



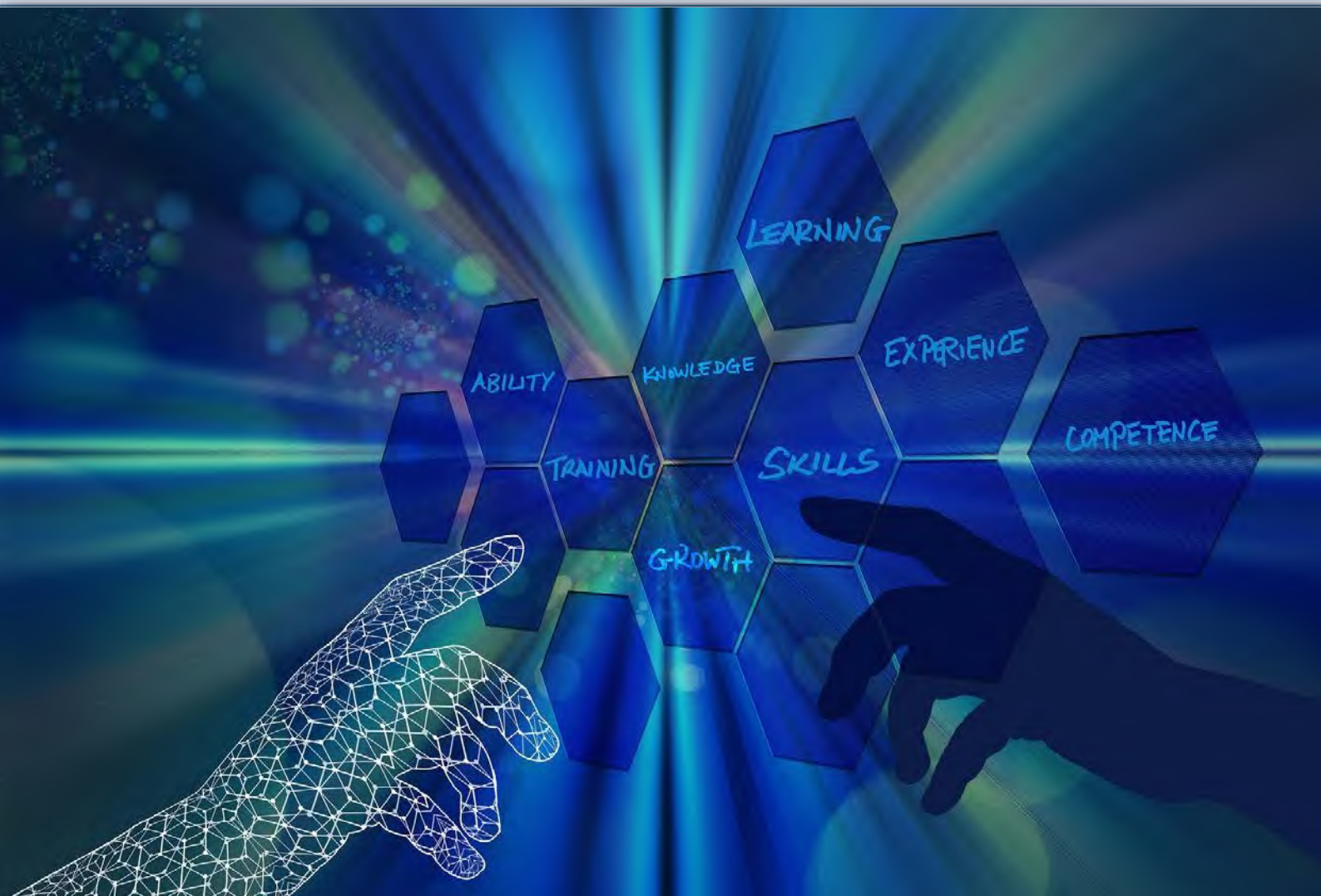
# Development of an Expert Support System for Competency Assessment in Higher Education

