



VETInnovate

Transformation of VET Centres to become
regional leaders of inclusive, sustainable
and digital skills ecosystems



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1. Digital Transformation in Vocational Education and Training

Digital transformation is reshaping economies, labour markets, and learning environments across all sectors. For vocational education and training (VET), the implications are profound: technological change is redefining occupations, production systems, and the competences required by learners entering the workforce.

However, digital transformation in VET institutions cannot be reduced to the adoption of new technologies or the introduction of isolated digital tools. It involves a systemic institutional shift that affects governance, infrastructure, curricula, pedagogical approaches, staff competences, industry collaboration, and quality assurance mechanisms.

In this context, VET institutions must move beyond sporadic digital initiatives and develop coherent digital transformation strategies that align learning processes with the needs of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing systems, digital platforms, automation, and data-driven production environments.

At the same time, digitalisation must be inclusive, ethical, and responsible. Institutions must ensure that digital transformation enhances accessibility and participation for all learners while addressing critical issues such as digital ethics, cybersecurity, and data governance.

This pillar therefore focuses on the institutional capacity of VET centres to design, implement, and sustain digital transformation, while ensuring that learners acquire the digital competences required in contemporary and future labour markets.



2. Scope of the Pillar

This pillar assesses how effectively a VET institution integrates digital transformation across its organisational structures, learning environments, and relationships with industry.

It focuses on two interconnected dimensions:

1. Institutional Digital Maturity

- Governance of digital transformation
- Infrastructure and digital ecosystems
- Organisational capability and monitoring

2. Digital Skills Development

- Integration of digital competences in curricula
- Pedagogical innovation and learning technologies
- Alignment with emerging industry needs

Together, these dimensions enable institutions to move from isolated digital initiatives toward a systemic digital transformation that enhances both institutional performance and learner outcomes.

To support practical implementation and self-assessment, the pillar is operationalised through a set of measurable indicators used in the VETINNOVATE platform. These indicators focus on observable elements of digital transformation, such as the integration of digital competences in curricula, readiness for Industry 4.0, the use of digital pedagogy, the availability of infrastructure, the inclusion of disadvantaged learners through digital tools, the use of immersive technologies, staff training, and opportunities for lifelong digital upskilling.

These indicators should not be interpreted as isolated items. Rather, they function as practical entry points for assessing broader institutional capacity. In this sense, the platform indicators operationalise the wider framework presented in this pillar, which understands digital transformation as a systemic process requiring alignment across strategy, curriculum, pedagogy, infrastructure, staff development, and collaboration with industry.



3. Why Digital Transformation Matters in VET

3.1 Rapid Technological Change

Emerging technologies are transforming industrial processes and service delivery. Fields such as advanced manufacturing, logistics, construction, energy, and mechatronics increasingly rely on:

- Robotics and automation
- Artificial intelligence and machine learning
- Smart sensors and Internet of Things (IoT)
- Digital twins and simulation systems
- Advanced data analytics
- Additive manufacturing
- Digital supply chain management

As a result, the skills required by technicians and skilled workers are evolving rapidly.

For VET institutions, this means that digital transformation must be visible not only in infrastructure but also in the training offer itself. Centres need to assess whether learners are exposed to emerging technologies such as robotics, Internet of Things systems, artificial intelligence applications, data analytics, immersive simulations, and digital monitoring tools, in ways that are relevant to their vocational sectors.

VET institutions must therefore ensure that learners develop both:

- Technical digital competences related to specific sectors
- Transversal digital competences applicable across occupations



3.2 The Role of VET Institutions in the Digital Economy

VET centres are not only providers of training; they increasingly act as regional skills hubs, supporting innovation and technological adoption in local economies.

Digital transformation enables VET institutions to:

- Support the digitalisation of small and medium enterprises
- Provide upskilling and reskilling opportunities for workers. This increasingly includes the provision of short, flexible learning opportunities, including micro-credentials and modular digital training, which support continuous workforce development
- Act as demonstrators of emerging technologies
- Facilitate knowledge transfer between education and industry

This role requires strong institutional capacity, modern learning environments, and close collaboration with industry partners.

