



Awards 2025

Technological or Digital Innovation of the Year

Institution Name	University of Cambridge
Submission title or project name	Virtual reality public speaking
Nominee / key personnel	Dr Chris Macdonald (founder)
URL	https://www.itv.com/watch/news/could-virtual-reality-be-the-answer-to-your-fear-of-public-speaking/md4zr97
Submission	Speech anxiety affects 80 per cent of university students, and it impacts well-being, academic attainment and career progression. To address this, we built a first-of-its-kind online platform that transforms users into skilled and confident public speakers. Tailored course material develops core skills, and virtual reality training environments accelerate learning and build confidence. Multiple world-firsts were achieved to make the platform uniquely accessible and effective. As revealed in the academic journal <i>Frontiers</i>, the platform has been clinically proven to increase levels of confidence after a single 30-minute session (the paper is in the top 1 per cent of research outputs). The open-access platform and its accompanying research have been widely praised in more than 100 media outlets – including the BBC, <i>The Guardian</i> and <i>The Times</i>. The platform has hosted over 100,000 practice presentations – and its growth is accelerating. In short, the positive impact has expanded far beyond our institution, and it continues to transform lives.



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Institution Name	Solent University, Southampton
Submission title or project name	Southampton Solent making food accessible on campus
Nominee / key personnel	Lesley McIvor (Solent University's contract and project manager), in partnership with Sodexo
URL	
Submission	Solent University, Southampton is pioneering digital innovation in higher education through its use of the Everyday App, developed in partnership with Sodexo, a food services and facilities company. Launched in June 2021 and enhanced significantly in 2023, the app enables staff and students to order food via phone or kiosk, with over 11,000 users and more than 135,000 transactions, generating a £741,000 turnover. The university has been recognised as a Sodexo Centre of Digital Innovation for using the app to reduce food waste by 48 per cent, boost sustainability and enhance inclusivity. It has also integrated the app into its contextual offer scholarship scheme, providing eligible students with £500 in dining credits to help combat food insecurity and the rising cost of living. In 2024-25, 98 scholarships were awarded, totalling £49,000, with plans to increase this to 150 in 2025-26. The app also supports dietary needs, ensuring a dining experience that supports student well-being and academic success.



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Technological or Digital Innovation of the Year

Institution Name	University of Leeds
Submission title or project name	HELIX at the University of Leeds
Nominee / key personnel	
URL	https://digitaleducation.leeds.ac.uk/helix/ https://media-and-learning.eu/event/annual-virtual-tour-of-advanced-learning-spaces/
Submission	Launched in the 2023-24 academic year at the University of Leeds, HELIX is a pioneering hub for digital innovation, established to transform the ways staff and students create, collaborate and co-design across disciplines. HELIX represents a £3.2 million investment over five years to drive the future of education and enterprise, blending cutting-edge digital technology with an ethos of openness and accessibility. Across a 1,000m² footprint, our digitally enabled infrastructure – including an immersive XR classroom with 80-plus Meta Quest headsets, podcast and film studios, a state-of-the-art maker space, and the UK's only Omnideck 360° VR treadmill – has catalysed experimentation and cross-disciplinary work from the arts and humanities and business to engineering and medicine.



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Institution Name	University of Edinburgh
Submission title or project name	From static posters to dynamic dialogue: improving research impact with interactive data
Nominee / key personnel	Marie Storrar; Dr Tod Van Gunten
URL	
Submission	This initiative reimagines the traditional academic poster, addressing opportunities to engage non-specialist audiences. By embedding interactive data visualisations using Flourish, we transform dense research into an exploratory experience, directly enhancing the university's vital knowledge transfer function. This innovative application of existing technology empowers users – from policymakers to members of the public – to actively investigate findings, personalising the data to their own needs. This saves time, deepens comprehension and boosts the real-world impact of academic research. The resulting model is highly scalable and offers a replicable blueprint for any institution in the sector seeking to amplify the reach and resonance of its academic work.



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Institution Name	Dublin City University
Submission title or project name	Myskills.dcu.ie
Nominee / key personnel	DCU Futures, in collaboration with DCU Academic Systems Unit, Symplicity and DCU Teaching Enhancement Unit
URL	https://myskills.dcu.ie/students/login?ReturnUrl=%2f
Submission	Working with academic systems partners Symplicity, Dublin City University launched a pioneering skills platform, myskills.dcu.ie, in 2024. Myskills pulls together years of work under the Higher Education Authority's Futures Project to develop and embed a transversal skills framework into undergraduate programmes. The formal assessment of skills at module level is fed into Myskills, where students can also evidence their extracurricular skill development. The platform allows students to capture and detail experiences that have formed their skill progression. Myskills has transformed DCU graduates' ability to speak to their academic and skills development through using their tangible skills report as evidence. Finally, prospective employers have a report that demonstrates the students' skill development, complementing the traditional academic transcript. Currently, students on 15 programmes are utilising Myskills; this number will rise to 26 in academic year 2025-26, a process that will continue until all undergraduate programmes have transversal skills at their core.



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Technological or Digital Innovation of the Year

Institution Name	University of Chester
Submission title or project name	Digital innovation: micro learning and engagement for global communities
Nominee / key personnel	Faculty of Science, Business and Enterprise
URL	https://www.chester.ac.uk/study/micro-mba/
Submission	The University of Chester has embarked on an ambitious strategy to become a global university, where educational excellence transforms lives. To support this endeavour, the Faculty of Science, Business and Enterprise pioneered two interlinked digital initiatives: the International Citizen Student Show and the Micro MBA (master of business administration). These projects have transformed our connection with prospective students, alumni and partners – delivering flexible, high-impact content across borders and time zones. The combination of interactive live shows and modular online learning is transferable to other subjects and institutions, offering a simple but compelling blueprint to support internationalisation efforts through innovative, learner-centred digital engagement.