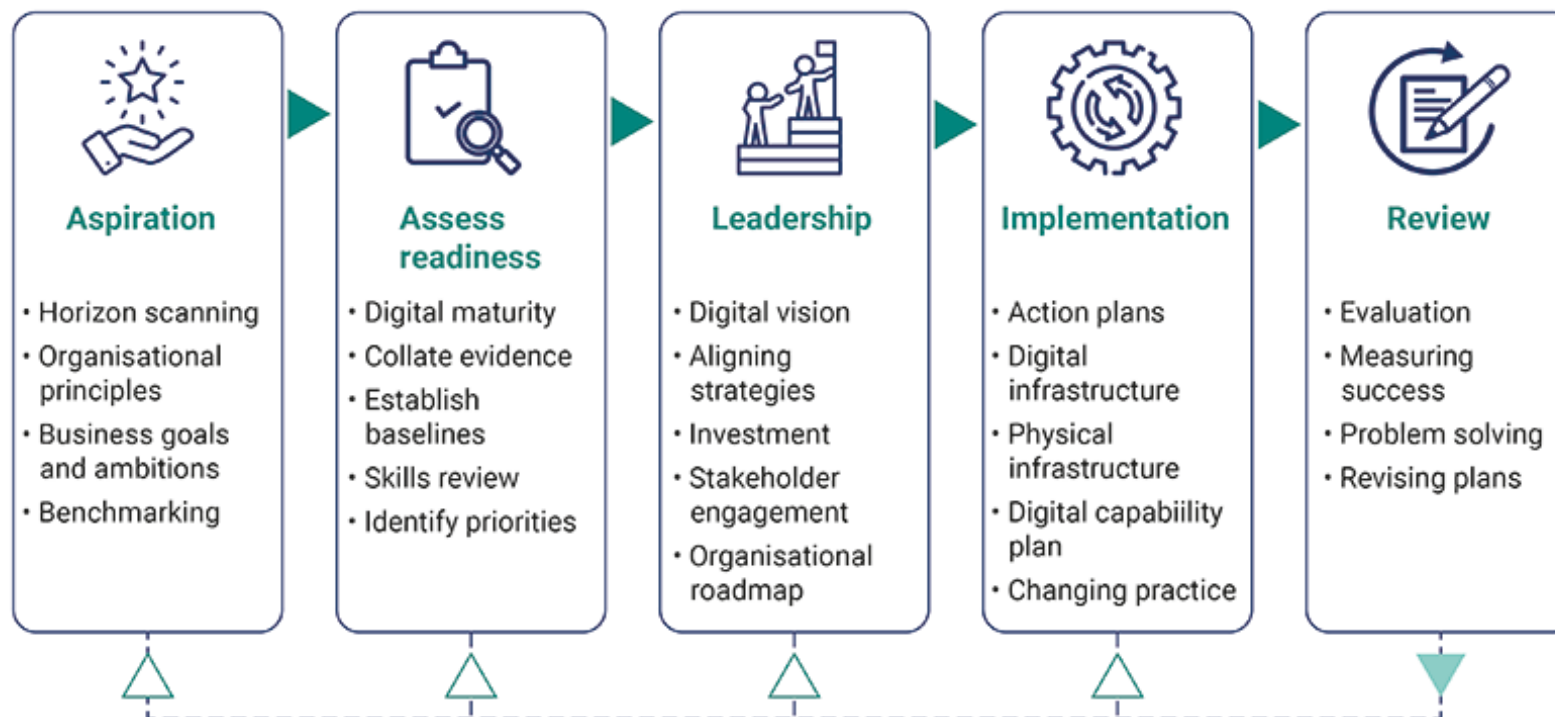
Digital maturity

Maturity model, benefits of organisation-wide maturity assessment





Digital transformation process



Digital maturity assessment is one stage within a wider process of digital transformation and should be revisited at intervals to identify progress



Benefits of digital maturity assessment



“Digital maturity is not about maximising every score. It is about making deliberate, evidence-informed choices about where greater maturity will deliver the most organisational value.”