## RESPO-VI

**Training for HEIs teachers and validators for working with RESPO-  
VI application**

**A hands-on guide on the online tools and platforms for  
assessing digital competencies in higher education**

January 2024



**Working together for a green, competitive and inclusive Europe**

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# 1. Introduction

This brochure was originally prepared for a workshop entitled "Unlocking HE digital potential: RESPO-VI workshop on digital competencies and assessment tools", which was carried out in the framework of the RESPO-VI project, with the financial support of Norway Grants. This workshop was intended for participants from the higher education (HE) sector (HE teachers, teaching assistants, career centres, student support services, etc.) who wish to deepen their understanding of the development of digital competencies and acquire practical skills for their assessment. With a focus on interactive tasks and the practical use of a variety of online tools and platforms such as ESCO, International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Standards, Digital Competence Wheel, and Europass Digital Skills Test, the e-guide will provide users with an active and effective learning experience. The brochure is also suitable for wider use beyond the RESPO-VI project, not only by HE staff but also by students to prepare them for the digital society.

Purpose of the e-guide content:

- to deepen the understanding of digital competencies.
- to learn practical skills for assessing digital competencies.
- to explore and use different online assessment tools.

The aims of e-guide users:

- to develop the ability to assess digital competencies.
- to know and distinguish between different online tools and platforms for assessing digital competencies.
- to acquire practical skills to work individually with online tools for assessing digital competencies.
- to share experiences and best practices with other participants.

*Digital competence involves the confident, critical and responsible use of, and engagement with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society. It includes information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, media literacy, digital content creation (including programming), safety (including digital well-being and competencies related to cybersecurity), intellectual property related questions, problem solving and critical thinking.*

*(European Union, 2018)*

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## 2. Online tools for assessing digital competencies

### 2.1 ESCO

ESCO (European Skills, Competencies, Qualifications, and Occupations) is the European Union's official platform for the development and exchange of information on skills, competencies, qualifications and occupations. It is a comprehensive tool that provides a common language and structure for describing skills and competencies in Europe. The ESCO platform includes different classifications and descriptions of skills and competencies that are of key importance in the labour market. It is used in job search, career guidance, education and in conjunction with various information systems such as job portals, training institutions and other organisations. ESCO can be used by developers as a building block for different types of applications that provide services such as autocomplete, suggestion systems, job search algorithms and job matching algorithms.



Figure 1. ESCO platform in numbers from the year 2020 (source: <https://esco.ec.europa.eu/en/about-esco/what-esco>).

The main objectives of ESCO are to facilitate the matching of labour supply and demand, to promote intra-European labour mobility, to improve the match between education and labour market needs and to contribute to the development of a single digital labour market in the European Union. Among other things, the ESCO contains detailed descriptions of digital competencies that are key for different fields and professions. Individuals can study these descriptions to understand which digital competencies are relevant for a particular job or field. ESCO is linked to several national and international competency frameworks. An individual can

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benchmark his/her digital competencies against the standards applicable in a particular country or industry. Individuals can use this knowledge to tailor their CVs and cover letters and highlight their digital competencies when looking for a job.

Access to the ESCO platform is easy and free. On the ESCO website (<https://ec.europa.eu/esco>) you can access various tools and features. The first option is to simply browse through the categories and search for specific competencies, occupations or sectors. The second option is to use the advanced search engine for a more targeted search. You can use the “find” function, by typing the occupation or skill that you’re looking for. Another option is to browse the hierarchy at the left of the page: every time you click on a concept group, all the sub-groups included will appear, until you reach the most granular level. ESCO:

- allows individuals to assess their competencies and compare them with standards defined at the EU level,
- allows you to compare competencies against national competencies frameworks, making it easier to move between different EU countries,
- is available in 27 official languages of the EU, allowing it to be widely used by people living in the European Union.
- is linked to other relevant data sources, giving access to up-to-date labour market information and trends.

Using the ESCO platform is intuitive as it follows simple steps to search, compare and track your development. A quick start guide to using the ESCO platform is also available on the [website](#). The guide explains the importance of ESCO in standardizing job roles and skills across countries, thereby enhancing transparency, mobility, and comparability within Europe. The document outlines the main use cases of ESCO, including job matching, career guidance, and labour market research. It highlights ESCO's role in connecting individuals with suitable employment opportunities, bridging the gap between education/training and the labour market, and facilitating data analysis on skills and occupations. The guide provides instructions on how to navigate and utilize ESCO through the online classification portal, downloading datasets, and using the provided APIs.

## 2.2 ISTE Standards

The ISTE Standards provide a framework that guides educators in using digital technology to create highly effective, sustainable and extendable learning experiences for students. The ISTE standards are divided into 4 sections:

- students,
- educators,
- education leaders and
- coaches.