3.3 Digital Inclusion and Equal Access

While digital technologies offer powerful learning opportunities, they can also exacerbate inequalities if not implemented carefully.

Institutions must therefore ensure:

- Equal access to digital tools and infrastructure
- Support for learners with limited digital skills
- Accessible digital learning environments
- Inclusive pedagogical approaches

Digital transformation must contribute to reducing barriers rather than creating new ones.



4. Key Dimensions of Digital Transformation

The following dimensions provide a framework for assessing the digital transformation capacity of VET institutions. In the VETINNOVATE tool, these dimensions are translated into practical indicators that capture specific features of institutional practice, such as DigComp integration, Industry 4.0 readiness, digital pedagogy, infrastructure, inclusive tools, immersive technologies, data and AI skills, staff training, lifelong learning opportunities, and micro-credential recognition.

The indicators therefore serve as measurable expressions of the broader dimensions described below.

Dimension 1 - Digital Strategy and Governance

Digital transformation requires clear strategic direction and institutional leadership. A robust digital strategy should:

- Define long-term digital transformation goals
- Align with institutional mission and regional labour market needs
- Establish clear responsibilities and governance structures
- Include monitoring and evaluation mechanisms

Without strategic coordination, digital initiatives risk becoming fragmented and unsustainable.

Dimension 2 - Digital Infrastructure and Learning Technologies

Modern digital infrastructure is essential to support advanced learning environments. Key components may include:

- Learning management systems
- Simulation platforms
- Virtual and augmented reality environments
- Remote laboratories
- Smart classrooms and connected equipment
- Cloud computing resources

Infrastructure should support both on-campus and blended learning environments, enabling flexible access to training.



Dimension 3 - Integration of Digital Skills in Curriculum

Digital competences should be embedded within vocational curricula rather than treated as separate modules.

Where appropriate, institutions may use recognised competence frameworks such as DigComp as reference points for structuring learning outcomes and assessment methods. Curriculum integration should also reflect the presence of emerging technologies relevant to Industry 4.0, including robotics, IoT, AI applications, digital simulations, and sector-specific data tools. In addition, particular attention should be given to the development of data literacy and applied AI skills, as these are increasingly required across a wide range of vocational sectors.

Curriculum design should reflect:

- Sector-specific digital tools and technologies
- Data literacy and digital problem-solving
- Digital collaboration practices
- Technology-supported work processes

Strong collaboration with industry partners is essential to ensure that training remains aligned with current technological developments.

Dimension 4 - Digital Pedagogy and Learning Innovation

Digital transformation requires new pedagogical approaches that move beyond traditional lecture-based instruction.

Innovative practices may include:

- Simulation-based training
- Project-based learning
- Digital collaborative platforms
- Virtual laboratories
- Remote experimentation environments. In some sectors, immersive technologies such as virtual reality or augmented reality can significantly enhance practical training by allowing learners to simulate complex or high-risk tasks in controlled environments

These methods allow learners to engage with realistic work scenarios and develop problem-solving skills relevant to digital workplaces.



Dimension 5 - Trainer Digital Competence

Trainers play a critical role in the success of digital transformation.

Institutions must ensure that teaching staff develop competences in:

- Digital instructional design
- Technology-enhanced learning
- Digital assessment methods
- Use of advanced technical equipment

Supporting trainers through targeted professional development is essential to sustain innovation in teaching.

Dimension 6 - Staff Professional Development

Digital transformation is an ongoing process requiring continuous learning for all institutional staff.

Professional development programmes should address:

- Emerging technologies in vocational sectors
- Pedagogical innovation
- Digital project management
- Industry collaboration

Institutions should encourage staff participation in training, peer learning networks, and industry placements.

Professional development should not be limited to one-off activities. Institutions should consider whether digital upskilling opportunities are continuous, flexible, and accessible both for internal staff and, where relevant, for wider groups of adult learners and professionals engaging in reskilling or upskilling activities.



