

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
DIGITAL BUSINESS STRATEGY

2023

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1 Introduction

North-West University's (NWU) purpose statement is "to excel in innovative learning and teaching and cutting-edge research, thereby benefiting society through knowledge." Its geographical uniqueness characterized by having a footprint in two provinces, rural, semi-rural and urban campuses, a diverse staff and student body demands that innovative means are constantly evaluated and applied to ensure delivery of the purpose statement. As stated in its Teaching and Learning strategy document, the intention of the NWU is to prepare its students for life and the world of work, creating a culture of innovation to solve real world problems so that they may participate constructively in public life, and lead fulfilling professional and private lives.

The evolution of digital technology and the pervasive manner in which it has permeated into all areas of society presents an opportunity for NWU to harness this digital revolution in pursuit of its strategic goals. Development of NWU's Digital Business Strategy (DBS) is underpinned by the acknowledgement of the power of Digital Transformation (Dx) and in realizing the immense impact that Dx can play towards the delivery of NWU 's strategic goals.

The NWU Digital Business Strategy outlines how NWU will transform its culture and coordinate its efforts to maximize opportunities afforded by the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) technologies including Cloud, Internet, and Artificial Intelligence to achieve its institutional mandate and to position itself for the future educational landscape. It is important to note that the DBS is NOT a technology strategy, it is an institutional strategy in tandem with the university's overarching strategy and in support of the achievement of all of NWU's institutional goals.

The Digital Business Strategy emphasizes:-

- (1) Transformation of NWU institutional culture towards a future-fit university,
- (2) Agility of business processes and
- (3) Strategic use of 4IR technologies to deliver tangible value to all of NWU's stakeholders and to positively impact their experiences in all areas of engagement with the institution.

2 Digital Business Strategy implementation context

North-West University is a dynamic institution that constantly assess and responds to environmental influences, development of the Digital Business Strategy is therefore not done in isolation, it is informed by the many influences that impacts NWU's course on a daily basis, these include: -

- Changes in the Higher Education landscape post the Covid pandemic.
- Technological advances
- Increasing cyber threats
- Globalization and the connected world
- Scarcity of technical skills
- Bridging the digital divide
- Societal perceptions regarding digitalization
- Budgetary and Financial constraints

2.1 Changes in the Higher Education landscape post the Covid pandemic

Lockdown restrictions imposed due to Covid forced institutions of higher learning to explore new ways of teaching, learning and assessment, inclusive of online and distance education for contact students. The pendulum has not swung back fully since Covid subsided resulting in the adoption of a "new normal" where students, faculty and staff operate in a hybrid on/off campus environment that is enabled through technology while expecting continued delivery and support of institutional services to compliment the new ways of work.

2.2 Technology advances

The rapid speed at which digital technology advances has left institutions in a constant catch up, Information Technology departments are having to maintain a legacy of technology investments while institutional strategies require adoption of new technologies to create business advantage and improved stakeholder experience. Regular interventions are needed to continuously reskill IT personnel to deal with the changing technology landscape while empowering users on the optimal use of new technologies.

2.3 Increasing Cyber Threats

Implementation of digital transformation increases the pace of digitalization and hence the technology footprint within an institution resulting in increased exposure to cyber-attacks. Migration to Cloud services and adoption of hybrid modes of working leads to a digitally connected environment that can introduce vulnerabilities to sophisticated cyber-attacks. Poor governance of Cloud services can compromise institutional data security leading to disruptions of critical operations and other legal challenges.

2.4 Globalization and the connected world

Connectivity brought about by the implementation of Digital Transformation (Dx) and global partnerships and engagements that follow inadvertently lead to an institution that is always on, often resulting in an undeclared 24x7 operating model. This has an impact on support staff that maintains institutional ICT services.

2.5 Scarcity of technical skills

Digitalization requires acquisition and retention of specialist technical skills that are not easily available, inability to access such skills can undermine implementation of the Digital Business Strategy. Innovative means to recruit and retain critical technical skills have to be devised to ensure successful implementation of the DBS.

