

The B.C. Post-Secondary Digital Literacy Framework

**Digital Learning Advisory Committee:
Digital Learning Strategy – Appendix 2**

This is an appendix of B.C.'s Post-Secondary Digital Learning Strategy. Access the full strategy here: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content?id=87976287B14D45E698D9A0F1C2DC0455>. The strategy includes strategic priorities and actions, appendices, and acknowledgements.

The Digital Learning Strategy is made available through an Open License. Review the Digital Learning Strategy Open License here: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content?id=2E522682E64045FD8B3C2A99F894668C>.

Introduction

Digital literacy is a person's knowledge, skills, and abilities for using digital tools ethically, effectively, and within a variety of contexts in order to access, interpret, and evaluate information, as well as to create, construct new knowledge, and communicate with others.^{1,2}

Digital literacy is increasingly recognized as a vital skill. UNESCO's [digital literacy skills framework](#) from 2021 states that "digital literacy and access are a basic right in the twenty-first century; without them it is increasingly difficult to participate civically and economically"³ (p. 34). Additionally, the Government of Canada states that "basic digital literacy skills are essential to participate in Canadian society and the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened their need."⁴ Digital literacy is becoming increasingly important for accessing public and private services and information. Digital literacy has been key throughout the COVID-19 pandemic for public health updates, access to services, interpersonal connections, work, education, and much more.

The B.C. Post-Secondary Digital Literacy Framework was developed to enhance digital literacy knowledge, skills, and abilities across post-secondary communities. In alignment with Strategic Action 1(b), this framework can be leveraged to inform localized digital literacy policies, professional development programs, and Open Education Resources with the overall goal of supporting educators, administrators, researchers, staff, learners, and other members of post-secondary communities in developing digital literacy.

A person's access to adequate hardware and software is required for developing digital literacy. However, not all people in B.C. have access to hardware and software, nor are included in digital or online environments. Therefore, alongside this framework, post-secondary institutions are encouraged to consider and address barriers learners might encounter when accessing digital learning spaces including connectivity, software, devices, and learning spaces.

Purpose

The intention of this framework is to define digital literacy and highlight the associated knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to participate in digital society, specifically among members of post-secondary communities. Digital literacy is intended to support accessible, inclusive, and equitable digital environments for members of the post-secondary system. This work assumes that digital literacy will support people as they move from the post-secondary system into the workforce.

This document strives to be relevant and responsive to the digital literacy needs of First Nations, Urban Indigenous, Métis, and Inuit Peoples. Throughout its development process, the B.C. Post-Secondary Digital Literacy Framework was reviewed and received feedback from Indigenous and Indigenous-focused stakeholders.

This framework is also intended to provide post-secondary institutions with guidelines for developing digital literacy policies and tools. Post-secondary institutions are encouraged to adapt this framework to their own unique needs. Not all components of this framework will directly apply to shorter duration training programs.

Consistent with other components of the Digital Learning Strategy, the B.C. Post-Secondary Digital Literacy Framework is intended to be evergreen and responsive to shifts in technology, pedagogy, and culture.

1. Instructional Resources

Three pathways were identified to increase digital literacy across post-secondary communities through Strategic Priority 1 (b) in the Digital Learning Strategy. The Digital Literacy Open Education Resource Repository and Digital Literacy Micro-credential are anticipated to emerge from this framework, and institutions are encouraged to develop courses that focus on digital literacy. This framework will be updated as resources are developed. These pathways will use this framework to inform the development of educational resources:

Pathway 1: Digital Literacy Open Education Resource Repository

An Open Education Resource repository containing digital literacy materials will allow educators to easily integrate competency-specific materials into courses. As the repository grows, content pertaining to different fields could become available. This will allow educators to expand learners' digital literacy skills without greatly increasing their workloads.

Pathway 2: Digital Literacy Micro-credential

Creating a micro-credential with stackable courses and multiple entry and exit points could provide professional development to educators and staff; additionally, this could be open to the public and increase digital literacy skills throughout the province, potentially through facilitated courses offered by sector partners. This would allow all post-secondary institutions to provide their workforce with equal digital literacy competencies, regardless of institutional size or financial resources. Entry and exit points could be tailored to supporting personal digital literacy or developing digital literacy in learners.