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The ISTE standards addressing educators, provide guidelines on how to help students become independent learners. These standards encourage educators to improve their teaching practice and challenge them to rethink about the transition from traditional approaches to approaches that empower learners to lead their own learning process. The standards aim to ensure that educators encourage learners to contribute positively to the digital world and to participate responsibly in it. The standards identify the key skills and pedagogical insights that today's educators need for teaching, professional work and everyday life in the digital age. The ISTE standards are aligned with UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goals. The ISTE Standards can bring numerous benefits to teaching and learning.

New digital tools that can be included in pedagogical approaches and classrooms can:

- make the presentation of information and the transfer of knowledge more engaging for learners (for example virtual field trips or interactive simulations),
- enable teachers to tailor lessons to the needs of individual students, using data to identify areas where students need support,
- facilitate group projects regardless of the students' physical location, and
- promote hands-on and participatory learning, critical thinking creativity and real-world problem-solving.

In addition to the 7 standards in Figure 1, the standards for educators also include the following:

- **Counsellor:** a teacher who provides advice and support to students in the digital world, helping them to develop digital literacy skills, navigate online resources and make informed choices.
- **Coach:** teachers help students reach their potential, guide them in using technology effectively and inspire them to set goals, reflect on their learning and take responsibility for their education.
- **Innovator:** The use of technology leads teachers to innovate, encouraging them to explore new ideas and tools that can transform their teaching and learning into more dynamic and exciting pedagogical experiences.

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# STRETCH YOUR EDTECH PRACTICE

Breathe into the  
 ISTE Standards  
 for Educators



The ISTE Standards for Educators are a lot like yoga.

- ✓ Start where you are, get out of your comfort zone and progress at your own pace.
- ✓ Practice with others to move toward mastery.
- ✓ Don't forget to breathe!

Get the standards today at [iste.org/StandardsForEducators](https://iste.org/StandardsForEducators)

## LEARNER

Learn from and with others and explore promising practices that leverage technology to improve student learning.

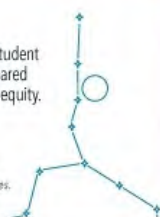
**Extended Triangle Pose**  
 Reach beyond your comfort zone to deepen your practice as you commit to continuous self-improvement.



## LEADER

Seek opportunities to support student empowerment, help shape a shared vision and advocate for student equity.

**Warrior I Pose**  
 Tap into your courage and confidence as you use your strength to inspire and empower your students and colleagues.



## CITIZEN

Inspire students to contribute responsibly in the digital world and guide them to be curious, wise, empathetic, safe and ethical.

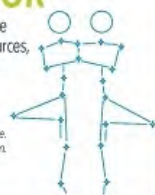
**Downward Facing Dog**  
 View the world from a different perspective as your students explore ethical ways to use digital tools to change the world.



## COLLABORATOR

Collaborate with others to improve practice, discover and share resources, and solve problems with others around the globe.

**Partner Tree Pose**  
 Lean on your partner to maintain your balance. If you fall out of the pose, smile and try again.



## DESIGNER

Design authentic, learner-driven activities and environments that recognize and accommodate learner variability.

**Wild Thing Pose**  
 Open up to new possibilities so you can create innovative digital environments that engage and support learning.



## FACILITATOR

Model creative expression, empower students to take ownership of their learning and create opportunities for students to innovate and solve problems.

**Bridge Pose**  
 Lying on your back, stretch into the role of facilitator and breathe as you become more comfortable with student-driven learning.



## ANALYST

Use data to drive instruction and provide alternate ways for students to demonstrate competency and use assessment data to guide progress.

**Upward Facing Dog**  
 When analyzing data to inform practice, start small and work toward greater flexibility. Focus on goals, measure progress and reach higher.



Figure 2. ISTE Standards for Educators (source <https://info.iste.org/>)

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## 2.3 Europass digital skills test

This simple test, available at <https://europa.eu/europass/en/europass-tools/test-your-digital-skills>, allows you to find out quite quickly what your current level of digital skills is. In the test, you will answer a series of questions on digital competencies, structured in such a way as to give you a clear understanding of your level of proficiency in different aspects of digital literacy. Once you have completed the test, you will receive a detailed report describing your average level of development of digital competencies. This will help you to identify your areas of strength and weakness in digital literacy and give you guidance on how to develop your digital competencies further.

