

UNE Digital Strategy 2026–2029

The Foundation of the Leap

A digital foundation worthy of the institution it serves.



Six-Layer Stack



7 Design Principles

- Human Dignity
- Foundation First
- Leapfrog
- One Data Estate
- Sovereign
- Composable
- Demonstrate First

6 Operating Guardrails

- ◆ Cyber Uplift
- ◆ AI Ethics
- ◆ Investment Discipline
- ◆ No Vendor Lock-in
- ◆ Change Architecture
- ◆ Equity by Design

DEMONSTRATE (Year 1)
Prove value through pilots and quick wins.

CONNECT (Year 2)
Scale foundations and integrate platforms.

EMERGE (Year 3)
Realise transformational impact and growth.

Endorsed by UNE Council, 31 July 2026

UNE DIGITAL STRATEGY 2026–2029

The Foundation of the Leap

Public Version

Based on the strategy endorsed by the UNE Council, 31 July 2026

FOREWORD

The University of New England has a new Strategic Plan. It is ambitious, honest and unconventional, consistent with everything that has made this institution distinctive since its founding. It commits UNE to connecting individual aspirations to community outcomes, to being the university that does what others cannot or will not do and to building a new university inside the one that exists today.

This is the Digital Strategy's response to that commitment.

Not a parallel initiative. Not a technology programme running alongside the institutional agenda. A direct and deliberate response, translating the Strategic Plan's ambitions into the digital foundation required to make them real.

That foundation is where the most consequential work happens. Secure infrastructure, composable architecture, governed data and automated coordination are not endpoints. They are the conditions under which something genuinely new becomes possible. UNE is not modernising a university. It is building the substrate of an AI-native institution, with all the unknown doors it opens for how students learn, how staff work and how knowledge is created and shared. The path ahead is not fully mapped. That is not a weakness of this strategy. It is the nature of the territory.

For UNE, the digital foundation carries a specific responsibility. This is an institution founded on the principle that geography should not determine opportunity. The students and communities UNE serves, regional, remote and dispersed, depend on digital infrastructure not as a convenience but as their primary means of access to education, to support and to each other. One in five UNE students has a registered disability and 85% study entirely online. For these students, digital accessibility is not a design preference. It is a participation requirement. Getting this foundation right is not an operational priority. It is a mission obligation.

But this strategy is not only about infrastructure. It is about what infrastructure makes possible. For students navigating their education. For staff freed from low-value coordination work. For academics whose time and energy can be directed toward teaching and discovery rather than administrative friction. The technology is the instrument. The people are the point.

This strategy does not stand alone. Three enabling strategies respond to the Strategic Plan: a Data and Information Strategy, this Digital Strategy and an AI Strategy. Each moves at a different tempo. Each depends on the others. This document builds the foundational infrastructure layers on which other strategies depend. It shares ownership of the experience layer with the AI Strategy. And it is the primary engine of operational transformation, through the progressive dissolution of friction, from the inside out.

The next three years will determine whether UNE has the infrastructure its ambitions require. That is what this strategy is for.

It is not everything that is possible. It is everything that is necessary.

1. THE MOMENT

UNE does not face a single challenge. It faces the simultaneous convergence of three structural pressures that individually would be serious and together demand a fundamentally different response.

Financial pressure. UNE's financial position is constrained. The digital budget is almost entirely committed to keeping current operations running, leaving limited capacity for transformation. The cost structure of the traditional university model is misaligned with UNE's revenue reality and cannot be resolved through financial management alone. It requires a different operating model.

Technology pressure. UNE's technology estate reflects decades of accumulated complexity. Systems that do not communicate. Manual coordination processes that consume skilled human effort. Data locked in silos. A student digital experience that spans more than forty disconnected access points. Technical debt that is real and substantial.

Competitive pressure. The higher education market is undergoing structural disruption. New providers, AI-native and operating on fundamentally different cost structures, are entering the market and the implications for traditional institutions are significant. Student expectations, shaped by consumer digital experiences, are already ahead of what most universities can deliver. Institutions that thrive in this environment are more likely to be those that build a fundamentally different model than those that optimise the one they have.