2.6 Bridging the digital divide

The digital divide is a historical legacy that requires all institutions to be constantly aware of when undertaking digital transformation. To ensure that no NWU stakeholder is alienated by the changes introduced through Digital Transformation; NWU commits to making all endeavours possible to ensure that the digital transformation programme as espoused in the Digital Business Strategy embraces all of its stakeholders and does not leave anyone behind.

2.7 Societal perceptions regarding digital transformation

While digital transformation carries many positive benefits, however reckless automation can alienate employees and at times lead to job losses, NWU's approach to digital transformation is that of a socially responsible institution in line with its vision and mandate. The DBS therefore promotes movement of staff to more value adding roles in the event that current roles are negatively impacted by automation or other Dx activities.

2.8 Budgetary and Financial constraints

Institutions are constantly faced with competing priorities, stewardship of the institutional budget therefore requires that investment is made in areas with the highest possibility of success. Social circumstances of the South African society dictate that at all times technologies and processes introduced assist in alleviating the economic burden of NWU's stakeholders than increasing it, to this end the DBS commits to contributing to the achievement of these financial goals.

3 Environmental Analysis

North-West University commits to providing its students with an educational experience that will prepare them to face relevant twenty-first century employment, societal, cultural, economic, ecological and political challenges in an authentic manner, and to become responsible citizens (NWU Teaching & Learning Strategy 2025), the NWU institutional strategy further asserts best in class ICT as the success model for enabling seamless, virtual, open and integrated teaching and learning.

In attempting to meet these institutional strategic imperatives the Digital Business Strategy needs to leverage NWU's technological and institutional strengths to take advantage of emerging opportunities availed by 4IR technologies while simultaneously addressing inherent weaknesses and mitigating imminent threats.

3.1 Institutional SWOT Analysis pertaining to Digital Transformation

Below is a summary SWOT analysis highlighting Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats inherent in the implementation of the Digital Business Strategy.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A digitally savvy and supportive executive management. Both the University Management Committee (UMC) and Council have been visionary in identifying digitalization as a key driver of university success. 2. An established Digital Business Strategy programme ensuring a coordinated implementation of digital transformation across the institution. 3. A relatively stable IT workforce (low turnover) ensuring constant transfer of knowledge and continuity of implementation. 4. An innovative academy providing a constant supply of digital expertise that can be incorporated into the DBS programme. 5. A strong balance sheet that ensures sufficient funding for digital initiatives. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Legacy IT systems that are not aligned to modern architecture and the demands of a transforming institution. 2. Excessive lag time and lack of operational agility and decision making. 3. Poor institutional readiness for transformational change, this by nature is inherent in all established institutions of higher learning. 4. Inability to offer competitive salaries for on-demand skills.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strategic partnerships to fast-track the digitalization programme. 2. Adopting Agile as a business process enhancement methodology 3. Modernization of legacy systems leading to an integrated technology ecosystem. 4. Operational efficiencies through end-to-end optimization of Enterprise, Teaching & Learning as well as Research & Innovation processes 5. Using Intelligent Automation (IA) technologies to automate and streamline manual processes across the institution. 6. Leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) to support decision making and student retention and success. 7. Utilizing Data and Analytics for smart operations and data-lead executive decisions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Resistance to change 2. Access to technical expertise, inability to attract the required technical skills calibre. 3. Capacity limitations, inability to meet increasing digitalization demands. 4. Global shortage of IT skills resulting in inflated salaries and high staff churn. 5. Keeping up with a fast-changing technology environment. 6. Increasing digital divide. 7. Perceptions of investment bias and campus inequality. 8. Inability to retain key technical resources (revolving door syndrome) 9. Poor adoption of newly implemented technologies leading to suboptimal utilization. 10. Disillusionment with digitalization due to loss of “the human touch”.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Implementing smart teaching venues to enable Hybrid/Flexible (HyFlex) teaching and learning models. 9. Improving stakeholder experience at points of interaction through implementation of responsive systems designed with user experience at the centre. 10. Enabling hybrid work models through introduction of Cloud based collaboration and support technologies such as O365, MSTeams, Zoom etc. 11. Utilizing technology to eliminate geographic barriers and expand campus access. 12. Helping to reduce student and teacher digital divide through exposure to a high-tech T&L environment and other related technology based interventions. 	
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3.2 Environmental consideration (PESTLE Analysis)