Beyond digital foundations report, 2026

Jisc's UK HE 2026 digital maturity assessment

Scope



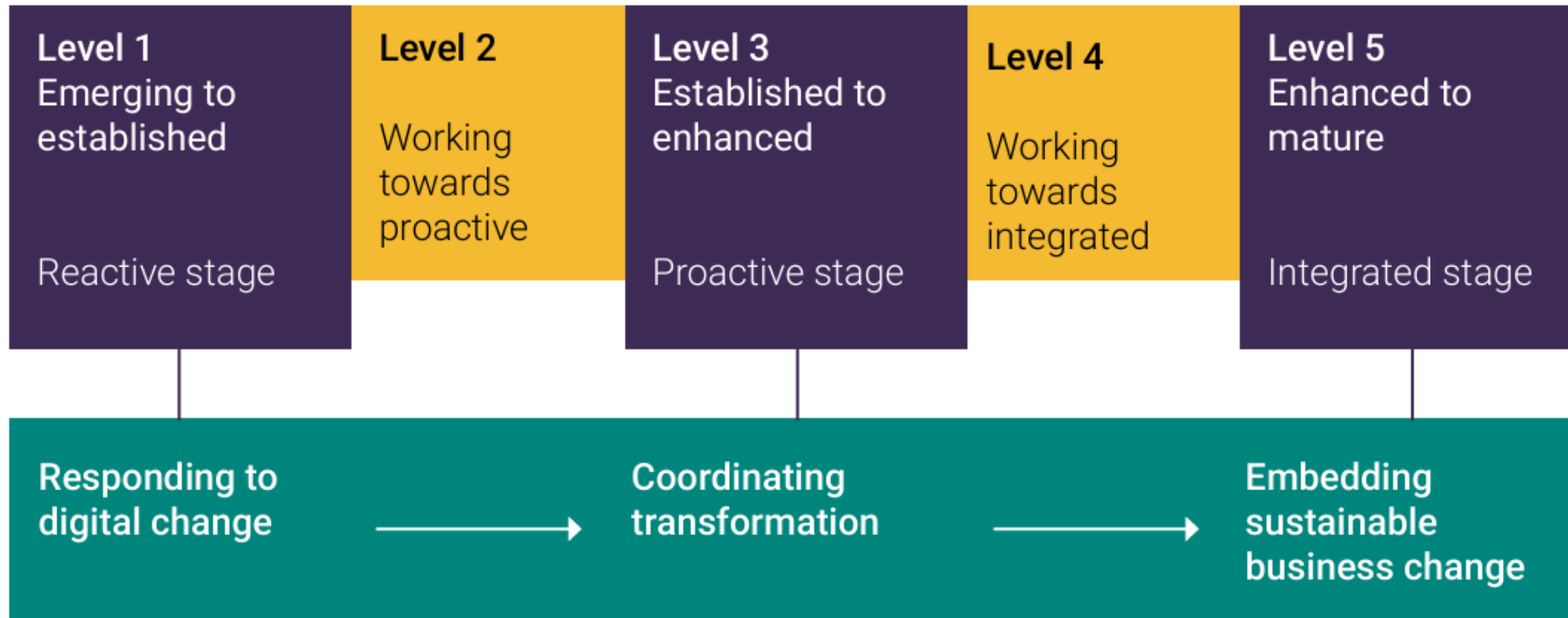
ji.sc/digital-maturity-report



Jisc's UK HE 2026 digital maturity assessment

Jisc sector wide assessment required by Transformation and Efficiency Taskforce: [Towards a new era of collaboration](#) (UUK, June 2025)