At the start of the test, you will first answer a few questions about basic information about your dream job and your level of education. This will allow the online tool to tailor the rest of the questionnaire to your needs. The questions that will follow will be more focused on digital skills. For each question, you will select the appropriate option as your answer.

After completing the test, you will see the level of development of your digital skills and you will receive a detailed report with a description. This will help you to identify which skill sets you need to improve to progress in your current job or to prepare for a possible future job or changes brought about by technological developments. At the end of the test, you will find a learning plan that will help you identify and complete courses that will enable you to achieve specific learning objectives.

## 2.4 Digital competence wheel

It is an interactive online tool that shows the state of development of digital competencies in an individual or an organisation. The aim is to provide an overview of digital competencies and to offer concrete tools on how to raise and improve these competencies. The tool is available in 11 EU languages. The Digital Competence Wheel is based on an EU project called DIGCOMP, which stems from the inclusion of digital competencies as one of the eight core competencies for lifelong learning by the European Parliament.

You can try the 14-day free version of the tool and get an overview of your digital competence levels. The digital tool is available online at <https://digital-competence.eu/>. By mapping competencies at both individual and group levels, the tool generates interactive and in-depth reports that help individuals and organisations understand and improve their digital competencies. In this way, higher education organisations can create any competency framework or model that suits their specific needs or preferences.

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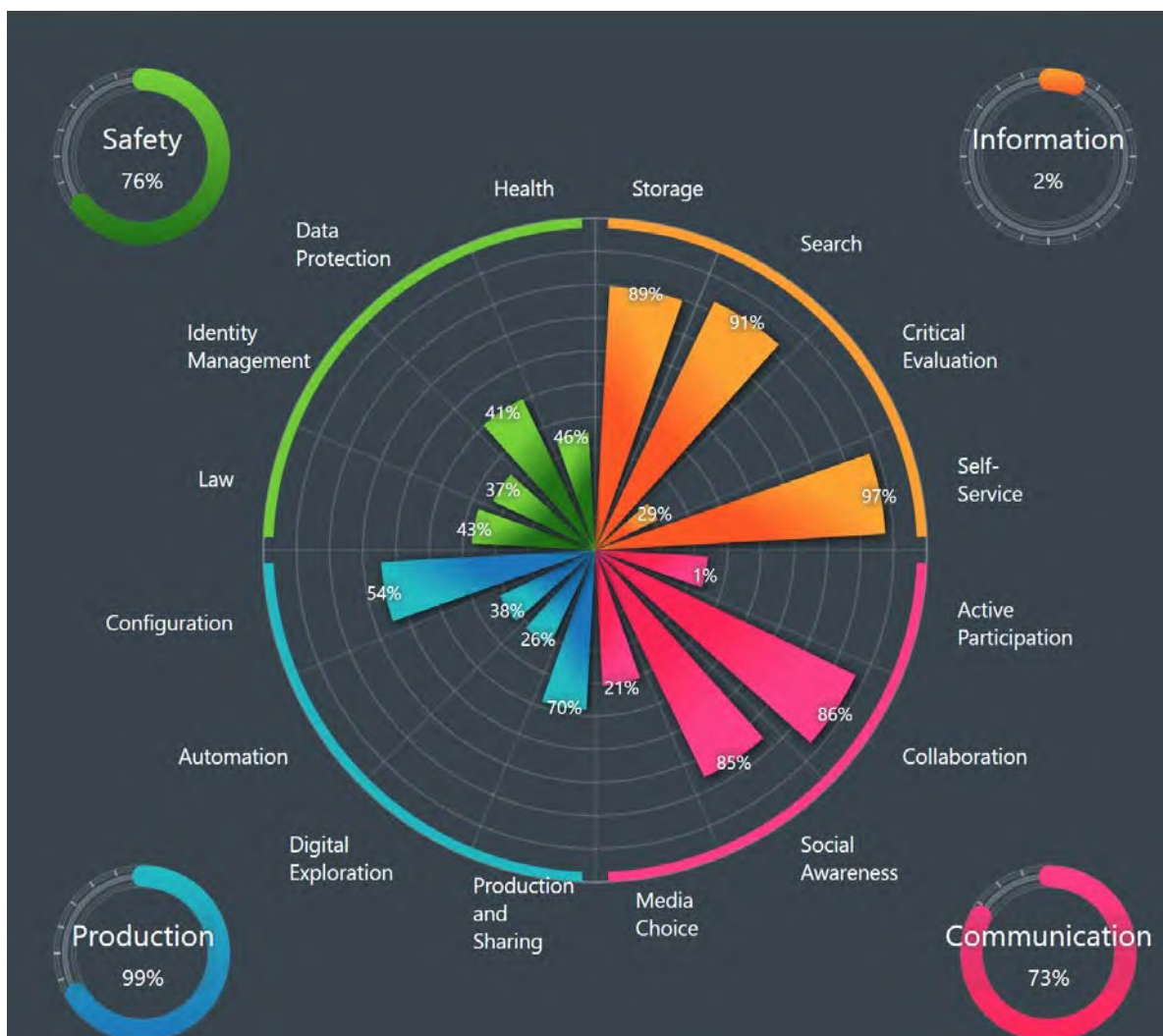