Pathway 3: Digital Literacy Credit Courses

Post-secondary institutions could develop or increase the delivery of credit courses related to digital literacy, or intentionally create space in existing courses for learners to develop digital literacy competencies. Eventually, a digital literacy breadth requirement could be included within program requirements.

2. Thematic Digital Literacy Competencies

This framework includes eight thematic competencies within digital literacy: ethical and legal; technology; information literacy; digital scholarship; communication and collaboration; creation and curation; digital wellbeing; and community-based learning. These competencies are broken down into the ideal skills, knowledge, and abilities of people in different post-secondary populations.

The population groupings used under the thematic competencies include digital citizens, incoming learners, program graduates, and educators. The thematic competencies reflect the desired levels of digital literacy within these populations, and this framework also recognizes that not everybody has equal opportunities to develop digital literacy.

A few notes on populations:

- The term [Digital Citizen](#) is used to describe an aspirational state of digital literacy, which includes understanding human, cultural, and societal issues related to technology and practice legal and ethical behavior, including learners, educators, administrators, staff, and researchers.⁵
- Incoming learners are people who are new to post-secondary studies.
- Educators are people involved in teaching learners across disciplines; this area may also include researchers.
- Program graduates are people who have completed a post-secondary credential.

Individuals may be part of more than one population in this framework. For example, the term Digital Citizen is expected to apply to a broad population and is intended to include other populations in this framework. In this way, skills described in relation to a specific population may also intersect with others and may be cumulative.

Ethical and Legal Considerations

From ethical and legal perspectives, a digitally literate person will understand and abide by principles of privacy protection, inclusion, and accessibility in digital spaces, recognize when these principles are not being upheld, be aware that power inequalities can exist in digital spaces, and contribute to equitable and safer spaces.

If you are a digital citizen, being digitally literate means:

- Actively seeking out and choosing technologies that are relevant and responsive to First Nations, Urban Indigenous, Métis, and Inuit Peoples whenever possible.
- Respecting other digital citizens and behaving appropriately in digital spaces.
- Ensuring that you are authorized to share personal information before doing so.⁶
- Securely storing, accessing, and communicating personal information online.
- Not illegally downloading or pirating media online (e.g., movies, music, etc.).

- Understanding that the worldviews of developers are built into the technologies they create, which can include biases.⁷
- Recognizing that power imbalances may determine how people interact in online spaces, which can stem from inequitable access, rights, representation, and levels of risk in digital spaces.^{8,9}
- Using content appropriately based on its source.¹⁰
- Understanding and respecting intellectual property rights and using content accordingly (for example, understanding copyright or knowing when and how to use openly licensed materials).¹¹
- Knowing about and following Indigenous protocols for using Indigenous knowledge, information, and intellectual property, and knowing that not all knowledge is appropriate for public sharing in the digital space.
- Upholding and acting upon the calls to action listed in the *Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission* and the articles listed in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.
- Meaningfully consulting with and including Indigenous Peoples in the development of digital programs and policies.¹²
- Considering and prioritizing Indigenous data sovereignty.^{13, 14}

If you are an incoming learner, being digitally literate means:

- Understanding and following academic integrity guidelines, including citing sources and avoiding plagiarism in digital learning spaces.¹⁵

If you are an educator, being digitally literate means:

- Ensuring that learners either already have the digital skills they need for their coursework or that they know where they can access support and assistance.
- Providing alternative participation methods where assignments require learners to publish information in the public domain. This could include creating replacement assignments or allowing learners to use pseudonyms instead of real names.
- Developing content that follows digital accessibility standards and guidelines.
- Not requiring social media for course participation unless it is relevant to the learning outcomes.
- Being aware that digital learning spaces are not equally accessible to everyone and can create barriers, particularly for Indigenous learners and equity-seeking groups.

Technology Supports

From a technology supports perspective, a digitally literate person will explore new technologies with curiosity, have troubleshooting skills, and intentionally select appropriate tools for different tasks.