Adapting the [maturity model](#) to develop online digital assessments

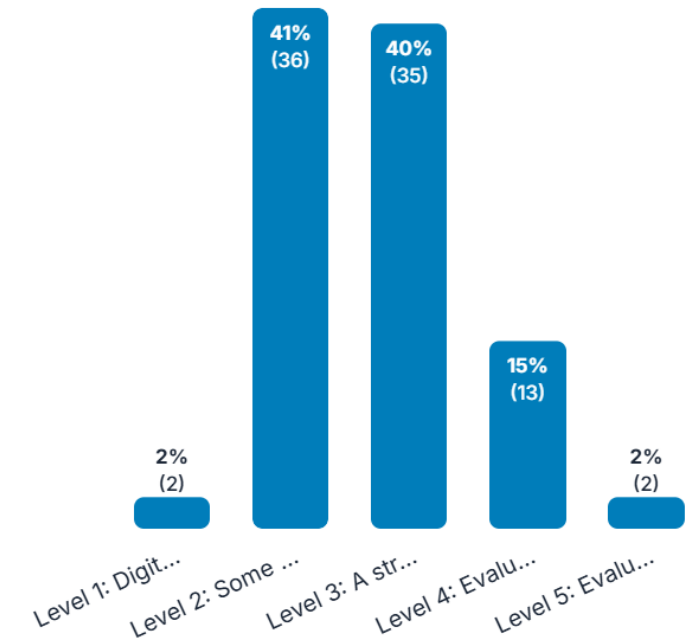


Jisc's UK HE 2026 digital maturity assessment

24 question high level online maturity assessment

- Open May – June 2026
- All UK HE organisations invited to participate
- Clear, evidence-based view of how well digital enables your organisation to deliver strategic priorities
- Areas covered:
 - Organisational culture, leadership and change
 - Digital capability (including AI)
 - Strategic approaches to research, education, innovation, investment, knowledge management and partnerships
 - Diverse learner needs and wider student experiences
 - Business intelligence, data and decision making
 - Business continuity, digital and physical infrastructure, environmental sustainability
- Barriers to progress

14. 27. How effectively does your organisation evaluate the wider organisational impact of digital investment decisions?



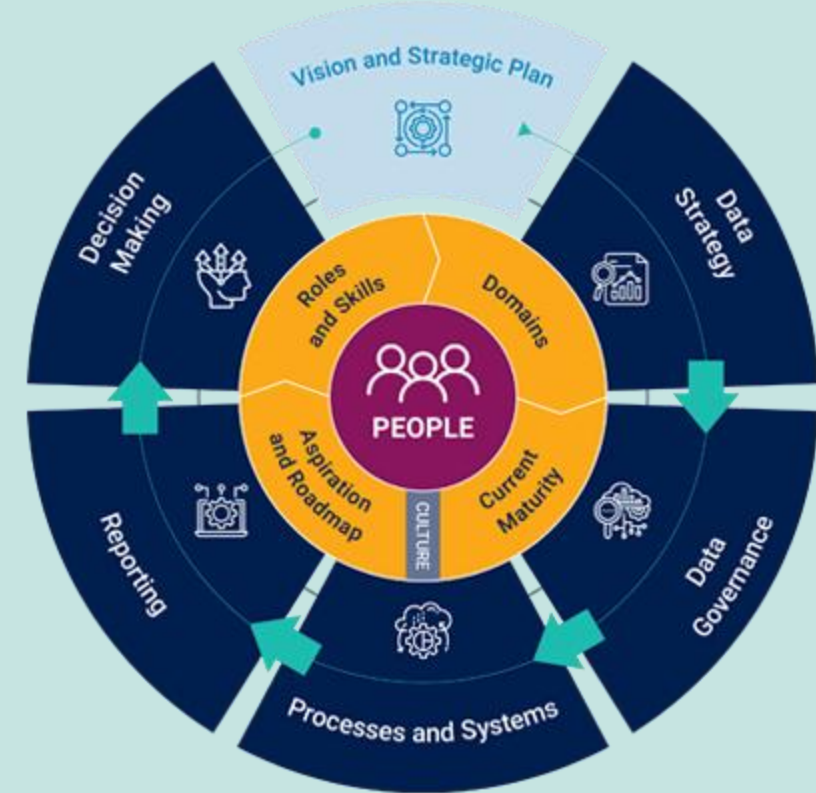
Example questions

A selection from the 24 questions

- How far does your organisation ensure that all stakeholders have the necessary digital capability (including AI capability) to perform effectively?
- How effectively does your organisation evaluate the wider organisational impact of digital investment decisions?
- How effectively does your organisation assess and respond to the diverse needs of digital learners?
- How strategic and integrated is your organisation's approach to the collection and management of corporate data for business intelligence?
- How effectively are knowledge exchange and wider digital collaboration supported within your organisation?
- How reliable, safe, and secure is your organisation's digital infrastructure to ensure business continuity?

