



GUIDE

# Reaching your digital transformation goals with OneAdvanced

A guide for further education





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## What does digital transformation mean for my organisation?

In its purest sense, digital transformation means changing the entire strategy of an organisation through optimised digital solutions. The goal is to future-proof operations with the latest technologies, ensuring the organisation remains financially viable for years to come.

On a practical level, however, digital transformation means moving away from outdated, legacy infrastructure to improve efficiencies and outcomes in areas of high priority. Senior leaders must look at areas of high need and replace systems as needed and where practicable. This does not mean simply updating existing applications – end of life software should be replaced with the most efficient solutions available.

In further education, budgetary and time constraints make wholesale changes unlikely; a realistic approach is to adopt an incremental strategy that prioritises areas of need. Digital transformation should be cost-effective and deliver better outcomes for students and staff. It should also be sustainable in terms of ongoing resource – both financial and non-financial – and achievable within a reasonable time frame.

Successful digital transformation will free up time for staff members, reducing the burden of administration with automated solutions. It will make information systems more efficient, and streamline the process of data collection and reporting. It will drive outcomes for learners by giving them more autonomy over their study, a better sense of agency, and clearer communication with assessors and educators. Successful digital transformation will promote constructive communication across the entire organisation.





## Moving to the cloud

### Cost and the environment

Further education providers are increasingly leaning on cloud-based technologies to streamline operations for educators, students, senior leaders, and support staff. According to a 2023 survey from OneAdvanced, 69% of educational establishments are now incorporating cloud technology into their regular practices – a figure that's set to rise as the benefits of cloud adoption become more widely recognised.

With tightly squeezed budgets putting strain on colleges and ITPs, cloud-based software solutions can offer appreciable cost savings. By moving away from on-premise servers, cloud migration can lower energy costs, minimise licensing fees, and reduce the need for in-house or third-party maintenance and repair teams. Virtual desktops such as AVD allow organisations to realise these efficiencies at scale and speed.

Environmental sustainability is a further consideration in the deployment of new technologies. According to a collaborative study by Microsoft and WSP, the cloud produces up to 98% fewer greenhouse gas emissions compared to on-premise infrastructure. Through cloud migration, FE providers can align technology provision with Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) objectives.





## A sector under pressure

While funding issues continue to make life difficult for FE organisations, staff members remain under pressure with unmanageable workloads. Responding to a recent National Education Union (NEU) survey, 41% of educators reported their workload to be unmanageable 'most', or 'all of the time'. Nearly 7 in 10 (68%) cited poor work/life balance as a major cause of stress.

High levels of stress and workload have a material effect on staff retention: 70% of FE teachers responding to the above poll said they were planning to leave within the next 5 years. A 2020 TES survey reported that 1 in 8 college teachers leave the profession within the first year.

To mitigate these challenges, senior leaders must prioritise cloud solutions that reduce workload for educators and support staff. Optimised solutions must reduce administrative burden through automation, accurate data collection, clear reporting capabilities, and ease of use.

## The ePortfolio advantage

A key area in which efficiencies can be maximised is through the OneAdvanced ePortfolio. Used widely by FE colleges and providers throughout the UK, ePortfolio is a powerful, all-in-one system for apprenticeship management, designed to greatly reduce the burden of administration and ensure the accuracy of learner data.

Entirely cloud-based, ePortfolio saves significant time for back-office and teaching staff with centralised data on reviews, assessments, and off-the-job hours. The platform makes it easy to build a detailed learner portfolio, with clear visibility on progression, courses, and qualifications. The portfolio can be shared with employers, giving both parties access to learner data at the same time – enabling clear and meaningful conversations to take place if a learner is falling behind.

ePortfolio simplifies the process of onboarding, with the option to enrol learners and employers on one central system. The learner journey can then be easily tracked, with regular checks to ensure they are ready for the next stage of their programme. The reporting suite gives clear visualisation on KPIs and other key performance data across any group of learners. This clarity of data makes it easy to evidence learner progression for Ofsted inspection.



## AI-driven software for better outcomes

### The current landscape

The term 'AI' has become increasingly inescapable. It is a term associated with progress but also with negativity – there is a sense that AI is 'taking over' or will soon replace human workers with automated equivalents. The reality, though, is likely to be very different – particularly in the world of education, where AI will be (and is) used to enhance learner, back-office, and teacher outcomes.

AI in education can make life easy for educators with intelligent data automation that highlights areas of risk; in further education this means that learners who may be falling behind can be assessed automatically and provision can be put into place to make improvements. Through early intervention, FE organisations can reduce rates of attrition and improve learner outcomes.

AI can also be used to reduce workload for tutors in the delivery of functional skills and assessment. AI tools are able to produce highly accurate assessment levels, giving tutors much more detail on learner progression compared to legacy assessment platforms. This enhanced functionality gives tutors visibility on specific areas of need, whether on an individual or group basis.