These pressures are not new. What is new is their convergence and the narrowing window within which to respond.

The Leap

UNE has done this before. When university education was only available in capital cities, UNE did not build more campuses. It invented distance education. It leapt. Not from a position of strength but from a position of constraint. By people who understood that the conventional response was not available to them and that the communities they served could not afford to wait.

The current moment is structurally identical. The conventional institutional response, audit, stabilise, remediate, modernise, would require investment at a scale and over a timeframe that UNE's circumstances do not permit. And it would deliver a modernised version of a model that is already becoming obsolete.

UNE holds structural advantages that new market entrants do not. Seventy years of distance education have produced deep operational knowledge of how remote and regional students learn, persist and succeed. Established accreditation, research capability and an existing student relationship built on trust are not assets that new providers can replicate quickly. The leap is not a defensive manoeuvre. It is the conversion of distinctive institutional assets into a model that competitors cannot easily match.

The strategic logic is precise. Stop trying to fix what cannot be fixed within available constraints. Start building what needs to exist alongside what currently exists. Use AI to dissolve the coordination layer that legacy systems require, making them progressively irrelevant rather than expensively repaired. Redirect every dollar and every hour freed by that dissolution into building the new model.

This is not a technology strategy. It is an act of institutional ambition.

2. THE STARTING POINT

A strategy that does not begin with an honest account of its starting point is not a strategy. It is an aspiration document.

What Students Experience

UNE's student-facing digital performance is a genuine institutional strength. The evidence is drawn from the Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching survey, the sector's primary independent measure of student satisfaction.

Metric	UNE 2024	Sector Benchmark 2024
Online learning materials, quality	4.12	3.98
Computing and IT resources, quality	3.94	3.82
Online learning platform	4.15	4.09
Student support and services	3.79	3.79

UNE is above benchmark on three measures and at parity on the fourth. Both computing and IT resources and online learning materials improved year on year. For an institution whose students are predominantly studying at a distance and for whom digital infrastructure is the primary connection to their university, this performance is significant. It reflects the quality of investment made in student-facing infrastructure over recent years and the commitment of the teams that maintain it.

Student support and services reached benchmark parity in 2024 after sitting below it the previous year. This is the area of greatest strategic sensitivity. Students who encounter friction in support channels are students at risk of disengagement. Closing that gap is a retention imperative, not merely a service quality aspiration.

The student digital baseline also reflects institutional AI capability that is already in production. Through LabNext70, UNE's applied AI lab, the institution has deployed secure AI workspaces for all staff and for all students, built on sovereign, model-agnostic architecture. UNE was among the first Australian universities to provide every student with free, institutionally governed AI access. This is the starting point of an institution that has moved faster than most of its peers on production AI deployment and now needs the governed digital foundation to connect, sustain and scale what it has built.

The opportunity is not to repair what students experience. It is to extend and personalise it, to move from a consistent baseline to a genuinely differentiated experience that reflects UNE's distance education legacy and its AI-native ambition.

What Staff Experience

The staff experience presents a different challenge. UNE's 2024 All-Staff Engagement Survey included direct measures of technology experience. Staff confidence in the technology they use and their sense that UNE deploys technology effectively both sit below sector benchmarks.

This is the primary internal transformation challenge. Not because of the people, but because of the environment they are working in. A workforce that trusts its tools, feels capable using them and believes

the institution is using technology well is a workforce whose capacity for transformation is unlocked. A workforce that does not is a workforce whose capacity is constrained before it begins.

This is not a criticism of staff. It is a diagnosis of the environment. And it is the diagnosis this strategy is designed to address.

The Technology Landscape

UNE's technology estate reflects decades of accumulated decision-making under resource constraint. Systems were added to solve immediate problems. Integration was deferred. Rationalisation was planned but rarely funded. The result is a landscape of genuine capability sitting alongside genuine complexity.

The honest characterisation is this. UNE has a technology estate that works harder than it should have to, maintained by a team that works harder than it should have to, in service of outcomes that are better than the underlying architecture deserves credit for. That is not sustainable. And it is not the foundation on which an AI-native institution can be built.

