



# GUIDELINES

## DIGITAL AGENCIES WORKING WITH VET PROFESSIONAL AND ORGANISATIONS

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The present guidelines for digital agencies professionals and organisations working with vocational education and training (VET) institutions in distance learning provides a concise overview of key recommendations and strategies to optimise the digital learning experience for young learners. These guidelines aim to assist digital agencies professionals in effectively engaging VET institutions and young learners through ethical, innovative, and learner-centric practices in the digital realm. By incorporating these guidelines, digital agencies professionals can play a pivotal role in creating engaging and inclusive digital learning environments that foster positive behaviors, support well-being, and promote effective learning outcomes. The guidelines emphasise the importance of ethical considerations, health and well-being, emerging engagement practices, and collaborative approaches to enhance the digital learning experience for young learners in the VET context. By embracing these guidelines, digital agencies professionals can contribute to the long-term success of distance learning initiatives, ensuring the delivery of high-quality education and training that meets the evolving needs of young learners and VET institutions.





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## 1. BACKGROUND

Overall, the guidelines for digital agencies professionals and organisations working with VET institutions in distance learning focus on ethical, health and well-being emerging practices, and effective engagement through digital platforms. The project STAY+ aims to leverage the expertise of digital agencies professionals to enhance the learning experience, promote positive behaviors, and ensure the well-being of young learners during and beyond the pandemic.

The STAY+ project is designed to address the challenges faced by young people during the pandemic and aims to gamify positive behaviors to promote their well-being and engagement considering the points outlined next.

**The context of the pandemic:** the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a rapid shift to remote and distance learning methods. This shift presented challenges for VET institutions and educators in effectively engaging young people through digital platforms while ensuring their well-being and ethical practices.

**Digital transformation in education:** the pandemic accelerated the digital transformation of education, leading to an increased reliance on technology for teaching and learning. Digital agencies professionals and organisations play a crucial role in supporting VET institutions in leveraging digital platforms to enhance the learning experience and engage young people effectively.

**Ethical considerations:** the guidelines recognise the importance of ethical practices in the digital realm. This includes considerations for data privacy, online safety, and promoting responsible use of technology. Digital agencies professionals and organisations are encouraged to incorporate ethical guidelines and best practices in their engagement with VET institutions and young learners.

**Health and Well-being:** the guidelines acknowledge the significance of prioritising the health and well-being of young people in the digital learning environment. They emphasise the need for promoting positive mental health, managing screen time, and fostering supportive online communities. Digital agencies professionals and organisations are encouraged to incorporate strategies that enhance the well-being of young learners.

**Emerging practices:** the guidelines address emerging practices in the field of digital engagement and distance learning. This includes innovative approaches to gamification, interactive learning experiences, and personalised learning



pathways. The project STAY+ aims to leverage these emerging practices to promote positive behaviors and engagement among young people.

**Engagement through digital platforms:** recognising the affinity of young people for digital platforms, the guidelines emphasise the importance of engaging them effectively through these mediums. Digital agencies professionals and organisations are encouraged to utilise interactive tools, multimedia content, and gamification techniques to create engaging learning experiences.

**Collaborative approach:** the guidelines propose a collaborative approach between digital agencies professionals, VET institutions, educators, and young learners. The project STAY+ promotes the co-creation of guidelines to ensure the relevance, practicality, and effectiveness of digital engagement strategies in the VET context.

**Long-term impact:** the guidelines take into account the long-term impact beyond the pandemic. They aim to establish sustainable practices that can continue to support the engagement and well-being of young people in the digital learning environment, even after the crisis subsides.

## 2. KEY FINDINGS

When it comes to guidelines for digital agencies, professionals, and organisations working VET in the context of distance learning and engaging young people through digital platforms, several aspects should be considered e.g., ethical considerations, health and wellbeing concerns, and emerging best practices. The key points identified by the project STAY+ are outlined next.

**Privacy and data protection** e.g., the importance of protecting personal data and maintaining privacy during online interactions. Provide clear guidelines on data collection, storage, and usage, ensuring compliance with relevant laws and regulations.

**Informed consent and parental involvement** e.g., highlight the need for obtaining informed consent from both students and their parents or legal guardians before engaging in online activities. Clearly communicate the purpose, scope, and potential risks associated with distance learning, ensuring parents are actively involved in the process.