Jisc's UK HE 2026 digital maturity assessment

- This assessment complements and can be used alongside [Jisc's data maturity model](#) and the [AI maturity model](#)
- As well as other sector frameworks and models such as the [Higher Education Business Capability Model](#) part of the Global Higher Education Reference Models (HERM) developed through formalised partnerships between CAUDIT, EUNIS and UCISA Enterprise Architecture (EA) Groups
- The [Organisational Efficiency Maturity Assessment \(OEMA\)](#) developed by SUMS and the Association of Heads of University Administration (AHUA).



Jisc data maturity framework

Jisc's UK HE 2026 digital maturity assessment

Collaborative approach

Discussions with providers which adopted a collaborative approach to completing the assessment highlighted the value of bringing together colleagues from different roles and services to share perspectives, challenge assumptions and develop a shared understanding of digital maturity across the organisation.

These conversations are a central purpose of the maturity model, helping organisations move beyond individual scores towards informed prioritisation and coordinated action.

*“Universities inherently have **multiple voices and priorities**. Academic and Professional services can **have different perspectives on what is a priority**. Operational teams can **operate in silos and [be] reluctant to change familiar processes**. **Fragmented systems** often help foster this silo culture.”*

Response in the sector maturity assessment 2026

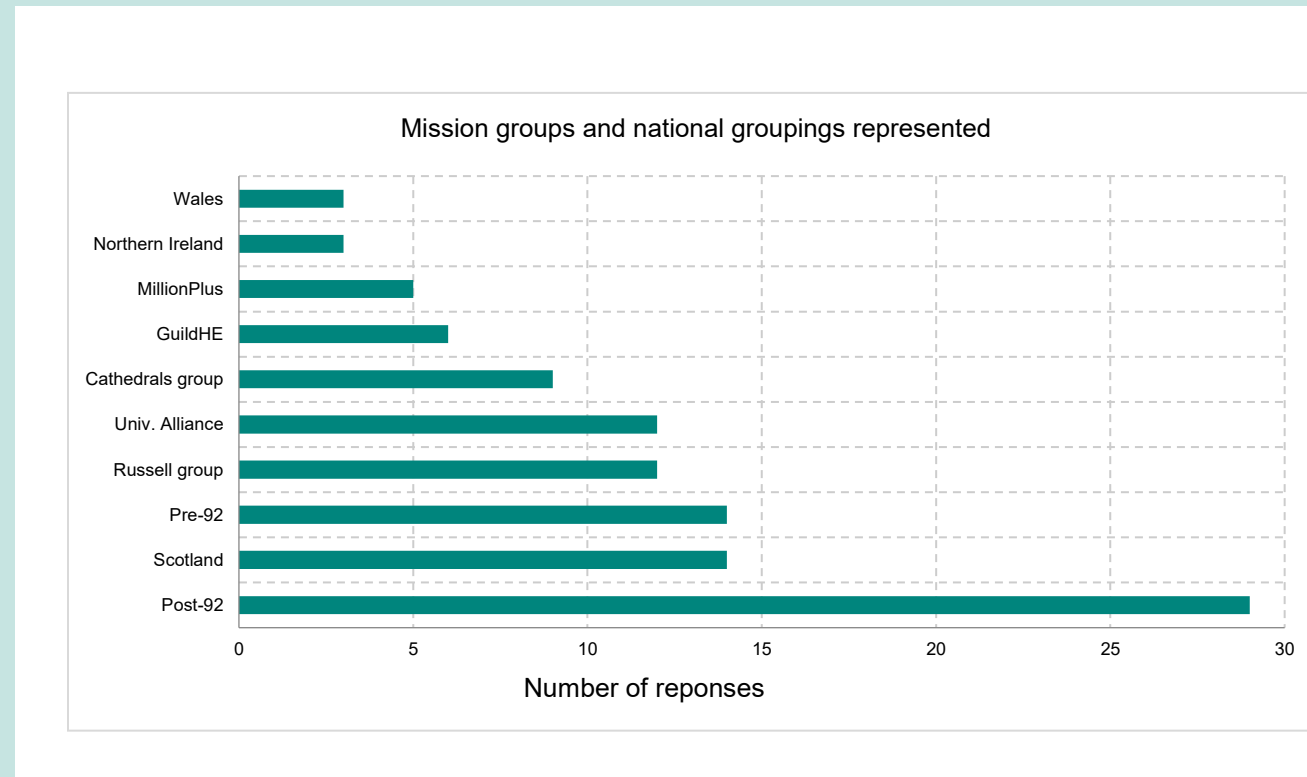
Jisc's UK HE 2026 digital maturity assessment