North-West University exists and operates within the wider South African context, as the microcosm of such an ecosystem it is affected by the Political, Environmental, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental pressures that prevail within this context.

Below are some of the key PESTLE drivers with an impact on digital transformation:-

POLITICAL
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. With the approach of any national elections as it is the case in 2024 there is a sense of unease with regard to any political changes that may occur and the impact such might have on higher education. There is also optimism of new leadership realizing technology as a critical driver in the future of education especially amongst the younger cohort of politicians, this optimism will hopefully lead to increased investment in the sector. 2. There is great opportunity for digital transformation in the governance, administration and management of higher education, this is set to positively impact the sector as more digital transformation initiatives begin to unfold within the Department of Higher Education.

ECONOMICAL

1. The South African currency is at an all-time low making it expensive to procure technology required to drive digital transformation as all of the equipment used in digital transformation projects is sourced from outside the country. Growth in the economy has stagnated resulting in high unemployment and continued job losses, this has an impact on budget availability both from government funding, student affordability as well as grants from third stream income. The results of these economic pressures will be reprioritization of expenditure away from perceived luxuries towards basic necessities which might impact budget availability for digital transformation.

SOCIAL

1. High unemployment amongst the younger population has a potential for social unrest and public disturbance which has at times lead to the destruction of communications infrastructure, this poses a serious operational threat as more technology services are migrating to the Cloud.

TECHNOLOGY

1. The scramble for scarce skills is likely to continue with the private sector hogging many of the technical skills due to their urban location and the ability to offer higher salaries to the detriment of the higher education sector which often cannot compete.
2. The emergence of Artificial Intelligence and the rapid speed at which it is developing carries with it both opportunities and challenges. While this technology will assist in making learning more accessible to a wider population, there are also fears and mistrust fueled by perceived potential job losses. On the other hand this technology carries with it opportunities in respect of :-
 - Enhanced institutional operations and the Teaching and Learning experience.
 - Students, faculty and staff better understanding its advantages and inherent risks in order to operate comfortably in a future that will be dominated by AI.
 - Dive deeper into understanding and mastering the underlying technologies and contributing towards developing models that display a South African and African context.

LEGAL

1. Compliance to Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) and other privacy related legislation.
2. Revision, tighter implementation and stricter monitoring of some of the labour and procurement laws imply longer turn-around times in filling of critical vacancies as organizations search for designated candidates and BEE certified vendors.
3. Reducing carbon footprint and adherence to environment management legislation.

ENVIRONMENTAL

1. Technology and more specifically the internet has removed geographic barriers, this implies that South African institutions are having to compete with international players for top students, this on the other hand opens opportunities to increase international enrollments due to a favourable exchange rate.

4 North-West University Digital Vision

North-West University seeks to be an internationally recognized university in Africa characterised by innovative use of cutting edge technologies to deliver: -

- Impactful research and the best teaching and learning experience.
- Institutional stewardship and student success that is underpinned by quality data and real-time analytics.
- Equal access to secure, best in-class connectivity and associated IT services for faculty, students, and staff.
- Efficient, integrated, digitally enabled workplace environment that attracts and retains best talent.
- Seamless integration with partners and the community

5 DBS Strategic Alignment

The NWU Digital Business Strategy forms part of the overarching institutional strategy and as such compliments the strategy in the successful delivery of all of NWU's strategic goals.