Dimension 7 - Industry Collaboration for Digital Skills

Close cooperation with industry is essential to maintain the relevance of digital training.

Effective collaboration may involve:

- Joint development of training programmes
- Industry-supported laboratories
- Work-based learning opportunities
- Co-designed digital learning resources

Partnerships help ensure that learning environments reflect real industrial practices.

Dimension 8 - Responsible and Ethical Digitalisation

Digital transformation must be implemented responsibly.

Institutions should address issues such as:

- Cybersecurity and data protection
- Ethical use of artificial intelligence
- Transparency in algorithmic systems
- Responsible digital behaviour

Learners should develop awareness of digital ethics alongside technical competences.



Dimension 9 - Monitoring and Evaluation of Digital Transformation

Continuous evaluation helps institutions measure the impact of digital initiatives.

Monitoring may include:

- Tracking learner digital competence development
- Evaluating effectiveness of digital learning tools
- Assessing staff training outcomes
- Reviewing alignment with labour market needs

Data-driven evaluation supports evidence-based decision-making.

Dimension 10 - Digital Inclusion and Accessibility

Digital learning environments must be accessible to all learners.

Institutions should ensure:

- Accessible digital platforms
- Adaptive learning resources
- Support for learners with disabilities
- Guidance for learners with limited digital experience

Inclusive digital strategies help ensure that technological innovation benefits the entire learning community.

These ten dimensions form the basis of the VETINNOVATE self-assessment framework presented in the following sections.

Digital transformation in VET also extends beyond initial training provision. Institutions increasingly play a role in supporting lifelong learning through short, flexible, and targeted forms of digital upskilling and reskilling. In this context, micro-credentials and other modular learning formats can help learners and workers progressively build digital competences that respond to changing labour-market needs.



5. Self-Assessment Dimensions

The VETINNOVATE self-assessment tool evaluates digital transformation in VET centres through a set of practical indicators linked to the broader dimensions presented in this pillar. These indicators focus on observable features of institutional practice, such as curriculum integration, digital pedagogy, infrastructure, advanced technologies, educator training, inclusive tools, lifelong learning opportunities, and micro-credential recognition.

The following dimensions provide the conceptual structure behind the self-assessment tool:

1. Digital Strategy and Governance
2. Digital Infrastructure and Learning Technologies
3. Integration of Digital Skills in Curriculum
4. Digital Pedagogy and Learning Innovation
5. Trainer Digital Competence
6. Staff Professional Development
7. Industry Collaboration for Digital Skills
8. Responsible and Ethical Digitalisation
9. Monitoring and Evaluation of Digital Transformation
10. Digital Inclusion and Accessibility

Together, these dimensions and indicators provide a practical picture of institutional digital maturity while remaining connected to the wider transformation framework described in this chapter.



6. Self-Assessment Statements

VET centres can use the following statements to reflect on their current level of digital transformation.

These statements are designed as broad reflection prompts aligned with the key dimensions of this pillar. In the VETINNOVATE platform, these areas are operationalised through more specific indicators and scoring items that capture observable aspects of institutional practice.

The statements should therefore be interpreted as a complementary tool to support discussion and reflection, rather than as a direct scoring instrument.

Institutional Strategy and Governance

- Our institution has a documented digital transformation strategy that is aligned with institutional priorities and reviewed periodically.
- Responsibilities for digital transformation are clearly defined within the organisation.

Integration of Digital Competences and Industry 4.0

- Digital competences are systematically integrated into vocational curricula through learning activities, practical training, or assessment methods.
- Where relevant, recognised frameworks such as DigComp are used to guide the development and assessment of digital competences.
- Learners are exposed to technologies relevant to Industry 4.0 sectors, such as robotics, Internet of Things systems, artificial intelligence applications, simulation tools, or data-driven processes.

Digital Pedagogy and Learning Innovation

- Digital tools are regularly used in teaching, assessment, and collaborative learning activities.
- Trainers apply pedagogical approaches such as blended learning, simulation-based learning, or project-based learning supported by digital technologies.
- Where relevant, immersive technologies such as virtual reality or augmented reality are used to support practical and work-based learning.