Figure 3. Graphical presentation of the development of digital competencies with the Digital Competence Wheel (source <https://digital-competence.eu/>).

*In a world that is constantly changing, there is no one subject or set of subjects that will serve you for the foreseeable future, let alone for the rest of your life. The most important skill to acquire now is learning how to learn.*

*John Naisbitt*

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### 3. Interactive exercises

#### 3.1 Higher education teachers' digital competencies for the future

The new framework for digital competencies in higher education (HeDiCom) includes four dimensions of teachers' digital competencies:

1. teaching practice,
2. empowering students for the digital society,
3. teachers' digital literacy, and
4. teachers' professional development.

This framework of digital competencies in higher education emphasises the importance of improving HE teachers' digital competencies, which contribute to improving the quality of students' digital competencies.

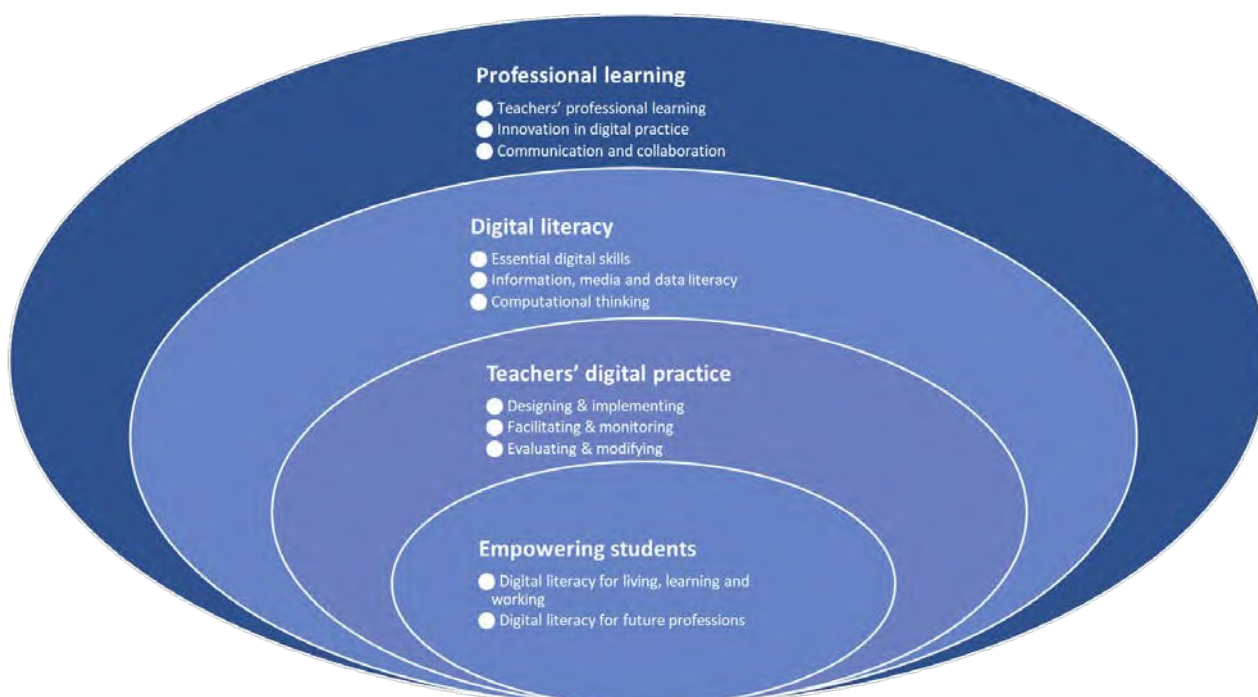


Figure 4. The HeDiCom framework for HE teachers' digital competencies for the future (summarized from Tondeur, J., Howard, S., Van Zanten, M. et al. The HeDiCom framework: Higher Education teachers' digital competencies for the future. *Education Tech Research Dev* 71, 33–53 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-023-10193-5>)