The path forward is not repair. It is deliberate, sequenced construction of a new digital foundation alongside the existing one. Dissolving legacy complexity progressively as the new architecture proves itself rather than attempting to replace everything at once. That is the logic this strategy is built on.

3. THE STRATEGIC ARCHITECTURE

Three Strategies, One Direction

The UNE Strategic Plan does not generate a single enabling response. It generates a constellation of strategies, each addressing a distinct dimension of institutional capability. This Digital Strategy is one of them.

Within that constellation, three strategies form a tightly connected cluster: Digital, AI and Data and Information. They are not a hierarchy. They are interdependent strategies, each operating at a different tempo, each depending on the others and each falling short without the others.

Strategy	Horizon	Purpose
Data and Information Strategy	4-year	Data as institutional asset, governed and trusted
Digital Strategy	3-year	Digital infrastructure, security and platforms
AI Strategy	2-year	Experience, augmentation and transformation

The Digital and AI strategies share a common architectural spine. The Data and Information Strategy provides the foundational data substrate that both depend on. All three are connected through a dedicated governance mechanism: the Joint Strategy Governance Forum, chaired by the Executive Director of Future Students, Engagement and Technology. Its mandate is to make binding decisions on cross-strategy investment priorities, resolve boundary conflicts before they escalate and assess phase transition readiness.

These strategies also operate within a broader institutional landscape that includes strategies for Workforce, Learning, Research, Engagement and Infrastructure. The relationship between Digital and these strategies is one of mutual interdependency. They define the educational, research and student experience ambitions that shape what Digital builds. This strategy provides the platforms, data architecture and security posture through which those ambitions are realised. Neither dictates the other. Both constrain and expand the other.

The Six-Layer Stack

UNE's technology architecture is organised as a six-layer stack, governed by two strategic forces working from opposite directions. The Digital Strategy builds from the infrastructure up. The AI Strategy delivers from the experience down. They meet in the middle, and that intersection is where the most consequential design decisions will be made.

Layer	Description
TRANSFORM	New models of education, research and operations
EMPOWER	Augmented capability for staff and students
DELIGHT	Unified and intelligent user experience
ENABLE	Platforms, integration and composable architecture
CONNECT	Network, cloud and interoperability
PROTECT	Security, sovereignty, compliance and governance

This is not a territorial map. It is a clarity instrument. When investment decisions are made, when priorities conflict and when resources are constrained, this model resolves the question of who decides without requiring escalation. The Digital Strategy holds full accountability for the security and connectivity layers and primary accountability for platforms and integration. The experience layers are shared. The transformation layer is where the AI Strategy leads and the Digital Strategy enables.

The AI Operating System

At the centre of UNE's digital architecture is the AI Operating System, the connective architecture that governs how data, identity, integration and intelligence work together across the university. It is the common foundation through which AI capabilities are safely embedded into university workflows.

The intention is precise. AI capability is only as trustworthy as the architecture it operates within. Without a governed foundation, AI tools behave as isolated instruments, responsive to individual prompts but disconnected from institutional data, institutional rules and institutional accountability. With a governed foundation, AI can act on behalf of the institution. A student receives guidance drawn from authoritative data, authenticated through institutional identity and operating within defined ethical boundaries, without any of that machinery being visible to the student.

The architecture is conservative at the core and ambitious at the edge. The governance and data layers are built for durability, auditability and institutional trust. The intelligence and experience layers are built for pace, adaptability and human connection. Neither works without the other. Governance

without intelligence is bureaucracy that adds cost. Intelligence without governance is risk that erodes trust.

The practical consequence of getting this right is what this strategy calls the human dividend: when AI handles coordination, triage, routine reasoning and data retrieval within a governed architecture, the human effort currently consumed by those tasks is returned to judgment, care, education and discovery, the work that only people can do.

4. PRINCIPLES AND GUARDRAILS

These principles and guardrails govern every investment, initiative and architectural decision. They are not aspirational. They are the framework that makes the strategy trustworthy and that resolves conflicts without escalation when competing priorities collide.