Findings: overall

Jisc's UK HE 2026 digital maturity assessment

Responses

- 88 responses from 83 higher education providers (some organisations offered more than one response)
- Broad range of mission groups, institution types and UK nations
- Range of organisational roles, with strong representation from senior leaders and those with organisation-wide responsibilities.
- This breadth of participation means the findings reflect a wide range of organisational contexts and strategic priorities across the sector.



Jisc's UK HE 2026 digital maturity assessment

Overall picture

Across all 24 assessment questions, the sector mean maturity rating was 2.84 out of 5, with a median of level 3 (proactive). At this aggregate level, the results align with the **coordinating transformation** stage of the maturity journey. These aggregate patterns provide an orientation to the sector picture rather than a ranking of organisational performance.

Relatively **higher** maturity ratings were reported for:

- reliable, safe and secure digital infrastructure
- teaching, learning and assessment infrastructure
- business intelligence
- support for the broader student experience
- strategic digital investment, although responses were divided between providers focused on maintaining existing infrastructure and those reporting more strategic, longer-term approaches.

Relatively **lower** maturity ratings were reported for:

- digital capability, including AI capability
- horizon scanning
- data architecture
- open knowledge sharing
- managing and preserving research assets, although this finding should be interpreted in the context of organisational mission.

Headline findings: four recurring themes

Strong digital foundations

Business continuity, digital infrastructure and teaching, learning and assessment infrastructure were among the strongest areas of maturity reported. Many providers have established robust and secure digital foundations that support core organisational activity.

People enable progress

Digital capability, including AI capability, was one of the least mature areas identified. Developing the skills, confidence, leadership and ways of working needed to realise greater value from digital investment remains a key opportunity for many providers.

Connecting the organisation

While many providers report mature digital infrastructure, respondents consistently identify fragmented systems, organisational silos and limited interoperability as barriers to realising greater value from investment.

Capacity for change

Financial pressures, limited staff capacity and competing priorities were among the most frequently identified barriers. These findings reinforce the importance of creating the organisational capacity needed to sustain digital transformation and innovation alongside day-to-day operations.