6 NWU Overarching Institutional Goals

The following are NWU institutional goals as articulated in the 2020 - 2025 strategy document. The Digital Business Strategy seeks to align with and advance these goals :-

Goal 1: Promote excellent learning and teaching and reposition the NWU to attain the size and shape required by the market direction decisions.

Goal 2: Strengthen research and innovation with a strategic focus on impactful globalisation.

Goal 3: Integrate and align community engagement with teaching-learning and research to develop a culture of active citizenship.

Goal 4: Develop a clearly differentiated student value proposition with a focus on creating an inclusive environment aimed at developing students holistically through structured and unstructured co-curricular programmes which are relevant, desirable and meet students' needs.

Goal 5: Attract, develop and retain excellent staff and create an equitable staff profile.

Goal 6: The development and implementation of a digital business strategy to create a competitive advantage for the university and ultimately unlock alternative revenue streams.

7 Digital Business Strategy Goals and Enablers

Execution and attainment of the Digital Business Strategy is through several established goals and enablers. The DBS goals provide a framework and guidance for the types of digital projects that the NWU will endeavour into over its various environments, while the enablers highlight specific initiatives to support attainment of the goals.

7.1 Detailed description of DBS Goals

Goal 1: Drive operational efficiency in the various environments within NWU.

The NWU is to prioritize broad-scale initiatives in all environments that drive operational efficiency by maximizing intelligent automation (IA) and artificial intelligence (AI) to minimize employee effort and improve turnaround time of business processes.

Goal 2: Create intentional experiences for all stakeholders of NWU.

The NWU believes that its competitive edge is founded in creating intentional experiences for its stakeholders through digital initiatives. Intentional experiences refer to prioritizing stakeholder centredness, enhanced support and personalization through innovation to drive engagement and retention. Stakeholders are defined broadly to include students, personnel, alumni, prospective students, and the public.

Goal 3: Transform the NWU business model to cater for emerging hybrid, virtual, e-University operating models.

Digital transformation is more than just technology renewal, it is a “series of deep and coordinated culture, workforce, and technology shifts that enable new educational and operating models and transform an institution’s operations, strategic directions, and value proposition (Educause, 2020)”. NWU will use digital transformation as a means to position itself to be future-ready.

Goal 4: Leverage emerging technologies and new ways of work to create opportunities for alternate revenue streams.

Implementation of emerging digital technologies provide opportunities for operating models that could be leveraged to yield alternate revenue streams for NWU. These revenue streams help to strengthen NWU’s financial position and to lessen dependence on government grant.

Goal 5: Drive digital dexterity to create an enabling culture and to bridge the campus digital divide.

Implementation of the digital business strategy will introduce new technologies and ways of working resulting in changes in the working environment for staff, students and faculty. Digital literacy at all levels becomes a minimum requirement to ensure survival and optimum operation by all in the new environment hence the need for NWU to engage in programmes to identify and bridge digital dexterity gaps as they emerge. The DBS also

strongly encourages a revised leadership approach that leads from the front to ensure that the right culture exist that facilitates digital transformation at all levels.

Goal 6: Adopt Agility and Innovation principles as levers for digital transformation.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) has transformed the Higher Education landscape allowing non-traditional players to enter the market threatening the survival of established institutions. Agile and Innovative ways of work are needed to ensure institutional survival. The Digital Business Strategy seeks to introduce a cultural shift that facilitate agile processes and decision making as well as a culture of innovation that permeates across the institution.

7.2 Detailed description of DBS Enablers

Enabler 1: Establish a systems integration middleware platform to ultimately enable a digital ecosystem

To achieve the agility that the university needs for rapidly implementing and integrating new systems into the digital ecosystem, an integration middleware platform is envisaged. This platform enables systems to seamlessly communicate with each other via a standardized interface, reducing the integration effort of new systems.