**Digital citizenship and online behavior** e.g., promote responsible digital citizenship among young learners. Encourage respectful and inclusive online interactions, discourage cyberbullying and harassment, and guide them on appropriate use of digital platforms.

**Digital well-being and mental health** e.g., recognise the potential impact of increased screen time and isolation on the mental health and well-being of learners. Encourage digital agencies and professionals to incorporate regular breaks, physical activity, and social interaction into online learning experiences. Provide resources for addressing mental health concerns and offer support channels for students.

**Accessibility and inclusivity** e.g., advocate for accessible and inclusive digital platforms that cater to a diverse range of learners. Ensure that content is available in multiple formats, supports different learning styles, and is compatible with assistive technologies. Consider the needs of learners with disabilities and provide appropriate accommodations.

**Quality content and pedagogical practices** e.g., emphasise the importance of delivering high-quality educational content and employing effective pedagogical practices in the online environment. Encourage digital agencies and professionals to collaborate with VET experts to develop engaging and interactive learning experiences that align with educational goals.



**Continuous professional development** e.g., encourage digital agencies and professionals to engage in ongoing professional development to stay updated with emerging technologies, pedagogical strategies, and ethical considerations in online learning. Promote collaboration and knowledge sharing among professionals to foster innovation and improvement.

**Evaluation and assessment** e.g., provide guidance on fair and reliable assessment methods for online learning. Encourage the use of diverse assessment strategies that align with learning outcomes and accommodate different learning styles. Address issues related to plagiarism, cheating, and academic integrity in the online context.

**Monitoring and feedback** e.g., establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of distance learning initiatives. Encourage regular feedback from learners, parents, and educators to identify areas for improvement and ensure the delivery of high-quality educational experiences.

**Collaboration and partnerships** e.g., encourage collaboration between digital agencies, professionals, VET institutions, and other stakeholders. Foster partnerships to share resources, expertise, and best practices, enabling a collective effort to provide high-quality vocational education and training through digital platforms.

These guidelines provide a starting point for digital agencies, professionals, and organisations involved in vocational education and training to create a safe, inclusive, and effective learning environment for young people through distance learning. It is essential to regularly review and update these guidelines to adapt to the evolving landscape of digital education and emerging ethical considerations.

### 3. GUIDELINES

The guidelines for digital agencies professionals and organisations working with VET institutions in distance learning aim to provide valuable insights and recommendations to enhance the digital learning experience for young learners. As the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of remote and online education, digital agencies professionals play a vital role in supporting VET institutions in effectively engaging young people through digital platforms. These guidelines recognise the importance of ethical practices, health and well-being considerations, and emerging engagement strategies in the digital learning environment. By incorporating these guidelines, digital agencies professionals can contribute to the creation of engaging, inclusive, and learner-centric experiences that promote positive behaviors and optimise learning outcomes. The project STAY+ aims to facilitate a collaborative approach between digital agencies professionals, VET institutions, educators, and young learners, ensuring the guidelines' relevance and applicability in the ever-evolving landscape of distance learning.

#### 3.1 Cooperation framework

The cooperation framework guidelines suggested by STAY+ for digital agencies professionals and organisations working with VET on distance learning engaging young people through digital platforms include the key features outlined next.

**Clear objectives and purpose** e.g., outline the objectives and purpose of the cooperation framework, which could be to enhance the quality of vocational education and training through distance learning and digital platforms, with a specific focus on engaging young people effectively.

**Collaboration and Partnership** as such e.g., emphasise the importance of collaboration and partnership between digital agencies, professionals, and vocational education and training organisations. It should encourage joint efforts and shared responsibilities to achieve common goals.



**Roles and responsibilities** e.g., clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each party involved in the cooperation framework. This includes the responsibilities of digital agencies in providing technological expertise and support, as well as the responsibilities of vocational education and training organisations in delivering content and ensuring effective learning outcomes.

**Quality assurance** e.g., establish quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that the digital platforms and distance learning programmes meet high standards. This may involve regular monitoring, evaluation, and feedback mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of the programmes and make necessary improvements.

**Pedagogical guidelines** e.g., provide pedagogical guidelines for designing and delivering effective distance learning programmes. This should include strategies for engaging young people, promoting interactive and collaborative learning, and adapting content to suit the digital medium.