Seven Design Principles

- 1. Human Dignity Before Efficiency.** Every digital and AI initiative must demonstrably improve the experience of the people it affects, whether staff, students or community, not just the efficiency of the institution. Where efficiency and human dignity conflict, human dignity wins. No automation initiative proceeds without a clear account of what happens to the people whose work changes. Accessible design is intrinsic to this principle. It is not a separate workstream.
- 2. Foundation Before Ambition.** No layer of the service architecture will be built on an unstable layer beneath it. Each layer must be sufficient to support the layer above it, assessed against the institution's risk appetite, not perfected before the next layer receives attention. Sequence is not timidity. It is discipline.
- 3. Leapfrog Over Remediation.** Where legacy systems, processes or architectures cannot be fixed within available time and financial constraints, we will build around them rather than through them. The strategy is to dissolve the legacy layer progressively by making it irrelevant, not by repairing it.
- 4. One Data Estate.** Digital, AI and Data and Information strategies share one data architecture, one governance model and one quality standard. No strategy will build a separate data estate. Data is an institutional asset, not a functional one. No vendor contract will be signed that creates proprietary lock-in over institutional data.
- 5. Sovereign by Design.** All digital and AI infrastructure will be built on Australian-sovereign foundations. Data sovereignty, privacy and security are architectural requirements, not compliance additions. Indigenous knowledge, student data and research data receive the highest level of sovereign protection.
- 6. Composable Over Monolithic.** Every platform and system decision will privilege interoperability, data portability and the ability to swap components without systemic disruption. API-first design is mandatory for all new platform procurement. Vendor contracts include exit provisions and data portability guarantees.
- 7. Demonstrate Before You Scale.** No initiative will be scaled institutionally before it has been demonstrated to work at a smaller scope. Pilots are genuine tests with defined success criteria, honest evaluation and explicit go or no-go decisions.

Underpinning these principles is a commitment about how the Digital function itself operates. The team exists to enable the work of others, not to control it. Every service, platform and policy is designed to

reduce friction and create capacity for the people who depend on them. That posture is not incidental to the strategy. It is a condition for the trust on which everything else depends.

Six Operating Guardrails

1. Cyber Uplift as a Constant. Progressive improvement of UNE's cyber security maturity is continuous and non-negotiable. New digital capabilities must not materially increase institutional cyber risk without formal acceptance.

2. AI Ethics. AI systems will not make or directly execute decisions that materially affect individual students or staff, including admissions, assessment, academic progression or employment, without a defined human review, decision and override mechanism.

3. Investment Discipline. No digital or AI initiative will be approved for investment without a documented value proposition that quantifies impact in at least one of: cost reduction, risk mitigation, revenue enablement or foundational capability with a documented dependency chain to measurable value.

4. Vendor Lock-in Prevention. No contract with a vendor will be executed without requiring data portability provisions, API access to institutional data, assistive technology compatibility and a defined exit pathway.

5. Change Architecture Required. No significant digital or AI initiative will be deployed to staff or students without a defined change management plan that includes role-level impact assessment, capability development support and a feedback mechanism.

6. Equity by Design. Every student-facing digital initiative will include an explicit equity assessment. Initiatives that improve experience for some students while worsening it for others, particularly regional, remote, low-SES and Indigenous students, will not proceed without redesign. WCAG 2.1 AA is the aspirational standard for student-facing platforms, pursued progressively within available means.

5. THE TRANSFORMATION MODEL

Building Alongside

The case for leapfrog over remediation has been established. UNE's financial constraints, technology debt and competitive environment do not permit a conventional recovery programme.

The core logic is construction, not repair. A new digital foundation is built alongside the existing one. As the new architecture proves itself, legacy complexity is progressively dissolved. Not replaced in a single programme of work. Not maintained indefinitely. Dissolved, as the systems and coordination layers it depends on are made irrelevant by what replaces them.

Rather than attempting a whole-of-institution transformation programme, the strategy creates small, contained pockets of the future operating model inside the current one. Each pocket targets a specific area of institutional friction, replaces the legacy process or coordination layer with a new one and demonstrates in practice what the future model looks like. Each is designed to be permanent from the outset, not a temporary experiment awaiting a scaling decision.