HE teachers must also be able to use digital technologies and tools to assess student's success such as the RESPO-VI tool. Different monitoring and assessment approaches using digital tools can increase the effectiveness of student's professional career development. This is one example of digital competence that is included in teacher's digital practice. Use ESCO skills classification and try to find different digital competencies that HE teachers need today (hint: search for HE lecturer under "occupations" and look at essential and optional skills). In the table below, please indicate which digital competencies from the ESCO database you

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consider yourself to have strong and which you consider to be weaker. If you wish, you can continue with the list and add other competencies that you consider important for your profession. Remember that some of the competencies listed in the ESCO database are linked to digital competencies indirectly, e.g. creatively use digital technologies, collaborate through digital technologies, problem-solving with digital tools, engage in citizenship through digital technologies, etc. Browse the skills category "working with computers" and you will certainly find many other skills that are relevant to your teaching work. Among essential skills, you can find two skills "assess students" and "manage personal professional development", which can be supported by using different online tools like RESPO-VI as mentioned above.

Digital competence from ESCO database for HE teacher	Strong	Weak
apply blended learning		
manage open publications		
operate open source software		
promote open innovation in research		
work with virtual learning environments		

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### 3.2 Digital self-presentation

This exercise aims to test and assess your digital competencies. Moreover, the purpose of this exercise is also to develop a plan for integrating these standards into your teaching practice.

1. **Access the Digital Competence Wheel and complete the online questionnaire:** Visit the website <https://digital-competence.eu/> where the Digital Competence Wheel is available. Register or log in to the platform on the website. Take 20 minutes to complete a detailed questionnaire on your digital skills in areas such as information literacy, communication, content creation, security, etc. Analyse your results after completing the questionnaire. Identify areas where competencies are already strong and where you could improve your digital competencies.
2. **Access the Europass digital skills test and complete the online questionnaire:** Visit the website <https://europa.eu/europass/en/europass-tools/test-your-digital-skills> where the Europass digital skills test is available. Take 15 minutes to complete a detailed questionnaire on your digital skills. Analyse your results after completing the questionnaire. Identify areas where competencies are already strong and where you could improve your digital competencies.
3. **Results-based action:** Based on the results from both tests compare the level of different digital competencies for yourself. Develop an action plan with weak digital competencies that you wish to improve. Consider taking up further training and workshops or undertaking independent learning.
4. **Reflection and sharing of experience:** Write a short reflection on how the assessment of digital competencies has influenced your understanding of the importance of digital skills in higher education. You can also share your reflection with us, who are working on the RESPO-VI project, and submit your comment via <https://1ka.arnes.si/RESPO-VI-staff-WS-FB>.

### 3.3 ISTE standards in practice

The integration of digital tools and resources is transforming education, both teaching and learning, making it more engaging and learner-centred with interactive applications. Interactive apps make learning more practical and improve retention. Such tools engage learners in active research, collaboration and solution creation. This makes learning more exciting. Consider how the following three pedagogical approaches, which follow the ISTE standards, could be incorporated into your teaching approach. Familiarise yourself with the ISTE Standards for Higher Education Staff that are relevant to your teaching area.

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Determine the ISTE standard for each example below (analyst, designer, global collaborator, facilitator, collaborator). Against each standard, assess your current competencies and experience. Identify key challenges or areas where you could improve your digital skills in line with the ISTE standards.