Jisc's UK HE 2026 digital maturity assessment

Findings: Framework areas in detail

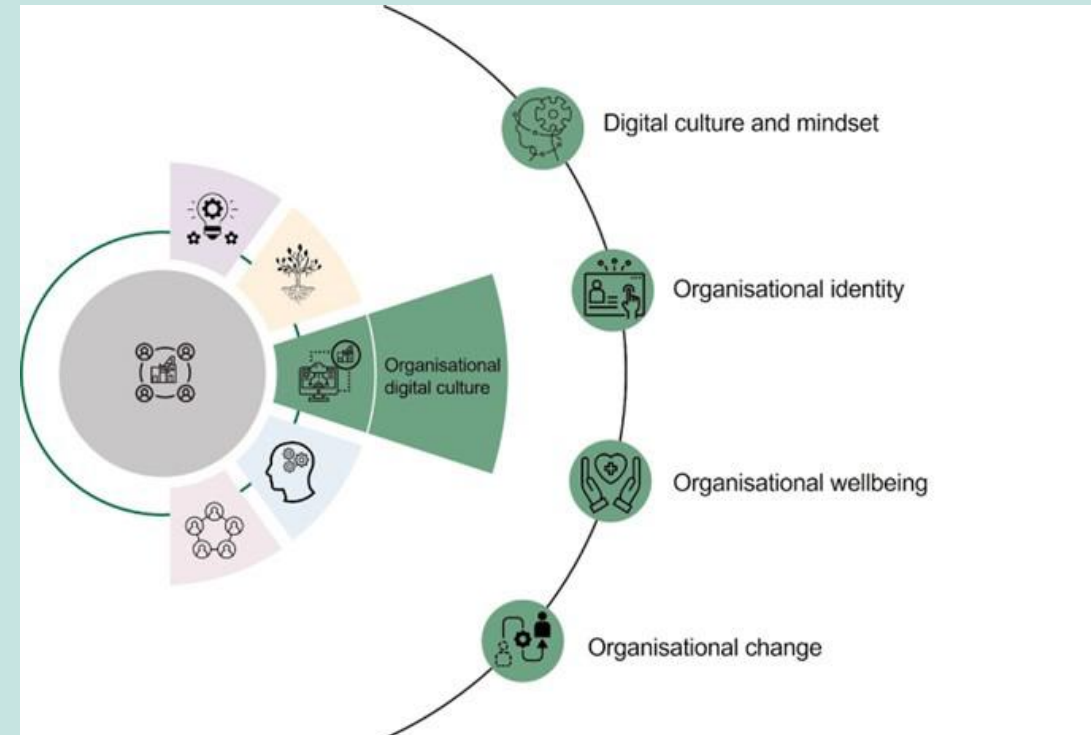
*"The principal barriers to further progress in **organisational digital culture** are financial constraints and variations in digital capability across the workforce. While the University has demonstrated a commitment to innovation through initiatives such as immersive and virtual reality learning environments, digital confidence and proficiency remain inconsistent across staff groups. This can limit the pace of adoption of new technologies and ways of working."*

