

OpenEU WP5.3 – Framework for the digital transformation of on-campus HEIs

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Purpose and Scope

This framework operationalises the institutional transition from primarily on-campus provision to sustainable hybrid and online provision. It consolidates strategy and governance, platforms and IT operations, pedagogy and staff development, student services, quality assurance, communication, and institutional context into a facilitation-ready checklist (Areas → Subareas → Topics → Diagnostic questions). The instrument was field-validated in 2025 through expert engagements and aligns with WP5 Task 5.3 and the planned Digital Transformation Toolkit (D5.3/D5.1, depending on internal numbering). For background and evidence, consult the bundled paper: Santos, A., Morgado, L., Mamede, H., Koulaouzidis, G., Ilcheva, M., Kuijpers, C., Guasch, T., Magnússon, M. Á. S., Peratikou, A., Plaksenkova, I., Bills, A., Kalles, D., Brouns, F., & Gil-Jaurena, I. (in press). Transformation framework for transitioning traditional universities to online open education. In Proceedings of the EADTU 2025 Conference. EADTU.

Framework process

1. **Preparation (at institution under transformation):** Identify contacts per area; assemble existing evidence (e.g.: policies, QA reports, platform documentation, workflows, KPIs).
2. **Self-assessment / workshops (institution + external experts):** Discuss each item, capture maturity (0–4), draft notes, provide evidence links, identify area/subarea/topic owners. Use the reflection questions to focus the conversation and ensure evidence is referenced.
3. **Prioritisation:** Derive **quick wins (0–6 months)** and **structural initiatives (6–24 months)**; map dependencies; secure governance approval.
4. **Roadmaps & monitoring:** Convert priorities to a 12–24-month plan with milestones, KPIs, and risk controls.

Maturity Anchors (0–4)

- **0: Absent:** No consistent practice/evidence.
- **1: Developing:** Existence of *ad hoc* pilots; limited documentation and area/subarea/topic ownership.
- **2: Improving:** Documented processes in parts of the institution; emerging KPIs.
- **3: Managing:** Institution-wide process with roles, SLAs, QA, and monitoring.
- **4: Optimising:** Continuous improvement with analytics and external benchmarking.

Framework

Area A. Strategic Management

Subarea A1. Strategic Plan and Digital Vision

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>A specific strategic plan for e-learning is established and documented.</i>	How was this plan created, and who oversees its implementation?	[1]; [4]; [2]
<i>The mission, vision, and values are aligned with the new distance learning model.</i>	In what ways do the mission, vision, and values explicitly support distance and online learning?	[3]; [1]; [4]; [2]
<i>The institution has identified specific challenges that may impact digital learning implementation.</i>	Which challenges are most pressing, and what strategies are in place to address them?	[4]
<i>An economic feasibility analysis is performed with estimates on return on investment (ROI).</i>	How are these ROI estimates used for decision-making and resource allocation?	[3]

Subarea A2. Applicable Legislation

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>Legislation regulating distance education exists and is adhered to by the institution.</i>	How does the institution monitor compliance with these legal frameworks?	[3]; [4]; [2]
<i>E-learning policies conform to all relevant legal and ethical standards.</i>	Which internal mechanisms ensure that these policies stay up to date and compliant?	[1]

Subarea A3. Governance Structure

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>Policies and regulations encourage innovation and digitalization of institutional processes.</i>	How are these policies communicated and enforced across different departments?	[2]

A dedicated team or committee leads digital transformation and pedagogical innovation (e.g., digital transformation director, innovation committee).

Who is on this team, and how do they collaborate with other governance bodies?

[3]; [2]

Subarea A4. Change Management

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>A change management plan includes internal communication, training, and the involvement of faculty, students, and administrative staff.</i>	How is each group (faculty, students, admin) consulted and informed during the change process?	[2]
<i>Active collaboration with external partners (industry, local communities, NGOs) fosters applied projects, pilot testing, and real-world skill-building for e-learning students.</i>	How do you select and manage partnerships to enhance relevance and impact in online programs?	[5]
<i>Mechanisms are in place for continuous feedback and evaluation of transformation processes.</i>	How often is feedback collected, and what methods are used (surveys, focus groups, etc.)?	[2]
<i>Educational research and innovation in e-learning are regarded as high-status activities and promoted by career development incentives.</i>	What types of incentives (e.g., funding, awards, promotion criteria) encourage innovation?	[1]
<i>Good practices based on experience and research in e-learning are disseminated through established mechanisms.</i>	How are these good practices documented, shared, and scaled up within the institution?	[1]
<i>The institution ensures that staff workload and participation in e-learning activities are considered when managing courses or programs.</i>	Which policies or tools exist to monitor and balance staff workload in online teaching?	[1]
<i>E-learning budgeting considers equipment, software, staffing, training, research needs, and emerging technologies.</i>	Which budgeting process ensures timely updates and resource reallocation as needs evolve?	[3]; [1]