## Reducing attrition

While the latest government statistics show a small but significant rise in new apprenticeship starts, high attrition rates continue to be a serious problem – participation decreased by 2.4% in academic year 2003-2024, representing 15,000 non-completing learners.

In order to reduce attrition rates, senior leaders must prioritise early intervention. However, spotting the signs that a learner may be on the pathway to non-completion can be difficult – data based on a number of metrics including attendance, coursework, examinations, and learner engagement must be cross-referenced and analysed. This is, in many cases, a burdensome and time-consuming task.

Using AI-driven data here can be highly beneficial.

Within OneAdvanced's ePortfolio, the Smart Coach module uses Machine Learning to identify learner risk. With detailed risk analysis and graphs showing risk over time, tutors and assessors can ensure learners receive early intervention and complete courses to a high standard. Smart Coach can even suggest 'strategies for success,' ensuring improved apprenticeship completions, more funding, and increased engagement.

## Keeping learners engaged

Another area in which AI-driven tools can help learners stay engaged is in the delivery of Functional Skills, Digital Skills, and GCSE for post-16 learners. Many learners consider the ongoing study of these subjects off-putting – particularly when it comes to revisiting English and maths – and as such, tutors can find it difficult to keep them engaged.

The solution lies with digital tools that encourage engagement with highly accurate levels of assessment; learners are able to know exactly where they stand, and where they need to improve. With OneAdvanced's Assessment and Learning solution, bksb, learners are assessed on a granular level, giving them a clear understanding of areas of strength and weakness.

Using adaptive AI, bksb makes an in-depth analysis of previous answers to stretch the learner in specific areas of need and revisit topics requiring further revision. The platform keeps learners engaged through video explanations and examples, and can be accessed from any device with a Wi-Fi connection, enabling learners to practice at any time and from any location. bksb also saves time for the tutor – example questions can be shared in-class, reducing the need for hand-outs and extensive lesson planning.



## Efficient digital management systems

### The drive to efficiency

In further education, the Management Information System (MIS) or Learner Management System (LMS) must be optimised to centralise learner data, save time for staff, and provide a single source of data truth for the organisation. Automated tools should give educators and administration staff visibility on the entire learner journey, give learners visibility on their work, and make it easy to provide evidence for funding.

In relation to Ofsted and other inspection bodies, management systems should provide up-to-date, accurate data that is easy to access and present. These systems should evidence learner progression and achievement, and show that learners with additional needs are adequately catered for.

For senior leaders, having robust and efficient digital management systems in place creates added confidence in preparation for Ofsted. And while the run up to Ofsted and the day of inspection can cause significant anxiety for teachers, the effect on senior leaders and managers is often overlooked – having the right systems in place can go some way to alleviate these pressures.





## LMS automation

With OneAdvanced's cloud-based LMS, the latest funding submission requirements are automatically updated; Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data is optimised, ensuring organisations receive the maximum level of ESFA funding. The intuitive platform makes it easy to input, view, and export ILR data, requiring minimal training.

For apprenticeship providers, the OneAdvanced LMS features vacancy matching and opportunity tracking, empowering employer relations staff to onboard new business. The system matches each learner to their ideal placement, improving attrition rates and increasing learner and employer satisfaction. Open channels of communication improve relationships between the organisation and existing employers.

A major advantage of the LMS is the ease of integration with other products in the OneAdvanced Education suite. The user can gain a full picture of each student by integrating the platform with Assessment and Learning (Functional Skills and GCSE) and ePortfolio (learner tracking and progression). The LMS also integrates with Congnassist, a digital tool for the assessment of neurodiversity.

## An optimised MIS

For further education colleges and other substantive providers, having an efficient MIS in place is critical to the effectiveness and safety of the organisation. An outdated MIS is unlikely to be fit for purpose, and cause security concerns – if the software is no longer receiving updates and security patches, this can leave the MIS vulnerable to data theft and other forms of cyber attack.

The MIS platform from OneAdvanced is constantly updated for maximum security and the latest funding body specifications. The solution covers the entire learner journey from application (self-serving to save time for administration staff) and bulk enrolment through to course management and course completion. The platform uses intelligent detection clash and timetabling to make life easier for tutors and assessors, and for learners, MS Teams integration keeps everyone up to date and connected.

To fulfil strategic planning requirements for Ofsted, the QAR report page of Achievement and Performance Analysis (an optional MIS module), enables the user to not only evidence achievement, retention, and pass rates for the current year, but can provide an Achievement Rate Forecast for future attainment. QAR data can be presented as interactive reports, giving immediate and clear visualisation.