Response in the sector maturity assessment
2026

Organisational digital culture

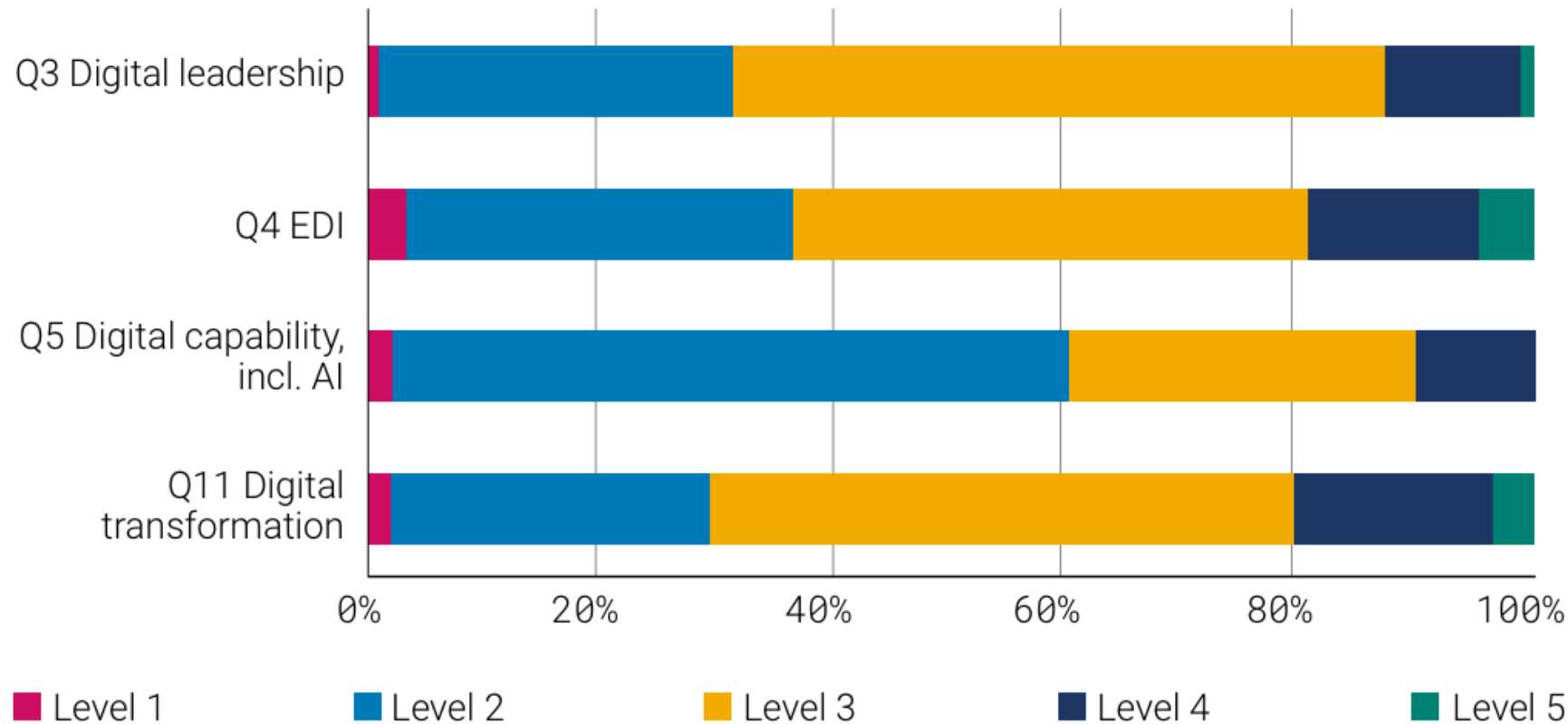
Assessment questions

- How far does your organisation demonstrate effective digital leadership?
- How far does the digital culture of your organisation support equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)?
- How far does your organisation ensure that all stakeholders have the necessary digital capability (including AI capability) to perform effectively?
- How far does your organisation lead and enable digital transformation to drive innovation and improve education, research and commercial outcomes?



Jisc's UK HE 2026 digital maturity assessment

Organisational digital culture: maturity distribution



Characteristics of digital maturity

The findings suggest that organisations making the greatest progress were those that:

- **Align digital priorities** with organisational strategy and long-term objectives
- **Coordinate leadership, governance and decision making** across organisational boundaries
- **Invest in people**, digital capability and organisational culture alongside technology
- **Use trusted information** and evidence to inform planning, prioritisation and investment
- **Work collaboratively** across academic, professional, technical and leadership teams to reduce fragmentation
- **Take a long-term approach** to infrastructure, digital services and organisational capacity
- **Embed continuous review**, evaluation and organisational improvement within normal planning processes
- **Design services around the needs of learners, staff and researchers** rather than organisational structures
- **Balance innovation** with resilience, sustainability and effective governance

Way forward

For organisations and the sector



Thematic papers series



Jisc

Strengthening leadership, governance and strategic decision making

Using Jisc's digital maturity model to inform strategic alignment, coordinated action and sustainable change.

Beyond digital foundations
thematic paper

October 2026

Thematic papers

Addressing current challenges

- Measuring the impact of digital transformation
- Strengthening leadership, governance and strategic decision-making
- Improving organisational efficiency, effectiveness and financial sustainability
- Enabling responsible and sustainable approaches to AI
- Building organisational resilience and adaptability
- Enhancing student experience
- Improving student engagement, progression, retention and attainment



Papers can be downloaded from the **Beyond digital foundations** webpage.
ji.sc/he-digital-maturity

Jisc

Enabling responsible and sustainable approaches to AI

Using Jisc's digital maturity model to identify opportunities, address risks and support responsible innovation

Beyond digital foundations thematic paper

October 2026

Read the full report:
ji.sc/digital-maturity-report



Read the briefing:
ji.sc/digital-maturity-briefing



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relationship manager





Join our **senior leaders' working group** for digital transformation:

<https://ji.sc/working-group>

Register now for our demonstrating digital transformation event:

[Demonstrating digital transformation
- Building a sustainable digital
culture - Jisc](#)



Questions for discussion

Questions for the sector

- Where could greater collaboration help providers address common organisational challenges and realise greater value from digital investment?
- Which barriers are best addressed by individual providers, and which require greater sector-wide collaboration, shared approaches or collective investment?
- How can sector bodies, networks and partnerships better support organisations to strengthen digital transformation capability and organisational maturity?
- What opportunities exist to reduce duplication, share expertise and build collective capacity across the sector?
- How can future sector initiatives support providers in moving beyond digital foundations towards greater organisational impact and value?
- What investments might offer the greatest value?

“The biggest barrier to progress is balancing the pace of digital transformation with institutional capacity for change.”

Response in the sector
maturity assessment 2026

Thank you

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