- 1. Flipped classroom:** Higher education teachers can use technology to flip the classroom by providing recorded lectures or multimedia content for students to review outside of class. Classroom time is then used for interactive activities, discussions, and hands-on projects.  
ISTE Standard: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Collaborative online projects:** Higher education teachers can facilitate collaborative online projects where students from different courses or institutions work together on shared assignments. This encourages teamwork, communication, and the exchange of diverse perspectives.  
ISTE Standard: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Global collaboration:** Higher education teachers can use online platforms to connect students with peers from around the world. Collaborative projects, joint research initiatives, and virtual international exchanges promote global awareness and intercultural competence.  
ISTE Standard: \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Gamification:** Courses can integrate elements of gamification, such as digital badges, simulations, escape room challenges, leaderboards, and storyline adventures. This enhances student engagement, motivation, and a sense of achievement in the learning process.  
ISTE Standard: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. E-portfolio for assessment:** Implementing e-portfolios as assessment tools enables students to showcase their work, reflect on their learning journey, and receive feedback. This supports the development of analytical skills and encourages self-assessment.  
ISTE Standard: \_\_\_\_\_

*The more we give importance to skill development, the more competent will be our youth.*

*Narendra Modi*

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## 4. Additional material for digital skills assessment

### 4.1 MyDigiSkills

MyDigiSkills (<https://mydigiskills.eu>) helps you to better understand your level of digital skills based on knowledge, skills and attitude in each of the five areas of the European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens, known as DigComp:

- Information and Data Literacy
- Communication and Collaboration
- Digital Content Creation
- Safety
- Problem solving.

The questionnaire contains 82 questions. It should take you around 20 minutes to complete, and you will get a report on your levels of digital skills at the end. It is important that you answer honestly and as fully as possible to give the most accurate estimate of your digital capabilities.

### 4.2 Skillify

Skillify (<https://skillify.digico.global/>) is a test to help you understand your level of digital skills. Skillify covers the 21 individual competencies and five areas listed in the DigComp model. This is done through 82 short and practical questions, with 4-level scale answers that cover knowledge, skills and attitudes. These competencies are developed across eight proficiency levels, from foundation/beginner to highly specialised. You can take the five areas of Skillify together or separately. At the end, you can register to save your results (so you can see your progress in future) and see a range of suggested free or low-cost courses. Moreover, you will also get a report with an overview of your skills and suggestions on how to improve them.

### 4.3 Pix

Pix (<https://pix.org/en>) is an online platform open for everyone to assess, develop, and certify their digital skills. Test your skills and create your personal account. Improve your skills with fun and interactive challenges. Develop the digital skills essential to your everyday life at your own pace. With the Pix Certification, your skills are recognised in France and throughout Europe (DigComp). From beginner to expert level, all exercises are tailored to the user's needs for an individualised assessment.

### 4.4 Digital diagnostic

Digital Skills Test (<https://digitalmarketinginstitute.com/students/digital-diagnostic>) tells you exactly where you're at, where you can up your game and which course is right for you. After it's done you get a full breakdown of your results and the option to analyse your strengths and challenges even further. It is free to use.

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#### 4.5 Google Digital Skills Quiz for Students

This assessment tool available at <https://sites.google.com/alphaplus.ca/digital-skills-assessment/home> can be used by higher education institutions to help assess students' readiness in digital skills for the transition to post-secondary studies and to provide suggested resources to support students in acquiring digital skills, if needed. There are three Microsoft Office tasks (Word, PowerPoint, Excel) and an online quiz that you can try. The quiz asks you questions about 7 topics that will be relevant to anybody entering post-secondary education: Online Security, Digital Plagiarism, Netiquette, Browser Features, Collaboration Tools, Learning Management Tools and Email.



**DIGITAL DIAGNOSTIC**



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## 5. Conclusion

By reading this short self-guide, you have learned about some of the initiatives that the European Union has taken in recent years. These and similar activities are constantly evolving and developing, so it is important to keep up to date with new developments such as the various digital tools that can serve as an excellent support in your development and assessment of digital competencies. In the RESPO-VI project, we are also working on one such tool that will serve higher education institutions, teachers and students as a tool to monitor the development of students' competencies during their formal and non-formal education. Take the opportunity to explore innovative digital tools and ensure you are at the forefront of educational progress. Join us on a journey of continuous learning and empowerment that is the key to success.