Digital Infrastructure and Learning Environments

- The institution provides reliable access to digital infrastructure, including connectivity, learning platforms, and specialised digital equipment.
- Digital tools and technologies are available across programmes and reflect current industry practices.

Data, AI, and Advanced Digital Skills

- Training programmes include elements related to data management, data analysis, or applied artificial intelligence, where relevant to the sector.
- Learners develop the ability to use digital tools for data-driven decision-making or problem-solving in vocational contexts.

Trainer Competence and Staff Development

- Trainers have received training that enables them to effectively use digital tools and technologies in teaching and assessment.
- Staff participate in structured professional development activities related to digital pedagogy, emerging technologies, or innovation in vocational education.

Lifelong Learning and Micro-Credentials

- The institution offers opportunities for continuous digital upskilling or reskilling, including flexible or modular learning formats.
- Short digital learning modules or micro-credentials are recognised and can contribute to broader qualification pathways.

Industry Collaboration for Digital Skills

- The institution collaborates with companies or sector organisations to identify emerging digital skill needs.
- Industry partners contribute to the design, updating, or delivery of training programmes involving digital technologies.



Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

- Data from learning platforms, training outcomes, or feedback mechanisms is used to evaluate and improve digital learning practices.
- Digital transformation initiatives are regularly reviewed and adjusted based on evidence and changing technological or labour-market conditions.

Inclusion and Accessibility

- Digital learning environments and materials are accessible to learners with different levels of digital literacy and diverse learning needs.
- Digital tools are used to support inclusion, for example through assistive technologies, adaptive learning resources, or multilingual platforms.

These statements should be considered together with the maturity matrix presented in the next section. While individual statements focus on specific aspects of digital transformation, they collectively contribute to a broader understanding of institutional digital maturity.



7. Maturity Assessment by Dimension

The following maturity matrix provides a structured interpretation of digital transformation across institutional dimensions.

It complements the indicator-based assessment used in the platform by helping institutions understand how individual results relate to broader organisational development.

Using the Matrix

While the platform uses specific indicators and scores to support self-assessment, the maturity matrix provides a broader interpretative framework that helps institutions understand how individual results relate to overall institutional development.

Institutions should review each dimension in the matrix and select the maturity level that best reflects their current practices. The assessment should be based on available evidence and institutional experience rather than individual opinions.

It is important to note that different dimensions may fall at different maturity levels. This is normal and reflects the complexity of digital transformation processes within VET institutions. For example, a centre may have advanced digital infrastructure but still be developing trainer digital competences or industry collaboration.

When interpreting the results, institutions should focus on identifying patterns rather than aiming for a single overall score. In particular, institutions may wish to consider:

- Which dimensions show the highest maturity levels, indicating areas of institutional strength.
- Which dimensions show the lowest maturity levels, indicating potential priorities for development.
- Whether differences exist across programmes or departments, as digital transformation may progress at different speeds in different vocational sectors.



Institutions can then use the results of the matrix to support strategic planning. In practice, this may involve:

- Identifying two or three priority areas for improvement.
- Defining specific actions to strengthen these areas.
- Assigning responsibilities to relevant teams or departments.
- Monitoring progress over time through periodic reassessment.

The matrix should therefore be understood not as a ranking tool, but as a framework for structured institutional reflection and continuous improvement.

Repeating the assessment periodically can help institutions monitor how their digital transformation evolves and how improvements in specific dimensions contribute to overall institutional development.