Area B. Technological Infrastructure

Subarea B1. Platforms and Tools

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>The LMS and related tools (videoconferencing, forums, chat) are high-quality, scalable, and have good usability.</i>	How do you measure or evaluate user satisfaction, scalability, and usability for these platforms?	[3]; [4]; [2]
<i>E-learning systems (VLE, LMS) are compatible with relevant management information systems and are reliable, secure, and effective.</i>	How frequently do you test integrations between these systems?	[3]; [1]; [2]
<i>The technical infrastructure is fit for purpose, supporting academic, social, and administrative functions.</i>	What monitoring is in place to ensure the infrastructure's ongoing performance?	[1]
<i>The technical specification is based on stakeholder requirements, with realistic estimates of system usage.</i>	Which stakeholders contribute requirements, and how are these updated over time?	[1]

Subarea B2. Security and Technical Support

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>Processes ensure compliance with GDPR and other data privacy regulations for storing, processing, and sharing learner data.</i>	What procedures or audits exist to validate compliance and address data breaches or privacy concerns?	[1]; [4]; [2]; [5]
<i>Adequate support (helpdesk, admin support) is available to academic staff, including affiliated tutors.</i>	How is the quality of support measured and improved?	[1]; [2]
<i>Maintenance, monitoring, and performance review standards are clearly defined and regularly updated.</i>	Which teams are responsible, and what is the review cycle?	[1]

Subarea B3. IT Resources

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>Servers, networks, and storage have sufficient capacity and redundancy to ensure consistent service.</i>	How do you track usage peaks to determine capacity upgrades?	[3]; [2]
<i>Contingency and disaster recovery plans are in place.</i>	How often are these plans tested, and who is involved in those drills?	[2]
<i>The institution's digital strategy includes targets for reducing energy consumption, e-waste, and carbon footprint.</i>	How are sustainability metrics tracked and reported, and do they influence procurement decisions or platform choice?	[5]
<i>Media development staff receive the training and support needed to develop and deliver e-learning components.</i>	Which ongoing training programs keep staff up to date with new media technologies?	[1]

Subarea B4. Emergent Technologies

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>The institution actively investigates new and emerging technologies for potential integration in e-learning.</i>	How do you pilot or evaluate new technologies before institution-wide adoption?	[1]
<i>There are institutional guidelines for integrating Generative AI into educational processes, ensuring it is not overly restrictive and encourages innovation.</i>	What are the specific guidelines for staff and student use of generative AI, how were they developed, and how do stakeholders perceive them?	[5]
<i>The institution provides guidelines for ethical use of AI in coursework, research, and assessment.</i>	How do faculty and students stay informed about AI's possibilities and risks, including bias, academic integrity, and data privacy?	[5]

Area C. Virtual Pedagogical Model and Didactic Innovation

Subarea C1. Program Review and Redesign

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>Curricula are designed to include e-learning approaches that develop subject-specific outcomes and transferable skills.</i>	What process ensures these learning outcomes remain aligned with industry or societal needs, or with state-of-the-art research recommendations for practice?	[1]; [2]
<i>E-learning-based curricula offer personalization and flexible learning paths that ensure achievement of outcomes</i>	Which tools or methods enable individualized pacing or learning paths?	[1]
<i>Independent learning materials provide learners with regular feedback via self-assessment or formative assessment.</i>	How do you track whether learners use these self-assessment and formative assessment tools?	[1]
<i>Curricula allow participation in academic communities via social media or other collaboration tools.</i>	What strategies encourage learners and external professionals to engage in these online spaces?	[1]
<i>Courses conform to explicit guidelines on layout/presentation and maintain consistency across a program.</i>	Which guidelines exist, and how is compliance monitored?	[1]
<i>Institutional materials on the VLE are regularly reviewed and updated; responsibilities and secure access are well-defined.</i>	How is version control maintained, and who approves updates?	[1]