Enabler 2: Enhance integrated data warehousing, analytics, and reporting capabilities

Initiatives to enhance strategic, managerial, and operational reporting throughout the university by:

1. Designating a single point of responsibility for integrated reporting strategically allocating the required resources.
1. Developing a data integration best-practice framework that should be followed for new and existing systems at the NWU. New systems can consume data, but they are required to share new data with the rest of the eco-system.
2. Implementing a robust data warehouse that integrates data from all systems at the university.

3. Widespread availability of reporting tools integrated into everyday communication platforms.
4. Upskilling of staff regarding data literacy and the use of BI-tools.

Enabler 3: Increase agility in the organization through rapid prototyping capabilities

To support innovation and efficient response to changes in the environment, rapid prototyping capabilities are to be established. These capabilities are to utilize the latest technologies and should be able to support the university by developing solutions at efficient costs with rapid turnaround times.

Enabler 4: Provide special funding avenues for digital projects

Funding is a vital prerequisite to the implementation of digital projects. Sufficient funding avenues need to be established with efficient application timelines and reporting processes. These avenues should cater for different project magnitudes.

Enabler 5: Support NWU ICT with sufficient capacity for implementation and support of digital initiatives

As digital projects increase at the university, pressure on NWU IT will escalate. Successful digital transformation requires sufficient financial and human resources for implementation and support. It is important that this is considered in budgets and policies.

8 Digital Business Strategy Review Process

The Digital Business Strategy document is a living document as such it is subject to annual reviews to ensure that it responds to changing technological dynamics and evolving digital needs of NWU's stakeholders. The DBS review process will also ensure alignment to revisions of the overarching institutional strategy.

9 Digital Business Strategy Scope

The Digital Business Strategy is an institution wide strategy enabling the coordinated planning, delivery, and execution of NWU's digital transformation journey.

The strategy also encompasses the associated cultural transformation and change management programmes which are critical to the success of digital transformation.

10 Digital Business Strategy Implementation and Alignment Programme

Institutional Goal 1	Promote excellent learning and teaching and reposition the NWU to attain the size and shape required by the market direction decisions	
Digital Vision	Implement a range of digital initiatives to enable a higher quality of student engagement; a more clearly defined and shared understanding of self-direction; collaborative and cooperative learning; and problem-solving skills development	
DBS Goal	Strategic Initiative	Schedule
Provide best in class smart learning environments that facilitate hybrid, flexible T&L	Implement Hybrid/Flexible (HyFlex) smart learning technologies for identified venues in all NWU campuses and empower academics and students in the effective utilization of such technologies.	2023/Q3
Provide a T&L environment that facilitates personalized anytime, anywhere, any device engagement	Implement best in class Student Information System (SIS)	2024/Q1
	Implement fit for purpose Learning Management System (LMS)	2024/Q4
Attract digitally savvy academics and researchers capable of leading the T&L digital transformation	Review employment processes to align with NWU digital goals.	2023/Q1
	Implement digital literacy and digital dexterity programmes to enhance staff digital competency.	2023/Q2
Entrench NWU's leadership in multimodal T&L provisioning	Provide alternative connectivity models to support the new NWU distance learning model.	2024/Q2
	Enable the NWU Business School renewal project.	2023/Q4

Institutional Goal 2	Strengthen research and innovation with a strategic focus on impactful globalisation	
Digital Vision	Capitalise on digital initiatives to help shift researcher focus away from administrative matters, supporting more productive research activities with higher overall research outputs further creating a premium online presence as a quality research institution that supports and attracts top-rated researchers and funding	
DBS Goal	Strategic Initiative	Schedule
Provide agile and responsive digital environment that attracts leading researchers and facilitates impactful.	Review recruitment processes to align with NWU digital goals. Renew High Performance Computing environment.	2023/Q1 2024/Q2
Provide a Library and Information Systems environment that supports aspirations of the next-gen Faculty and students	Implement integrated Library Information Management System. Implement best in class Student Information System (SIS).	2022/Q2 2024/Q1

Institutional Goal 3	Integrate and align community engagement with teaching-learning and research to develop a culture of active citizenship.	
Digital Vision	Enable community-engaged research and innovation, teaching-learning, and outreach by utilising various digital initiatives. These initiatives are applied in the scholarship of engagement by focusing on sharing of expertise, knowledge, and experience for community development. Ultimately enabling sustainable impact in the development of communities through digital platforms, technologies, and opportunities.	