**Accessibility and inclusivity** e.g., emphasise the importance of accessibility and inclusivity in the design and delivery of distance learning programmes. The guidelines should encourage digital agencies and organisations to make their platforms and content accessible to learners with disabilities and ensure equal opportunities for all young people.

**Data protection and privacy** e.g., address data protection and privacy concerns related to the use of digital platforms and learner data. The guidelines should emphasise the need to comply with relevant data protection regulations and ensure the security of personal information.

**Professional development** e.g., highlight the significance of continuous professional development for digital agencies professionals and vocational education and training staff. The guidelines should encourage both parties to invest in training and upskilling to enhance their expertise in digital education and distance learning methodologies.

**Communication and feedback** e.g., promote effective communication channels and feedback loops between digital agencies, professionals, and vocational education and training organisations. This enables regular exchange of information, sharing of best practices, and addressing any issues or challenges that may arise during the cooperation.

**Continuous improvement** e.g., encourage a culture of continuous improvement by fostering a learning-oriented environment. The guidelines should stress the importance of incorporating feedback, monitoring outcomes, and making iterative improvements to enhance the overall quality of the programmes.

It's important to note that these features are general suggestions, and the specific guidelines may vary depending on the context and requirements of the cooperation framework.

### 3.2 Securing inclusion

When it comes to securing inclusion in development between digital agencies, professionals, and organisations working with VET about distance learning and engaging young people through digital platforms, the key features that must be considered are outlined next.

**Accessibility** e.g., emphasise the importance of making digital platforms and content accessible to all learners, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. This includes considerations for screen readers, captioning, colour contrast, and other accessibility features.

**User-friendly interface** e.g., highlight the significance of designing user-friendly interfaces that are intuitive and easy to navigate. This includes clear menu structures, logical organisation of content, and the use of simple language.



**Pedagogical considerations** e.g., address the pedagogical aspects of distance learning and digital engagement. They should encourage the use of interactive and engaging instructional methods, such as multimedia content, gamification, simulations, and collaborative learning activities.

**Data privacy and security** e.g., with the increasing use of digital platforms, it is crucial to prioritise data privacy and security. The guidelines should outline best practices for handling personal information, securing online communication, and complying with relevant data protection regulations.

**Technical requirements** e.g., ensure smooth learning experiences, the guidelines should provide recommendations for the technical requirements of digital platforms. This may include guidelines for internet connectivity, device compatibility, software specifications, and bandwidth considerations.

**Continuous support and professional development** e.g., highlight the importance of providing ongoing support and professional development opportunities for teachers, trainers, and other professionals involved in distance learning. This includes training on using digital tools effectively, adapting to new technologies, and addressing technical issues.

**Inclusive design and cultural sensitivity** e.g., promote inclusive design principles and cultural sensitivity. They should encourage the creation of content that reflects the diversity of learners, respects different cultural backgrounds, and avoids stereotypes or biases.

**Monitoring and evaluation** e.g., ensure the effectiveness of digital learning initiatives, the guidelines should recommend monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. This may include assessing learner progress, collecting feedback from participants, and continuously improving the digital learning experiences based on data-driven insights.

**Ethical considerations** e.g., address ethical considerations associated with digital learning and engagement. This includes promoting responsible online behavior, preventing cyberbullying, and educating learners about online safety and digital citizenship.

**Collaboration and partnerships** e.g., emphasise the importance of collaboration and partnerships between digital agencies, educational institutions, and other stakeholders. This can facilitate knowledge sharing, resource pooling, and the development of innovative practices in digital vocational education and training.

It's important to note that these features serve as general recommendations and can be further customised based on the specific context and needs of the target audience and the digital agency or organisation involved in vocational education and training.

### 3.3 Healthy environment

Creating a healthy environment in the framework of cooperation of digital agencies, professionals, and organisations working with VET for distance learning and engaging young people through digital platforms, the project STAY+ identifies the key features outlined next.

**Safe and secure digital infrastructure** e.g., ensure that the digital platforms and infrastructure used for distance learning are secure, reliable, and protected against cyber threats. Implement measures such as encryption, secure authentication, and regular system updates to safeguard the privacy and data of users.