Subarea C2. Course Delivery, Teaching Methodologies and Strategies

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>A defined pedagogical model underpins current online or distance delivery approaches.</i>	How is this model communicated to educators, and how often is it revisited?	[4]

Specific online methodologies (e.g., problem-based, project-based, microlearning, gamification, blended) are adopted as relevant. What informs the choice of methodology for each course or program? [2]

Collaborative participation, discussion forums, asynchronous activities, occasional non-mandatory synchronous activities, and tutorial support are integrated. How do you ensure consistent quality and engagement across these different activities? [2]

Subarea C3. Instructional Design and Use of Technologies

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>Each course clearly states learning outcomes for knowledge and skills.</i>	How do instructors verify that these outcomes address both academic and professional expectations?	[1]
<i>Learning outcomes drive the selection of methods and course content; in blended contexts, each element's rationale is explicit.</i>	How do you align each mode (online, face-to-face) with the intended outcomes?	[1]; [2]
<i>The institution implements and integrates tools that support communication, collaboration, and assessment (e.g., authoring tools, virtual learning environments).</i>	Which specific technologies are used, and how are they evaluated for effective integration into teaching and learning?	[3]; [2]
<i>Coherent instructional design principles link learning goals, activities, materials, and assessment.</i>	Who oversees or reviews the alignment between goals and activities?	[1]
<i>The design and evaluation of courses involve individuals with both academic and technical expertise.</i>	How are these cross-functional teams formed and managed?	[1]
<i>OER and third-party materials are selected and tailored to fit learning outcomes; they undergo the same review as other materials.</i>	Which criteria determine whether OER or third-party resources are of suitable quality?	[1]

E-learning materials offer sufficient interactivity (student-content, student-student, student-teacher) to promote active engagement.

What metrics or feedback loops assess the effectiveness of interactivity? [1]

Subarea C4. Assessment, Learning Monitoring, and Quality

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>A dedicated quality assurance framework addresses online course design, delivery, and learner experience.</i>	Which QA benchmarks or indicators are used, and how are results fed back into course and program redesign?	[5]
<i>Continuous and adaptive assessment mechanisms balance formative and summative approaches, offering instant feedback.</i>	How are these assessments integrated into the course workflow, and how do students perceive them?	[1]; [2]
<i>Competency-based assessments, digital portfolios, and other formative methods track student progress.</i>	Which tools or rubrics help ensure consistent evaluation of competencies?	[2]
<i>Courses offer explicit, fair, valid, and reliable formative and summative assessments.</i>	How do instructors validate the reliability or fairness of assessments?	[1]
<i>Measures prevent impersonation or plagiarism in online assessments.</i>	Which authentication or proctoring methods are used, and how are privacy concerns handled?	[1]

Subarea C5. Support for Pedagogical Innovation

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>Centres of excellence or pedagogical innovation labs exist to support new approaches.</i>	How are faculty informed about and encouraged to utilize these centres?	[3]; [2]
<i>Continuous training programs for faculty/tutors focus on online education methodologies and technologies.</i>	How is training impact measured (e.g., changes in teaching practice)?	[3]; [2]

An organizational framework fosters innovation through scholarship and research in e-learning.

How do you fund or prioritize research into new pedagogical models? [1]

Course materials (including outcomes) are reviewed by experts before first use, then regularly improved with stakeholder feedback.

What is the feedback loop from students, tutors, and external stakeholders? [1]

Subarea C6. Adaptation of External Models

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>Best practices from other virtual or distance universities (e.g., OpenEU members) are analysed and adapted.</i>	How do you evaluate which external models fit your local context or needs?	[2]

Area D. Faculty Training and Development

Subarea D1. Training in Online Technologies and Methodologies

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>Staff in academic roles can develop and deliver e-learning effectively; ongoing training is provided.</i>	Which specific skills are prioritized in these trainings, and how often are they updated?	[1]; [2]
<i>Continuous training programs and workshops on distance teaching methodologies are available.</i>	Who coordinates these workshops, and how is attendance encouraged?	[3]; [2]
<i>Clear, consistent instructions on using the institution's e-learning systems are provided to all users.</i>	Where can faculty/students find documentation or guides, and how is feedback collected?	[1]

Subarea D2. Pedagogical Support

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>Consulting or pedagogical support is available for adapting content to the virtual environment.</i>	How do faculty request this support, and how quickly do they receive it?	[2]