Every transformation initiative must meet five criteria:

- **Dissolves real complexity.** It must remove a specific coordination burden, manual process or legacy dependency
- **Demonstrates the future operating model.** It must use the architecture, governance and design principles of the new foundation
- **Is self-contained yet connective.** It must deliver value independently while connecting to the emerging architecture
- **Generates a human dividend.** It must return time, capacity or improved experience to the people it affects
- **Operates within defined governance guardrails.** From its first day of operation

No existing system will be decommissioned until the capability it provides is demonstrably available through a replacement pathway.

Three Phases

The transformation unfolds across three phases over the strategy period. Each phase has a defined character and a governance trigger for transition.

Phase 1: Demonstrate (Year 1). The initial transformation initiatives are built and operational. Each proves that the new operating model works in a specific, contained context. The AI Operating System's foundational layers are established. The governance architecture is stood up and functioning. The measurement framework is producing data.

Phase 2: Connect (Year 2). Individual initiatives begin to reveal their shared architecture. What looked like discrete projects in Phase 1 starts to function as a connected system. New initiatives are introduced, informed by Phase 1 evidence. Legacy systems that have been made functionally redundant by the new architecture are identified for decommissioning.

Phase 3: Emerge (Year 3). The new digital foundation is no longer a collection of initiatives alongside the old architecture. It is the architecture. The AI Operating System is the primary integration and experience layer. The remaining legacy dependencies are on a documented decommissioning pathway.

Each transition is a governance decision made by the Joint Strategy Governance Forum based on documented evidence that the preceding phase's targets have been met.

The phasing model is designed so that partial completion still delivers value. If the strategy delivers Phase 1 fully and Phase 2 partially, UNE will have a materially stronger cyber posture, a functioning AI Operating System foundation, proven transformation capabilities in operation and a governance architecture that did not previously exist. The strategy does not require perfection to justify its investment. It requires honest execution.

6. WHAT WE ARE BUILDING

Every initiative in this strategy serves at least one of five strategic imperatives:

- **Maintain Reliable and Secure Operations.** The digital foundation must be trustworthy before it can be transformative

- **Enable AI-Native Transformation.** Build the architectural foundation that allows AI capability to be embedded safely and sustainably
- **Pioneer Digital Experiences.** Create student and staff experiences that are coherent, intuitive and progressively personalised
- **Reduce Marginal Cost Escalation.** Reverse the trajectory of rising operational cost through automation, rationalisation and architectural simplification
- **Amplify Human Capability.** Ensure that every digital initiative returns time, confidence and capacity to the people it affects

These imperatives are concurrent. An initiative that improves security but degrades the staff experience has not passed the test. An initiative that pioneers a new experience but increases operational cost without a pathway to sustainability has not passed the test. The imperatives operate as a system.

The Initiative Portfolio

The portfolio is organised by the six-layer stack. Foundation before ambition. Protection before expansion.

PROTECT. Security, Sovereignty and Governance

- **Cyber Security Maturity Programme.** Progressive improvement of UNE's cyber security maturity measured against the NIST Cybersecurity Framework, with Essential Eight compliance as a specific Australian Government baseline commitment. The programme follows a three-year arc: governance clarity, identity foundations and incident readiness in Year 1; security embedded into digital delivery and third-party risk management in Year 2; institutional cyber resilience and tested business continuity in Year 3.
- **Identity and Access Governance.** A unified identity and access management framework governing how staff, students and systems authenticate and what they are permitted to access. This is simultaneously a security control and a foundational capability for the AI Operating System. The current identity platform faces a hard architectural deadline, making re-architecture a time-bound obligation alongside a strategic investment.
- **Cyber Intelligence Augmentation.** AI-augmented threat detection, alert triage and situational awareness for UNE's cyber security operations. A small team gains the analytical capacity to focus on genuine threats rather than being consumed by alert volume.