If you are a digital citizen, being digitally literate means:

- Being able to save and access documents and understanding different types of data storage (hard drives, external drives, cloud drives, etc.).
- Using strong and unique passwords.
- Being able to troubleshoot when technology does not work as intended.¹⁶
- Openness to using digital technologies to learn in new ways, and approaching them with confidence, curiosity, and intention.
- Being able to use digital devices to conduct daily tasks related to post-secondary education safely and securely.¹⁷
- Not using digital technologies in ways that harm others.
- Considering how technology can facilitate access to reading and writing in different languages, including Indigenous languages.¹⁸
- Considering strategies for learning how to use new technologies.¹⁹

If you have graduated from your program, being digitally literate means:

- Knowing how to use technology that is specific to your work or studies.
- Adapting to new technology in your field and supporting peers with adopting new tools.

If you are an educator, being digitally literate means:

- Mindfully selecting technology for courses, which includes considering ethics, accessibility, technical support resources at your institution, affordability, and learners' cognitive loads.²⁰
- Connecting learners with support for using campus-wide technologies.
- Providing clear instructions about the technology, offering technical support, and providing learners with support resources if new technology is introduced to them (for example, vendor contact information, user guides, etc.).²¹
- Working with Teaching and Learning Centres (or equivalent) to ensure that online course materials, assessments, and activities are accessible and inclusive.
 - This includes making sure materials posted online follow accessibility protocols, such as [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#), links work and are not broken, course sites are easy to navigate, etc.
- Seeking out and choosing technologies that support Indigenous self-determination, including the use of Indigenous knowledge and cultural expressions.

Information Literacy

From an information literacy perspective, a digitally literate person will use critical thinking skills, which includes understanding how online information is produced, prioritized, and presented. A digitally literate person will also recognize that online information can provide different perspectives and ways of knowing and is aware of biases within online content and technology.

If you are a digital citizen, being digitally literate means:

- Following the appropriate intellectual property protocols and recognizing Indigenous communities as the maintainers and controllers of digitized cultural heritage resources, intellectual property, art, and knowledge systems when working with Traditional Cultural Knowledge.²²
- Being able to make informed decisions by:
 - Mindfully choosing search engines and online content that is consumed.
 - Understanding that search results are modified by search engines, search history, geographic location, algorithms, content moderation, search engine optimization, targeted advertisements, and marketing.²³
 - Recognizing that people provide their own perspective in their work; using digital technology to seek out and understand different valid perspectives.
- Being able to differentiate between truth and misinformation:
 - Knowing that false information can easily spread online, including through social media, websites, images, and videos.
 - Knowing that anybody can publish online, and that widespread information is not always accurate.
 - Knowing that image- and video-altering software is widespread and frequently used, especially on social media.
 - Knowing that information online can be presented through different worldviews and may not reflect other interpretations.
 - Having strategies to determine if online content is authentic and/or accurate.

If you are an incoming learner, being digitally literate means:

- Identifying, differentiating, and appropriately using different types of online information, including scholarly information, information from general web searches (social media, images, videos, news, blogs, websites, etc.), advertisements, and recognizing viral or sensationalized content.

If you have graduated from your program, being digitally literate means:

- Realizing that the technology used to learn or complete schoolwork can influence one's personal understanding and knowing that these technologies can spread biased perspectives.

If you are an educator, being digitally literate means:

- Providing experiential lessons that demonstrate and model information literacy in practice.
- Using digital information and tools to expand knowledge and providing multiple perspectives in coursework.

Digital Scholarship

From a digital scholarship perspective, a digitally literate person will intentionally and purposefully use digital technologies for learning, including developing effective research, critical thinking, problem solving, analysis, and decision-making skills.^{24, 25, 26, 27}

If you are a digital citizen, being digitally literate means:

- Effectively participating in online learning opportunities.²⁸
- Engaging respectfully in digital academic spaces.
- Using appropriate and culturally safe practices when working with Indigenous knowledge or data.
- Striving to make education technologies developed relevant and responsive to First Nations, Urban Indigenous, Métis, and Inuit Peoples.
- Identifying opportunities to share research processes, data, and results. This may include choosing and using open access platforms.