**User privacy and data protection** e.g., emphasise the importance of respecting user privacy and complying with data protection regulations. Educate professionals and organisations on the responsible collection, storage, and use of personal data, ensuring that consent is obtained when required and that data is handled securely.



**Age-appropriate content** e.g., encourage the development and use of age-appropriate content in line with the target audience's needs and maturity levels. Ensure that the content provided through digital platforms is relevant, accurate, and suitable for the vocational education and training goals, avoiding any harmful or inappropriate material.

**Digital well-being and mental health** e.g., promote the well-being and mental health of young learners by addressing the potential challenges associated with extensive digital engagement. Raise awareness about maintaining a healthy balance between online and offline activities, promoting regular breaks, physical exercise, and stress management techniques.

**Accessibility and inclusion** e.g., ensure that digital platforms and content are accessible to all learners, including those with disabilities or diverse learning needs. Implement accessibility features such as captions, transcripts, and alternative formats to accommodate different learning styles and abilities.

**Technical support and training** e.g., provide comprehensive technical support and training to professionals and learners to enhance their digital literacy and proficiency. Offer resources, tutorials, and troubleshooting guidance to address any technical challenges that may arise during distance learning.

**Continuous evaluation and improvement** e.g., regularly assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the digital platforms, content, and methodologies used in vocational education and training. Gather feedback from professionals, learners, and stakeholders to identify areas for improvement and make necessary adjustments to enhance the learning experience.

**Collaboration and engagement** e.g., encourage collaboration, interaction, and engagement among learners through digital platforms. Promote group activities, discussions, and project-based learning to foster a sense of community and enable peer-to-peer learning opportunities.

**Ethical use of technology** e.g., promote the ethical use of technology by professionals and learners. Discuss topics such as digital rights, responsible digital marketing, copyright and intellectual property, and avoiding plagiarism to ensure that everyone understands and adheres to ethical guidelines.

These key features focus on creating a healthy and conducive environment for distance learning through digital platforms, ensuring the well-being, privacy, and educational needs of young learners are met while promoting responsible and ethical digital practices.

### 32.4 Implementing projects

The project-based method suggested by the project STAY+ for digital agencies professionals and organisations working with VET about distance learning, engaging young people through digital platforms, includes the key features outlined next.

**Goal-oriented approach** e.g., the project-based method should be driven by clear and measurable goals. It should focus on achieving specific learning outcomes and objectives related to vocational education and training.

**Collaborative learning** e.g., the method should promote collaboration and teamwork among young learners. It should encourage them to work together on projects, fostering peer-to-peer learning and the development of interpersonal skills.

**Authentic projects** e.g., projects should be designed to simulate real-world scenarios and challenges relevant to the vocational field. This helps young learners apply their skills and knowledge in practical contexts, making the learning experience more engaging and meaningful.



**Technology integration** e.g., given the emphasis on digital platforms, the method should leverage technology to facilitate project-based learning. This includes using online collaboration tools, virtual environments, multimedia resources, and other digital tools to enhance the learning process.

**Flexibility and personalisation** e.g., the method should allow for flexibility in project design, enabling learners to pursue their interests and strengths. It should also provide opportunities for learners to personalise their projects and make choices that align with their career aspirations.

**Continuous assessment** e.g., regular assessment and feedback should be integrated into the project-based method. This helps learners monitor their progress, identify areas for improvement, and receive timely guidance from instructors or mentors.

**Reflective practice** e.g., the method should encourage young learners to reflect on their project experiences, both individually and collaboratively. Reflection fosters critical thinking, self-awareness, and metacognitive skills, enabling learners to extract deeper insights from their project work.

**Mentoring and guidance** e.g., the method should incorporate mentorship or guidance from experienced professionals in the vocational field. Mentors can provide expertise, support, and industry insights to young learners, enhancing their learning journey.

**Showcase and celebration** e.g., the completion of projects should be celebrated and shared with relevant stakeholders. This can be done through presentations, exhibitions, or online showcases, providing an opportunity for learners to demonstrate their skills and achievements.

**Continuous improvement** e.g., the project-based method should be a dynamic process that allows for continuous improvement. Feedback from learners, instructors, and stakeholders should be collected and used to refine the method, ensuring its relevance and effectiveness over time.

By incorporating these key features, the project-based method can create a stimulating and effective learning environment for young people in vocational education and training, leveraging the potential of digital platforms and distance learning.