CONNECT. Network and Cloud

- **Network Resilience and Reliability.** Ensuring the network infrastructure is resilient, monitored and capable of supporting the increased data flows that AI-mediated operations require. Includes campus and multi-site connectivity, cloud interconnection and monitoring capability that detects and resolves issues before they affect users.
- **Cloud and Hosting Rationalisation.** Rationalising UNE's hosting and cloud footprint to reduce duplication, improve sovereign data management and establish a coherent infrastructure layer.

ENABLE. Platforms, Integration and Architecture

- **AI Operating System Foundation.** Building the foundational layers of the AI Operating System: sovereign data connections, governance and identity, and the integration architecture that enables both human operators and AI agents to access governed institutional data through standardised interfaces. This is the single most consequential infrastructure initiative in the strategy. Without it, AI initiatives fragment into disconnected experiments. With it, every AI capability connects to a common, governed, sovereign foundation. All AI-powered interfaces built on this foundation must include assistive technology compatibility as a design requirement from inception.
- **Integration and Data Connectivity.** The integration architecture that allows AI tools and new platforms to access data from multiple source systems without requiring those systems to be rebuilt. This layer operationalises the leapfrog model. Includes open interoperability standards, tiered access controls and the progressive exposure of institutional data to cross-functional teams and AI agents.
- **Internal AI Adoption.** The Digital team adopts AI tools in its own daily operations as a genuine operational commitment. The team documents what works, what changes and where the limits are. It is an act of professional honesty: the team that supports the institution's AI journey does the work itself because that is the right thing to do. Quarterly measurement provides transparency and contributes to the institutional evidence base for what AI augmentation delivers in practice.
- **Application Portfolio Rationalisation.** Systematic assessment and progressive simplification of UNE's institutional and administrative application landscape. Includes identifying duplication, consolidation opportunities between overlapping platforms, underutilised functionality within existing systems and applications no longer fit for purpose.
- **Core Platform Sustainability.** Several foundational business systems face vendor-driven transitions from on-premise to hosted delivery within the strategy period. These are not discretionary investments. They are the cost of maintaining the platforms the institution currently depends on.

DELIGHT. Student and Staff Experience

- **Service Desk Intelligence.** AI-augmented service desk operations that improve resolution speed, reduce manual triage and build a knowledge architecture that learns from every interaction. The broader service delivery model is evolving toward a coordinated capability that combines digital platform automation, specialist operational delivery and proactive client experience ownership, including visible in-person support.
- **Student Onboarding Simplification.** The student onboarding experience, from application through to a student's first weeks of study, is shaped by the strategic priorities of the portfolios that own the student journey. The Digital portfolio's role is to dissolve the technical complexity that currently fragments that experience across multiple systems and manual coordination processes, making it coherent and accessible. Onboarding is where students with disability

encounter the earliest and most consequential barriers. Accessibility is an explicit design requirement.

- **Staff Digital Experience Improvement.** Addressing the gap in staff technology satisfaction through targeted improvements to the tools, platforms and support that staff use daily. Includes reducing friction in routine digital interactions, improving self-service capability, extending user autonomy and extracting more value from underutilised functionality in existing platforms.
- **Web and Intranet Experience.** UNE's public web presence and staff intranet are primary channels for institutional communication, student recruitment and internal coordination. Both should evolve toward coherent, substantively accessible and progressively personalised experiences that reflect UNE's digital ambition and UNE's obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and the Disability Standards for Education 2005.

EMPOWER. Capability

- **Digital Capability and Confidence Programme.** Building digital confidence and AI literacy across UNE's workforce. The staff baseline shows that technology confidence sits below sector norms. Closing that gap is essential for the institution's capacity to absorb the changes this strategy and others require.

TRANSFORM. Legacy Dissolution

- **Legacy Dissolution Pathway.** A documented pathway for progressive decommissioning of legacy systems, processes and coordination layers as the new digital foundation proves itself. This is not a remediation programme. It is the structural consequence of the leapfrog strategy succeeding.

7. HOW WE WILL KNOW IT IS WORKING

A strategy without a measurement framework is a declaration of intent.