DBS Goal	Strategic Initiative	Schedule
Provide a digitally enabled environment that facilitates continuous engagements between NWU and the wider community	Implement best in class Student Information System	2024/Q1

Institutional Goal 4	Develop a clearly differentiated student value proposition with a focus on creating an inclusive environment aimed at developing students holistically through structured and unstructured co-curricular programmes which are relevant, desirable and meet students' needs	
Digital Vision	Create individualised, quality, holistic student experiences through innovative digital platforms encompassing all aspects of student life regardless of presentation method	
DBS Goal	Strategic Initiative	Schedule
Provide a digitally enabled environment that facilitates continuous engagement between NWU and the wider community.	Implement best in class Student Information System.	2024/Q1
	Revise student value proposition to align with aspirations of a generation-z student.	2023/Q4
Contribute towards bridging the student digital divide	Implement student digital literacy programmes.	2023/Q2

Institutional Goal 5	Attract, develop and retain excellent staff and create an equitable staff profile.	
Digital Vision	<p>Providing a first-class employee experience through digital platforms, increasing agility and productivity through data-driven decision making and equipping employees with the skills required for optimal functioning in a digitally enabled workplace. Providing current and potential employees the ability to manage their work lives through online services, ensuring higher levels of satisfaction and productivity. Digital initiatives will be focussed around automating workflows, digital records and digital tools throughout the P&C value chain that results in a focus shift from away from admin, allowing for an enhanced value contribution.</p> <p>By leveraging digital HR tools and technologies, improve communication between employees and managers and reduce the administrative burden on P&C professionals and line managers leading to more efficient and effective P&C operations.</p>	
DBS Goal	Strategic Initiative	Schedule
<p>Provide digital systems and services that help attract and retain high calibre employees.</p> <p>Deliver enhanced staff and student experience through automated and self-service engagements.</p> <p>Provide an environment with increased levels of digital literacy through continuous digital skills development.</p>	<p>Implement best in class Human Capital Management Systems.</p> <p>Implement Intelligent Automation solutions.</p> <p>Drive self-service to aid efficiency and to reduce operational bottlenecks.</p> <p>Develop and implement the NWU Digital literacy framework.</p> <p>Promote and facilitate NWU wide digital skills enhancement.</p>	<p>2024/Q3</p> <p>2023/Q1</p> <p>2023/Q2</p> <p>2023/Q3</p>

Institutional Goal 6	Develop and implement a digital business strategy to create a competitive advantage for the university and ultimately unlock alternative revenue streams.	
Digital Vision	Ensure attainment of NWU's digital vision and aspirations as articulated in the Digital Business Strategy.	
DBS Goal	Strategic Initiative	Schedule
Elevate NWU digital capabilities and status in line with its strategic aspiration of a internationally recognized institution in Africa	Develop NWU Digital Strategy and supporting structures. Establish rapid develop/deploy capability (Agility Hub) Develop NWU Data & Analytics Strategy and Operating Model Facilitate delivery of NWU next generation Data Warehousing capability Coordinate delivery of DBS projects and change management across NWU Facilitate DBS awareness and visibility.	2023/Q2 2023/Q3 2023/Q4 2024/Q1 Ongoing Ongoing
Culture of Agility and Innovation	Facilitate Agility and Innovations interventions (e.g. Scaled Agile) to help transform NWU in line with DBS goals.	2023/Q4
Provide efficient, integrated and secure ICT platform that facilitate attainment of NWU's institutional goals	Implement the ICT's Next Generation Digital Environment (NGDE).	2023/Q4

11 Digital Business Strategy Governance and Execution Framework

11.1 Governance

NWU Digital Transformation constitutes an institution wide programme that involves many stakeholders from within and outside of the institution, it is for this reason that formal governance is instituted to ensure alignment and success. Implementation of the Digital Business Strategy is supported by the following governance structures:-

11.1.1 Digital transformation governance principles

A well-governed digital program must satisfy different stakeholders across an organization and be flexible enough to accommodate multiple types of initiatives, while ensuring enough rigidity to achieve strategic alignment and efficiency (sloanreview.mit.edu:61432, 2020).