If you are an incoming learner, being digitally literate means:

- Seeking out online and in-person campus supports to support your learning.
- Knowing the difference between academic and non-academic sources online.
- Being able to complete the online components of courses.
- Knowing that the location and format of digital information can change, and sometimes content can disappear.

If you have graduated from your program, being digitally literate means being able to:

- Find, organize, accurately interpret, analyze, ethically use, synthesize, and communicate information in digital spaces.^{29, 30}
- Use digital library resources and filters to refine search results.
- Understand how digital technologies are used to contribute to research in your field.

If you are an educator, being digitally literate means:

- Referring learners to resources if they are struggling with academic integrity in digital spaces, and teaching citation methods.
- Engaging with professional development opportunities related to fostering inclusive, accessible, and supportive online learning environments.
- Modelling digital scholarship by sharing digital research strategies, tools, and methods with peers.
- Using appropriate types of digital media for teaching and assessment.³¹
- Collaborating with peers to develop digital learning opportunities, maintaining consistency across curriculums, and building digital skills of learner populations.³²
- Seeking out, using, and informing others of technologies that are relevant and responsive to First Nations, Urban Indigenous, Métis, and Inuit Peoples.

Communication and Collaboration

A digitally literate person will be able to use online tools to communicate and collaborate with others and make valuable contributions in digital spaces. A digitally literate person will intentionally craft their messages based on how they want them to be interpreted.

If you are a digital citizen, being digitally literate means being able to:

- Participate in online communities and being able to collaborate with others in a variety of settings (academic, social, etc.).
- Use technology to communicate complex ideas and sharing, interpreting, and accurately understanding digitally delivered information.³³
- Make informed decisions about the best tools and methods for communicating with audiences.³⁴
- Work with others in digital spaces and contribute to safe, positive online networks.³⁵
- Manage online events and create safe and secure online environments.
- Use tools and strategies for collaborating online.³⁶
- Adapt to changes in communication and collaboration technologies.
- Respond appropriately when online conflict, harassment, or abuse arises.
- Work in and support a collaborative digital work culture.
- Communicate in different ways, including written, audio, or video messages.³⁷

If you are an incoming learner, being digitally literate means:

- Treating yourself and others with respect in online environments.³⁸
- Choosing tools that make it easy to collaborate and complete tasks.³⁹
- Being flexible with how you work with others, such as online, in-person, at the same time or at different times.⁴⁰

If you are an educator, being digitally literate means:

- Seeking out and connecting learners with accessible and institutionally supported collaborative digital tools.
- Developing assignments and assessments that teach learners how to work together in digital spaces.
- Understanding that cultural values and lived experiences may lead to different ways of participating in online spaces.⁴¹

Creation and Curation

A digitally literate person will be able to create or curate accessible digital materials that are specific to different audiences and platforms.^{42, 43}

If you are a digital citizen, being digitally literate means:

- Using digital media to creatively express yourself and selecting the appropriate platform and medium for different types of expression.^{44, 45}

- Accessing opportunities, information, and skills to be creative in digital spaces, including developing works that align with your traditional cultural expressions.
- Thinking creatively and being able to use technology to express your ideas, either individually or as part of a group.
- Understanding and respecting intellectual property rights in digital spaces.
- Making informed decisions about where you share your work and the work of others (for example, knowing how and when to license your work if you so choose).
- Understanding and following protocols for respectfully and appropriately using Indigenous knowledge and prevent digitized cultural appropriation.
- Developing and contributing to positive, healthy online communities.^{46, 47}
- Basing your creative choices on who your audience is, the type of content you are producing, and where you are sharing your work.⁴⁸

If you are an educator, being digitally literate means:

- Upholding accessibility protocols when developing learning resources.⁴⁹
- Being able to use technology to enhance digital learning opportunities (e.g., learning management systems, visuals, idea clouds, whiteboards, polls, etc.) to convey complex concepts.
- Providing opportunities for creative expression in digital learning spaces and assignments.