Maturity Matrix

Dimension	Level 1 – Initial	Level 2 – Emerging	Level 3 – Developing	Level 4 – Advanced	Level 5 – Transformational
Digital Strategy and Governance	No formal digital strategy; initiatives are ad hoc and not coordinated	Pilot initiatives or discussions exist but lack institutional coordination	Digital strategy defined but only partially implemented across the institution	Digital transformation integrated into institutional planning and governance	Strategy fully embedded, regularly reviewed, resourced, and aligned with regional stakeholders
Digital Infrastructure and Learning Technologies	Limited access to digital tools and equipment	Basic digital tools available but uneven across programmes	Adequate infrastructure supports several training programmes	Advanced digital learning environments implemented across most programmes	State-of-the-art infrastructure reflects industry practices and supports innovation
Integration of Digital Skills in Curriculum	Digital topics rarely included in training programmes	Some programmes include basic digital skills modules	Digital competences integrated into several vocational programmes	Digital skills embedded across most programmes and learning activities	Digital skills fully integrated and regularly updated with industry input
Digital Pedagogy and Learning Innovation	Teaching methods remain mostly traditional	Some trainers experiment with digital tools in teaching	Blended learning approaches used in several courses	Digital pedagogies widely implemented and institutionally supported	Innovative practices embedded and actively shared across the institution
Trainer Digital Competence	Trainers have limited digital teaching skills	Some trainers receive occasional digital training	Structured development supports trainer digital competence	Trainers regularly apply digital pedagogies and tools	Trainers lead innovation and share digital practices institution-wide
Staff Professional Development	No structured digital training for staff	Occasional training opportunities without coordination	Regular professional development activities available	Continuous development integrated into institutional plans	Ongoing learning culture with mentoring and external collaboration
Industry Collaboration for Digital Skills	Limited interaction with companies on digital topics	Occasional collaboration with industry partners	Partnerships support selected digital training initiatives	Strong collaboration on digital skills development	Industry actively co-designs programmes and supports innovation
Responsible and Ethical Digitalisation	Limited awareness of digital risks, ethics, or data protection	Some awareness of cybersecurity and ethical issues	Policies or practices address key digital risks	Responsible digitalisation integrated into institutional practices	Advanced governance of AI, data protection, and cybersecurity
Monitoring and Evaluation of Digital Transformation	Digital initiatives are rarely evaluated	Some informal evaluation practices exist	Monitoring mechanisms track digital transformation progress	Data informs planning and improvement decisions	Systematic, data-driven evaluation supports continuous improvement
Digital Inclusion and Accessibility	Digital access barriers not addressed	Some accessibility measures or support services exist	Support mechanisms implemented in most learning environments	Inclusion embedded in institutional policies and course design	Fully inclusive environments support learners with diverse needs



8. What Digital Transformation Looks Like in a VET Centre

Digital transformation in VET should be visible in everyday teaching practices, training environments, and collaboration with industry partners. The following examples provide practical illustrations across different vocational sectors.

Manufacturing and welding programmes

Digital transformation may include the use of simulation software to practice welding techniques or machining operations before performing them in physical workshops. Training environments may also integrate digital monitoring systems that allow learners to analyse production parameters and understand quality control processes. In more advanced environments, robotics or automation modules may be incorporated into training workshops.

Such practices typically reflect higher levels of maturity in the dimensions related to digital infrastructure, curriculum integration, and digital pedagogy.

Mechatronics and industrial maintenance

In these programmes, digital technologies may be used to simulate industrial processes or diagnose faults in automated systems. Examples include programmable logic controller (PLC) training environments or predictive maintenance simulations that use digital monitoring systems.

These practices demonstrate how digital tools can support the development of data literacy and diagnostic skills, which are increasingly required in Industry 4.0 environments.

Construction and building technologies

Digital transformation in construction training may include the use of Building Information Modelling (BIM), digital design software, or augmented reality visualisation tools to analyse construction projects. Digital measurement and inspection technologies may also be used during practical training activities.

These approaches help learners understand how digital tools support planning, monitoring, and collaboration in modern construction projects.



Logistics and warehouse management

In logistics-related programmes, digital transformation may involve the simulation of digital supply chain systems or smart warehouse environments. Learners may work with digital inventory management tools or data analytics platforms that support decision-making in logistics operations.

Such practices reflect increasing integration of data-driven decision-making tools in vocational training.

Energy and sustainability sectors

Digital monitoring tools are increasingly used to manage renewable energy systems and energy efficiency technologies. Training programmes may introduce learners to smart grid technologies, digital monitoring systems, or energy management platforms used in modern energy infrastructure.