The framework serves three audiences simultaneously. The Executive Team and Council need confidence that investment is producing results. The Digital team needs clear targets to organise work around. The partner portfolios whose cooperation the strategy depends on need visibility into whether the commitments made to them are being honoured.

Strategic Indicators

Indicator	Baseline	Direction of Travel
Student digital experience (QILT composite)	At or above sector benchmark	Maintained and extended toward sector-leading on core measures
Staff technology satisfaction	Below sector benchmark	Progressive improvement toward and beyond sector parity

Indicator	Baseline	Direction of Travel
Staff technology confidence	Below sector benchmark	Progressive improvement toward and beyond sector parity
Cyber security maturity (NIST CSF)	Active uplift programme underway	Progressive maturity improvement, measured annually
Applicant experience and conversion	Baseline to be established	Measured in partnership with student journey portfolios
Application portfolio complexity	Baseline to be established	Measurable reduction in duplication and fragmentation
Operational cost trajectory	Baseline to be established	Declining relative to capability delivered

Strategic indicators are reported to the Executive Team and Council on a six-monthly cycle. Operational delivery against committed milestones is tracked quarterly through the Joint Strategy Governance Forum.

This framework exists to make accountability real, not performative. It will produce an honest record of what this strategy achieved and where it fell short.

8. WHAT THIS STRATEGY ASKS

This strategy commits the Digital portfolio to a defined set of outcomes, delivered within a defined set of constraints, governed by a defined set of principles. It is the most honest account the Digital portfolio can offer of what it will do, what it needs and what it does not yet know.

But a digital strategy cannot succeed as a digital strategy alone.

The transformation described in this document is institutional. The Digital portfolio builds the foundation. It does not control what is built on it or whether the institution chooses to build at all. The cooperation, investment and patience required to realise this strategy extend well beyond any single portfolio's authority.

This strategy asks five things of the institution.

Active priority-setting. The Digital portfolio brings opportunities, architectural insight and delivery capability. The institution brings the problems, the needs and the strategic weight behind them. Business areas are expected to actively define and own the priorities that shape what the Digital portfolio builds, through an annual process that surfaces institutional need, ranks competing demands transparently and presents investment choices to the Executive Team.

Investment in foundations. Some investments produce visible returns quickly. Others build foundations whose value is realised over time. The institution must be willing to fund foundational work that does not produce immediate outcomes, trusting the sequencing logic and the measurement framework to demonstrate that the investment is sound.

Cross-portfolio partnership. Student onboarding cannot be simplified without the active participation of student administration, academic divisions and communications. The staff digital experience cannot improve without process owners outside the Digital portfolio willing to redesign the processes their technology supports. The data foundation cannot be built if data remains a contested asset rather than a shared one.

Consistent change leadership. Transformation that is championed in a strategy document and undermined in daily practice will fail. When AI tools change how work is done, when processes are redesigned, when legacy systems are retired, the institution's leaders must support those changes visibly and consistently. Change leadership is not a Digital portfolio responsibility alone. It is an institutional practice.

Patience for foundational work. The most consequential work in Year 1 is largely invisible. Identity governance, data architecture, integration infrastructure and cyber uplift do not produce experiences that staff and students can point to immediately. They produce the substrate on which those experiences are built.

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

At the end of this strategy period, if the commitments are met and the partnership is honoured, UNE will have:

A digital foundation that is secure, sovereign, composable and AI-ready.

A student digital experience that is not merely functional but genuinely differentiated.

A staff digital experience that has measurably improved from its current baseline.

An AI Operating System that connects institutional data, governance and intelligence into a single coherent architecture.

A team that has demonstrated what it means to work with AI, not just talk about it.

A technology estate that is simpler, more sustainable and less expensive to operate relative to the capability it delivers.

A measurement framework that has held the strategy accountable for three years and produced an honest record of what was achieved and what was not.

That is not a small ambition. But it is a realistic one.

This strategy does not promise to solve every problem. It promises to build the foundation on which the institution's most important problems can be solved. It promises to do so honestly, within its means and with the discipline that the institution's current circumstances demand.

The work begins now.

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