Digital Wellbeing

A digitally literate person will use technology to support their wellbeing and have strategies for managing technology if it negatively impacts their physical, mental, or emotional health. A digitally literate person will have healthy boundaries with digital technologies, use them intentionally and will not use digital technologies in ways that harm others.

If you are a digital citizen, being digitally literate means:

- Being aware of digital privacy and security issues, including:
 - Realizing that digital information about yourself and others may be permanent, regardless of whether it is true, recent, or relevant.
 - Knowing that search engines, websites, platforms, and the Internet of Things (e.g., wearable technologies, smart homes) contribute to your digital footprint.
 - Recognizing that it is not always possible to control how online information is used, and that content posted online may not be fully deleted later.⁵⁰
 - Obtaining consent prior to sharing information about other people and communicate how others can or cannot share information about you.
 - Discussing and following the privacy preferences of others before posting images and being aware of information conveyed through images.

- Recognizing that surveillance through artificial intelligence and algorithms can target and impact some segments of the population more than others, including populations that experience discrimination and/or barriers.⁵¹
- Knowing about information security and privacy risks and taking precautions to maintain online safeguards.
- Being aware of digital identity matters, including:
 - Intentionally creating and managing your online identity to the extent possible and understanding that it can influence your sense of self, your personal life, and your professional life.^{52, 53}
 - Being cautious when meeting people online since they may not be who they say they are.⁵⁴
 - Protecting your identity and the identity of others when sharing information online.
- Being aware of digital safety issues, including:
 - Protecting personal, private, and sensitive information in digital spaces.⁵⁵
 - Not participating in cyberbullying; identifying cyberbullying and knowing and practicing intervention methods.⁵⁶
 - Promoting safe and inclusive online cultures and speaking out against hate speech, technology-facilitated sexualized violence, and racial and gendered violence in online spaces.
 - Recognizing and speaking out against internet cultures that exhibit toxicity, misogyny, racism, sexism, violence, objectification, and sexualized violence to promote online cultures that are safe and inclusive.
- Being aware of digital health matters, including:
 - Making informed health-related decisions including securely storing digital health records, accessing remote healthcare services, and mindfully using wearable technologies.⁵⁷
 - To the extent possible, being intentional when sharing and consuming digital content and taking breaks from it when it is impacting your wellbeing.
 - Recognizing that social media content is carefully curated and can be edited, and that images do not always reflect authentic experiences or reality; social media can host dangerous content leading to harmful behaviours.
 - Maintaining a healthy balance between online and offline activities.

Community-Based Learning

From a community-based learning perspective, a digitally literate person will work with individuals and communities to support digital projects. This can include placing Indigenous or community knowledge and cultural practices at the centre of projects to produce mutually beneficial outcomes.

If you are a digital citizen, being digitally literate means:

- Recognizing that access and expertise with digital technologies may vary across and within communities and finding ways to navigate these differences.
- Recognizing that different groups and communities may have their own ways of working in digital spaces.
- Understanding that digital spaces can reflect and reinforce specific ways of knowing that may not reflect all contexts, backgrounds, and worldviews.
- Being aware of, respecting, and following data sovereignty principles, especially for research pertaining to First Nations, Urban Indigenous, Métis, and Inuit Peoples.^{58, 59}
- Centring community partners in making decisions regarding how technology will be used in projects and initiatives.
- Understanding how digital information is accessed, used, and shared, including cultural and historical records.⁶⁰
- Using digital skills to meaningfully contribute to community projects.

If you are an educator, being digitally literate means:

- Supporting a co-creational model, placing community expertise at the centre of projects and leadership.
- Providing opportunities for learners to participate in community-based learning by building and maintaining relationships.
- Listening to and prioritizing community needs and working with local experts and learners to meet those needs.
- Recognizing that First Nations, Métis and Inuit are distinct, rights-bearing communities, and committing to a distinctions-based approach in relationships with each.
- Developing a safe digital space for community/learner collaborations that are respectful and mindful of Indigenous Peoples, protocols, and priorities.

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