Guidelines from MIT's "7 Key Principles to Govern Digital Initiatives" have been adopted as principles for guiding and aligning all digital transformation initiatives across NWU.

11.1.2 Digital Business Strategy Officer

The Digital Business Strategy Officer (DBS Strategist) is the accounting officer responsible for driving the entire NWU digital transformation programme. The Officer reports into the Deputy Vice Chancellor responsible for IT and Digital Transformation

11.1.3 DBS Enablement and Transformation Core Team (Dx Forum)

A forum made up of senior representatives nominated by stakeholders across all NWU key portfolios (Teaching & Learning, Research & Innovation, Library & Information Services, People & Culture, Student Life, Finance, Marketing, Vice Chancellor's office, Registrar's office, ICT) is established to coordinate and align all digital transformation activities across NWU. DBS Core Team members have a responsibility to drive awareness, coordination,

alignment and success of DBS primarily within their environment and ultimately across NWU. DBS Enablement and Transformation Core Team meetings are chaired by the Digital Business Strategy Officer.

11.1.4 DBS Initiatives Review Panel

In line with its ambition to be on the leading edge of technology advancement, NWU will often undertake to pilot new technologies, concepts and ways of work, these are funded through the Accelerator Fund. The DBS Initiatives Review Panel composed of Deputy Vice Chancellor (DBS & IT), DBS Officer, Chief Director IT is responsible for reviewing and approving funding for proposed pilot and rapid deployment initiatives.

11.1.5 IT Committee

The IT Committee functions as the executive governance structure monitoring, directing and approving DBS and ICT strategy and digital transformation activity across NWU. The DBS Officer reports into the IT Committee on digital transformation execution and progress.

11.2 DBS Execution Framework

The DBS Execution Framework facilitates piloting, adoption and successful delivery of DBS initiatives across NWU. The framework is supported by the following instruments:-

11.2.1 DBS Accelerator Fund

The University Management Committee (UMC) the highest executive body within the NWU governance structure allocates a budget to the digital transformation programme with the express purpose of piloting and driving new technologies and ways of work in support of the digital transformation programme.

11.2.2 DBS Agility Hub

Agility is a primary feature of digital transformation, for institutions to keep pace and indeed to stay ahead they require the capability to rapidly pilot and assess new innovative ideas without the limitations generally associated with operational constraints. The Agility Hub is a capability established in partnership with strategic industry expertise to provide varied skills and capabilities to rapidly assess and deploy new innovations on a small scale within NWU. Once concepts are successfully proven, larger scale rollouts might be initiated utilizing the normal NWU procurement processes. The Agility Hub, under the leadership of the DBS Officer works closely with ICT and other institutional stakeholders in ensuring a coordinated execution of the DBS cutting edge initiatives programme.

11.2.3 DBS Roadmap and Dashboard

The Digital Business Strategy Roadmap and Dashboard is a mirror on commitments made to drive NWU's digital transformation and reflections on progress made. The Roadmap and Dashboard is prepared by the Digital Business Strategy Officer with the assistance of the DBS Core Team and presented to the IT Committee as part of the DBS progress report. The DVC (DBS & IT) further reports on DBS progress to the University Management Committee (UMC) the highest executive body within NWU. UMC holds ultimate responsibility for the DBS success. The NWU Council is apprised of the DBS progress through a standing DBS feedback report presented by the UMC.

The below chart highlights the different elements of DBS governance and execution.

DBS Governance and Execution