## Future-proofing finance and procurement

### An era of constraints

Faced with severe budgetary constraints, new procurement rules, and increasing expectations from stakeholders and inspection bodies, FE organisations and ITPs are being asked to do more with less. In a 2022/2023 report, The Institute of Fiscal Studies concluded that 16-19 funding had experienced the biggest drop in funding of any education sector in the UK over the past 20 years.

Within this unforgiving landscape, having a robust financial strategy in place has never been more important. Yet the data suggests that finance teams are not fully equipped to perform their roles effectively – in a recent survey by Advanced, 30% of finance professionals said that having access to accurate data is the biggest problem they face on a daily basis. Nearly one in 5 (18%) said their current finance systems do not meet the needs of the organisation.

When surveyed on procurement practices, under half (46%) said they 'often' review their supplier relationships, while 28% said this is carried out 'sometimes'. One in 7 (14%) said that the likely cause of poor-quality data is due to data silos, and nearly one quarter (24%) said this is down to incomplete or inaccessible supplier data.

On the question of improvements, 44% of respondents said that better visibility of suppliers within the supply change would be beneficial, while the same number said that better supplier and contract management processes would improve supplier relationships.



## Easy data access

The above feedback suggest that digital tools are crucial in the delivery of efficient finance systems; these systems should ensure robust and accurate recording of data, and should be consistently updated with the latest supplier information. Digital systems should make it quick and easy to access the data finance and procurement professionals need on a daily basis.

Financials from OneAdvanced addresses all of the pain points experienced by finance professionals in a single, centralised platform. With multiple functions in one place, the platform greatly reduces the need for manual tasks, producing real-time business insight automatically. With Financials, the user has easy access to the data they need, with powerful reporting and analytics tools.

Intuitive and user friendly, Financials allows for the creation of personalised desks for each worker, with instant access to individual features. Straightforward dashboards allow senior leaders to self-serve information without accessing the system, saving financial teams valuable input time. Automatic updates ensure teams are kept up to date with any legislative changes, while information sharing between modules decreases the need for data re-entry. Financials integrates seamlessly with commonly used financial software, including Supplier Management from OneAdvanced.

## Complete procurement oversight

For procurement teams, having clear visibility on suppliers is critical to successful practice. Using Supplier Management from OneAdvanced, the user can easily view detailed information on each supplier, with powerful, actionable data. Supplier Management offers an extensive range of public, private, and supplier-direct data sources, giving a complete view of regulatory compliance, supplier risk, and supplier integrity.

The system also allows the user to gather detailed information on the supplier's suppliers, ensuring transparency throughout the chain. Presented with details on key social risks such as modern slavery and human trafficking exposure, procurement managers can be sure they are buying goods that are ethically and sustainably sourced.

With Supplier Management, suppliers can be tracked over time and set objectives; this data can be used to measure historical and projected performance, allowing the user to have conversations with their suppliers over any blockers that may be in place. The software even allows the user to create useful scoring lists to make comparisons between different suppliers based on a range of criteria, including environmental impact.



## Governance and risk management optimisation

### Safeguarding for the future

In order to maintain good governance, further education organisations will need to have robust policies in place at board level. These policies should inform the strategy, mission and values of the organisation, ensuring operational sustainability. At the same time, senior leaders will need to create detailed risk registers to safeguard against foreseeable challenges including low start rates, non-completion, staff attrition, economic uncertainty, and new regulation.

Policy creation should guide the strategic decisions of the organisation, as well as provide guidance for employees. A common example is Environment Social and Governance – ESG policy should be clear in its objectives, and guidance should be passed down through the organisation to inform decision making in disparate functions, including procurement, HR, and digital transformation.

Without a well-thought-out governance and risk strategy, organisations become reactive rather than proactive. This puts a drain on resources, creates inefficiencies, and causes reputational damage. According to a study by Grant Thornton, companies with strong governance are twice as resilient against operational failure.





## Powerful risk assessment

Using Risk Management from OneAdvanced, senior leaders can create multiple risk registers, map and monitor strategic goals, and produce risk reports instantly. The solution makes it easy to manage and assess risk across the entire organisation, from a 'big picture' overview through to granular-level insight.

The solution allows the user to create risks labels for category, description, owner, task, and due date. This process is made easy by Risk Navigator, a handy function that guides the user on how to add well-structured and consistent risk data. Automated email alerts then notify the user when actions are due – all of this means risk data is clear, accurate and easy to manage.

Risk Management features an optional module designed to help organisations meet their ESG objectives. Users can turn ESG objectives into organisational goals and integrate ESG policy into actionable strategy.

## Optimised meetings

Designed for easy meeting preparation and management, Meetings and Board Management optimises board and colleague meetings from start to finish. In line with ESG objectives, the solution streamlines the collation of meeting packs into one easy-to-access digital solution made to save administration time and eliminate the need for paper.