<i>Incentives exist for faculty who innovate or experiment with new teaching practices.</i>	What forms do these incentives take (financial, recognition, promotion criteria, etc.)?	[3]; [2]
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Area E. Academic Services

Subarea E1. Digitized Academic Processes

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>Processes (enrollment, registration, assessments, feedback, certificate issuance) are digitized.</i>	How are these processes integrated to ensure a smooth user experience?	[4]; [2]
<i>The learning platform is effectively integrated with academic management systems.</i>	Are there any data inconsistencies or bottlenecks that still require manual intervention?	[2]
<i>The institution recognizes prior learning experiences, and micro-credentials can be stacked or transferred toward formal qualifications.</i>	What processes validate and credit a learner's external experience, and how do they integrate into degree pathways?	[5]
<i>The institution accepts digital payment systems, including non-EU options (PayPal, credit cards, etc.).</i>	How is payment security and user convenience maintained?	[5]

Subarea E2. Assessment and Certification

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>Tools are in place for administering and grading online assessments.</i>	Which grading analytics are available for instructors?	[3]; [2]
<i>Systems for issuing and verifying digital certificates are in place.</i>	How do employers or third parties confirm the authenticity of these certificates?	[2]

Subarea E3. Support Resources and Materials

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
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<i>Digital learning materials, virtual libraries, and multimedia resources are readily available.</i>	How do students access and navigate these resources, and are there any usage metrics?	[2]
<i>Collaboration and student support tools (forums, chats, study groups) are provided.</i>	What steps ensure active engagement on these collaboration platforms?	[2]
<i>Roles and responsibilities for external e-learning activities (e.g., virtual mobility, partnerships, OER, MOOCs) are clearly defined.</i>	Who oversees external agreements or partnerships, and how often are they reviewed?	[1]

Area F. Administrative Services

Subarea F1. Process Automation

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>Administrative processes (finance, HR, logistics) are digitalized and automated where possible.</i>	Which processes remain manual, and what is the plan for further automation?	[3]; [2]
<i>Administrative systems are integrated with new digital platforms for maximum efficiency.</i>	What were the biggest challenges in integrating these systems, and how were they resolved?	[2]

Subarea F2. Administrative Team Training

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>New management and communication tools are adopted, enabling staff to support e-learning effectively.</i>	What orientation or training do new admin staff members receive on these tools?	[3]; [1]; [2]
<i>Ongoing support and training are enhanced in line with emerging technological developments.</i>	How is the impact of training measured for administrative roles?	[1]; [2]

Area G. Student Support, Accessibility and Ethics

Subarea G1. Student Support and Assistance

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
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<i>Clear guidelines and support exist for digital well-being, work-life balance, and mental health for students in online environments.</i>	What resources, training, or policies help individuals manage screen time, asynchronous demands, and possible ‘always-on’ expectations?	[5]
<i>Students receive clear, up-to-date information on courses, including learning and assessment methods.</i>	Which channels are used to keep this information up to date?	[1]
<i>Students have guidelines on their rights, roles, and responsibilities; relevant e-learning details (hardware, accessibility, collaboration) are included.</i>	How do you verify that students have read and understood these guidelines?	[1]
<i>Technical helpdesk, administrative support, and course-choice advice are available.</i>	How quickly can students expect resolution or answers?	[1]; [2]
<i>Continuous monitoring of student progress and pedagogical interventions occur when necessary.</i>	Which analytics or early-warning systems detect struggling students?	[2]
<i>Students have access to learning resources (online library, study-skills development, study advisor), plus training on how to use them.</i>	How is usage tracked, and do you gather student feedback on resource quality?	[1]

Subarea G2. Accessibility, Inclusion, and Ethics

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>Platforms and content are accessible to all, including those with special needs.</i>	Which accessibility guidelines (e.g., WCAG) are followed, and how is compliance audited?	[3]; [2]
<i>The institution adopts digital inclusion and cross-cultural policies, with relevant training.</i>	How do these policies address language, cultural differences, or connectivity challenges?	[3]; [2]
<i>Social media (institutional or external) is used to foster student communities.</i>	Which social media policies guide appropriate and ethical community-building?	[1]
<i>The institution enforces clear policies, procedures, and consequences</i>	How are these policies communicated, monitored,	[5]

regarding cyberbullying, ensuring a safe digital environment for all (students and staff).

and enforced, and what support channels exist for those affected by cyberbullying?