Across many VET centres, digital transformation may also include the use of digital portfolios or competency tracking systems, allowing learners to document and demonstrate their technical skills and learning progress.

In some VET centres, digital transformation may also be visible through the use of competence frameworks to structure digital learning outcomes, the introduction of virtual or augmented reality tools for practical training, the development of data and AI-related learning activities, and the provision of short digital courses or micro-credential-based modules for upskilling and reskilling.

While not all institutions will implement all of these practices immediately, the presence of such activities often indicates that digital technologies are becoming integrated into training programmes, teaching practices, and collaboration with industry. Institutions can therefore use these examples as reference points when reflecting on their level of digital maturity.



9. Evidence Indicators

When conducting the self-assessment, institutions should consider the following sources of evidence:

- Institutional digital strategy documents
- Curriculum design and programme outlines
- Digital learning platform usage data
- Staff professional development records
- Industry partnership agreements
- Learner digital project portfolios
- Accessibility and inclusion policies

Institutions are encouraged to triangulate evidence from multiple sources, including documents, observed practices, and input from staff or industry partners. This helps ensure that the self-assessment reflects actual institutional practices rather than individual perceptions.

Additional evidence may include:

- Curriculum maps showing integration of digital competence frameworks
- Documentation of modules covering robotics, IoT, AI, or data analytics
- Records of VR/AR use in training activities
- Staff participation rates in digital pedagogy training
- Evidence of digital upskilling or reskilling offers for adult learners
- Institutional procedures for recognising short digital learning modules or micro-credentials



10. Assessment Tips

Use evidence-based reflection

Assess maturity levels using documented evidence such as strategy documents, curriculum materials, digital learning platforms, or training records.

Involve multiple stakeholders

Digital transformation affects the entire institution. The assessment should therefore involve management, trainers, technical staff, and where possible industry partners.

Consider differences across programmes

Digital transformation may progress at different speeds across departments or vocational programmes. The assessment should reflect these variations.

Focus on improvement

The purpose of the assessment is not to rank institutions but to identify areas where further development or investment may be needed.



11. Transformation Pathways

The self-assessment results should support institutional reflection and strategic planning. Digital transformation is not a one-time process but a continuous cycle of assessment, improvement, and evaluation.

VET institutions can follow a structured transformation pathway:

Step 1 – Assess current digital maturity

Use the self-assessment framework to evaluate the institution's performance across the ten dimensions described in this pillar.

Step 2 – Identify priority areas

Analyse the results to determine which dimensions show the lowest maturity levels and therefore require immediate attention.

Step 3 – Collect supporting evidence

Gather documentation and examples that illustrate current practices, including training programmes, digital tools, partnerships with industry, and staff development initiatives.

Step 4 – Define responsibilities

Assign responsibility for digital transformation initiatives to specific teams or institutional units, such as management, digital learning coordinators, or training departments.

Step 5 – Prioritise actions

Develop an action plan identifying short-term and medium-term priorities, such as:

- Improving digital infrastructure and access
- Embedding digital competences in curricula and assessment
- Strengthening educator training in digital pedagogy
- Integrating Industry 4.0 technologies, simulations, and data-related learning activities
- Expanding inclusive digital tools and lifelong learning opportunities
- Developing recognition mechanisms for short digital learning modules or micro-credentials



Step 6 – Monitor and review progress

Institutions should regularly review progress, ideally on an annual basis, and update their digital transformation strategies based on evolving technological developments and labour market needs.

Through this continuous improvement cycle, VET institutions can progressively strengthen their digital capacity and contribute to the development of regional digital skills ecosystems.



12. Conclusion

Digital transformation is an ongoing process that requires institutional commitment, innovation, and collaboration. VET centres that successfully integrate digital strategies, modern pedagogies, and strong industry partnerships are better positioned to respond to the evolving needs of the labour market.

By applying the VETINNOVATE self-assessment framework, institutions can identify their strengths, address areas for improvement, and develop strategies that support the development of inclusive, sustainable, and digitally advanced skills ecosystems.



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