Meeting agendas can be created in minutes, with invitations sent to iCal, Google, and Outlook calendars. Documents can be attached easily, and time can be allocated to each item, keeping meetings on track and productive. Data is kept secure through the ability to control permissions.

When agendas have been set, the user can make annotations with drawings, notes and amendments to customise each item; these can be shared with the group or selected attendees. Secure meeting packs can then be emailed to attendees, with the option to save as a pdf, or print if required



## Maximising wellbeing and retention

### Retention issues

Staff retention remains a serious challenge in further education: according to the latest DfE data, over 50% of FE educators in 2015 were no longer teaching after 5 years, while 4 in 10 say they are likely to leave the profession within the next 12 months. Reasons given for the desire to leave FE are focussed around low pay, overwork, and lack of opportunity for progression.

For FE educators and support staff, heavy workload and the demands of inspection are leading to significant levels of stress. A recent Ofsted report (schools and FE) highlights unmanageable workloads, time-consuming administrative tasks, and the lead up to Ofsted inspection as major contributors to poor wellbeing.

The report also highlights the level of help and assistance available to teaching and support staff. Just over half (57%) of respondents in FE said their line manager frequently gives praise and recognition, and only 36% said their line manager often or always supports them with their wellbeing.

Clearly, then, effective people management has an important role to play in the wellbeing of staff; colleagues should feel supported, recognised, and connected to the organisation. Senior leaders should set clear, actionable objectives that are both motivating and realistic. Employees should feel they have opportunity for progression and that they have the continuous support of line managers and senior staff – particularly when it comes to wellbeing and workload.



## Effective performance monitoring

With a continuous performance management (CPM) system in place, staff are more likely to feel motivated and connected. CPM is a management approach based on regular constructive criticism, feedback, and praise. It allows for feedback in real time, replacing the 'annual appraisal' – an outdated assessment model often involving time-consuming administration.

Performance and Talent is a powerful digital CPM solution from OneAdvanced made to promote meaningful communication. Hosted in the cloud, there is no software to download, and the application can be accessed from anywhere with an internet connection. The software allows for feedback from all areas of the organisation, whether that be from senior leaders, or maintenance and facilities staff. Every employee can receive recognition for a job well done, boosting morale and fostering a team mindset.

The platform allows the user to have regular conversations with staff, making it easy to give in-the-moment feedback, constructive advice, and praise. Users can set up individual and group objectives, and these can be reworked as the academic year evolves. In turn, staff members (at any level of the organisation) can create feedback for senior staff or colleagues.

## Complete functionality and guidance

For staff members who may not feel comfortable creating feedback, the software comes with inbuilt AI writing assistance that matches the professional tone of the organisation. Employees can raise concerns in real time, rather than retrospectively, ensuring rapid intervention when needed. This added layer of engagement gives employees a sense their concerns are being taken seriously.

For senior leaders and HR managers, Performance & Talent comes with powerful reporting capabilities. The Talent Snapshots feature gives an at-a-glance overview of promotion and succession planning, and trends data is presented in user-friendly charts and infographics. Data can even be transferred to other frequently used applications, including Tableau and Power BI.

To aid transformation, the team at OneAdvanced provide a tailored service, assessing current performance, with guidance on best practice. We provide templates to make digital transformation easier, and offer recommendations and advice to ensure you get the most from your new digital CPM solution.



## Summary

For further education organisations, funding issues and cost of delivery mean that digital infrastructure will have to be replaced incrementally, on a needs-first basis. This means forming a strategy to assess current technologies, while prioritising systems that need to be replaced quickly.

By replacing legacy infrastructure with the latest solutions, senior decision makers will be future proofing their operations. With a move towards cloud-based software and automated platforms, FE organisations will see improved efficiencies in enrolment and onboarding, learner management, stakeholder reporting, and course delivery.

For educators and HR managers, automated solutions will reduce administrative burden, improve educator-learner relationships, and evidence progression for inspection bodies. For procurement managers, updated digital platforms allow complete oversight on suppliers, ensuring alignment with policy on ethical sustainability and environmental impact.

Through optimised digital tools, organisations can minimise attrition rates and maximise staff wellbeing. These tools can motivate staff through the ability to create and view feedback in real time, offering a platform for praise and encouragement. With optimised digital solutions, FE organisations can manage their governance and risk strategy with clarity and insight, and streamline the management of board meetings.

By partnering with OneAdvanced, FE organisations receive help and guidance throughout their digital transformation journey. From initial infrastructure assessment to ongoing support with the latest software and security updates, we're here to make your digital transformation fast, safe, and cost-effective.



## Powering the world of work

To find out more about how we can help get you started on your digital transformation journey, contact us today.

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