Area H. Communication and Marketing

Subarea G3. Internal Communication (Digital Tools)

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>Tools like Discord, Slack, Teams, etc. are used for instant communication, project collaboration, and file sharing.</i>	How do you manage user onboarding and tool adoption across diverse teams?	[3]; [2]
<i>Videoconferencing or webinars (Zoom, Google Meet, etc.) for staff (not students) are regularly used, and staff are trained on their use.</i>	What best practices or standards do you have for conducting effective online meetings and avoiding stigmatizing non-physical participants?	[3]; [2]
<i>Intranet and internal portals centralize news and institutional updates.</i>	Which strategies ensure that staff check and engage with these portals?	[2]

Subarea G4. Internal Communication (Processes and Procedures)

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>Clear internal communication protocols specify which channels to use for urgent, informative, or collaborative messages.</i>	How often are these protocols updated, and who is responsible for maintaining them?	[2]
<i>Training and capacity-building programs ensure administrative/faculty proficiency in new tools.</i>	How do you evaluate these training sessions' effectiveness?	[3]; [2]

Subarea G5. External Communication

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>The institutional website and social media channels reflect the new digital identity, with clear info on online programs and methods.</i>	How do you measure the impact of these updates (e.g., web analytics, feedback forms)?	[2]

<i>Email marketing or newsletters keep students, alumni, and community informed about news, events, and opportunities.</i>	What email metrics are tracked (e.g., open rates, click rates), and how are they used?	[4]; [2]
<i>Chat applications or online support (chatbots, live support) assist students and prospects quickly.</i>	How is the quality of these chat interactions evaluated?	[2]

Subarea G6. Engagement and Feedback Strategy (Monitoring and Analysis)

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>Email opening rates, response times in chat, videoconference engagement, and satisfaction with digital channels are tracked.</i>	How do you interpret and act on these metrics to improve communication?	[2]

Subarea G7. Engagement and Feedback Strategy (Continuous Improvement)

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>Regular mechanisms (surveys, forums) gather feedback on digital communication channels and work-life-training balance.</i>	How do you prioritize which feedback items to address first?	[2]
<i>Clear, transparent updates about digital strategies and changes are communicated to stakeholders.</i>	What processes ensure timely announcements and avoid information overload?	[3]; [2]

Area I. Demographics and Context

Subarea I1. Faculty and staff

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>Geographical diversity and time zones for all employees are documented.</i>	How does this information factor into scheduling or online meeting practices?	[3]
<i>The institution tracks the number of teaching staff by rank (assistants, associate/assistant/full professors).</i>	How is this data used for strategic hiring or workload distribution?	[4]

Policies govern teaching hours workload, including asynchronous digital learning.

How do you ensure fair workload distribution between face-to-face and online components? [5]

Subarea I2. Organization

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>The institution's faculties/departments and degree programs are clearly defined.</i>	What is the structure for overseeing and coordinating program offerings?	[4]
<i>The locations of campuses (or off-campus centres) are identified.</i>	How are distance and resources managed across multiple sites?	[4]
<i>The institution's role in the national higher education system is understood (e.g., recognized, accredited).</i>	Which bodies grant recognition or accreditation, and how often is reaccreditation required?	[4]
<i>The academic year is clearly organized (semesters, quarters, annual, etc.).</i>	Has the structure changed to accommodate distance learners' time constraints?	[4]
<i>Programs of study are structured (single path, major/minors, short and long masters, PhDs).</i>	How do you ensure consistent quality across different program formats?	[4]
<i>Non-degree-granting courses (vocational, professional training) supplement degree offerings.</i>	Which types of learners typically enrol in these short courses?	[4]
<i>The institution's current funding structure includes tuition, government grants, research grants, etc.</i>	How stable or diversified is funding for distance learning initiatives?	[4]

Subarea I3. Students and alumni

Topics	Reflection question	Sources
<i>The university offers flexibility in what, where, when, and how to study (e.g., for working students, non-lecturing weeks).</i>	How do you track student satisfaction or completion rates for these flexible pathways?	[4]

<i>There are ongoing initiatives to engage alumni (former students).</i>	How is alumni feedback integrated into curriculum or service improvements?	[4]
<i>The institution supports the student life cycle (recruitment, advice, guidance) effectively.</i>	Which methods help you measure the impact of these support services on retention or success?	[4]
<i>The institution provides transparent financial information (tuition, scholarships) to students.</i>	How do you communicate updates on fees or funding opportunities to new and existing students?	[4]

Sources and References

Source keys used in the tables

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