*Don't wait until everything is just right. It will never be perfect. There will always be challenges, obstacles and less than perfect conditions. So, what. Get started now. With each step you take, you will grow stronger and stronger, more and more skilled, more and more self-confident and more and more successful.*

*Mark Victor Hansen*

### Working together for a green, competitive and inclusive Europe

The RESPO-VI benefits from a € 499.917 EUR grant from Norway. The aim of the project is to develop a decision support system in higher education institutions that will enable the monitoring of the development of competences and skills that STEM students acquire during the implementation of formal education and informal training. This document was created with the financial support of Norway Grants. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of RESPO-VI project partners and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the Programme Operator of the Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship programme.





## Space for your own reflection and comments

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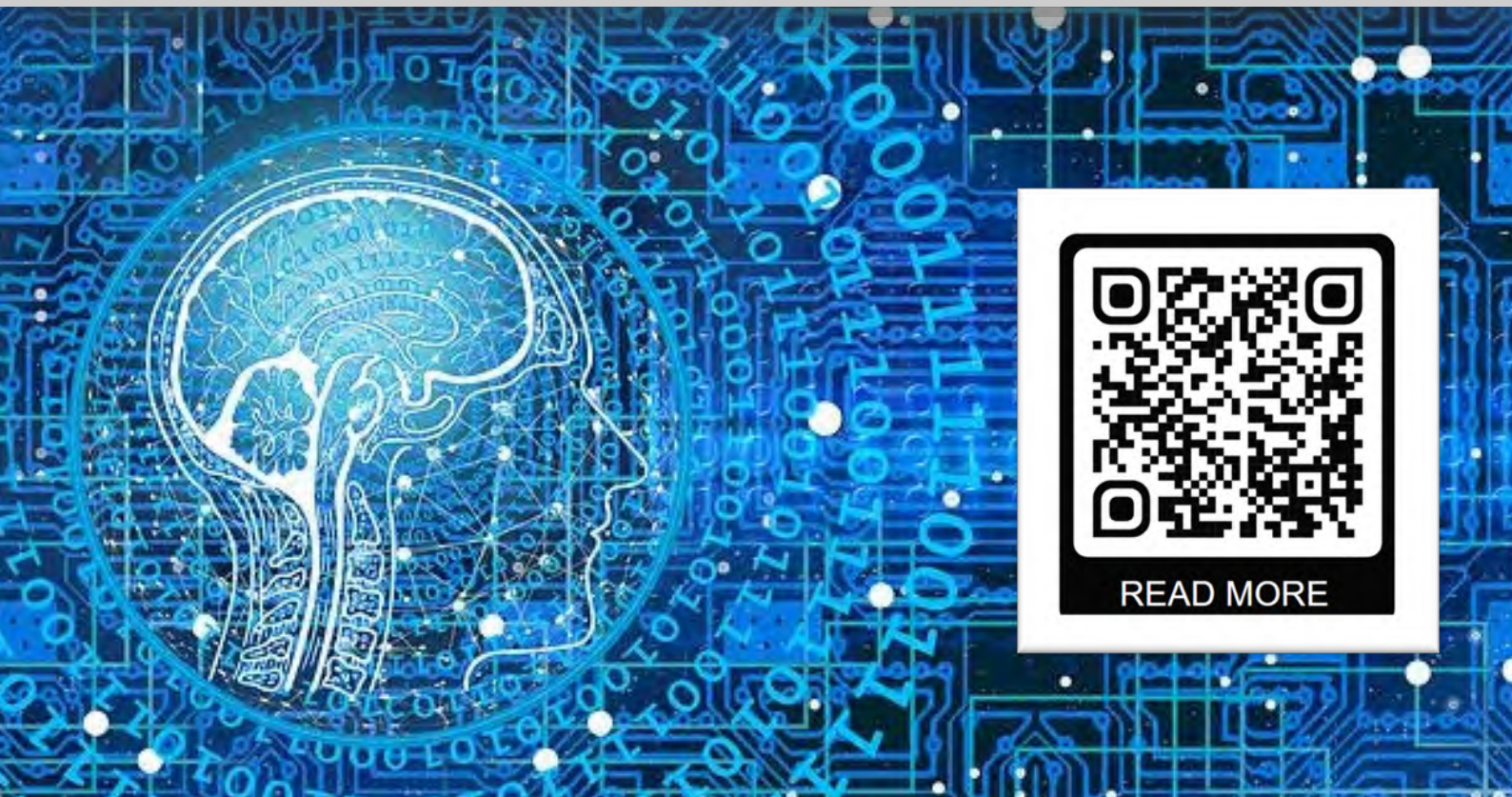
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