



## Introduction

What do we mean by 'digital literacies'? This hand-out presents several ways of thinking about and raising awareness of digital literacies, for example as learner capabilities, and as different contexts for action.

### 1. Definitions

The term 'digital literacy' has come into regular use over the past few years but people in different roles, and at different institutions, will understand the term differently. If you feel it is important to arrive at a shared understanding, you could ask people you are working with to consider a well-established definition such as the one used by the European Commission:

*Digital literacy is defined as the confident and critical use of ICT for work, leisure, learning and communication.*

If your aim is achieving change in your institution or curriculum, and to broaden the agenda from ICT skills only, you may decide to sidestep the issue of definition by using terms that have more currency or acceptance in your context, such as:

graduate attributes	)	(	a digital economy/society
academic practice	)	for (	the digital age
higher skills	)	(	the 21 <sup>st</sup> century
learning literacies	)	(	the information and communication age

etc.

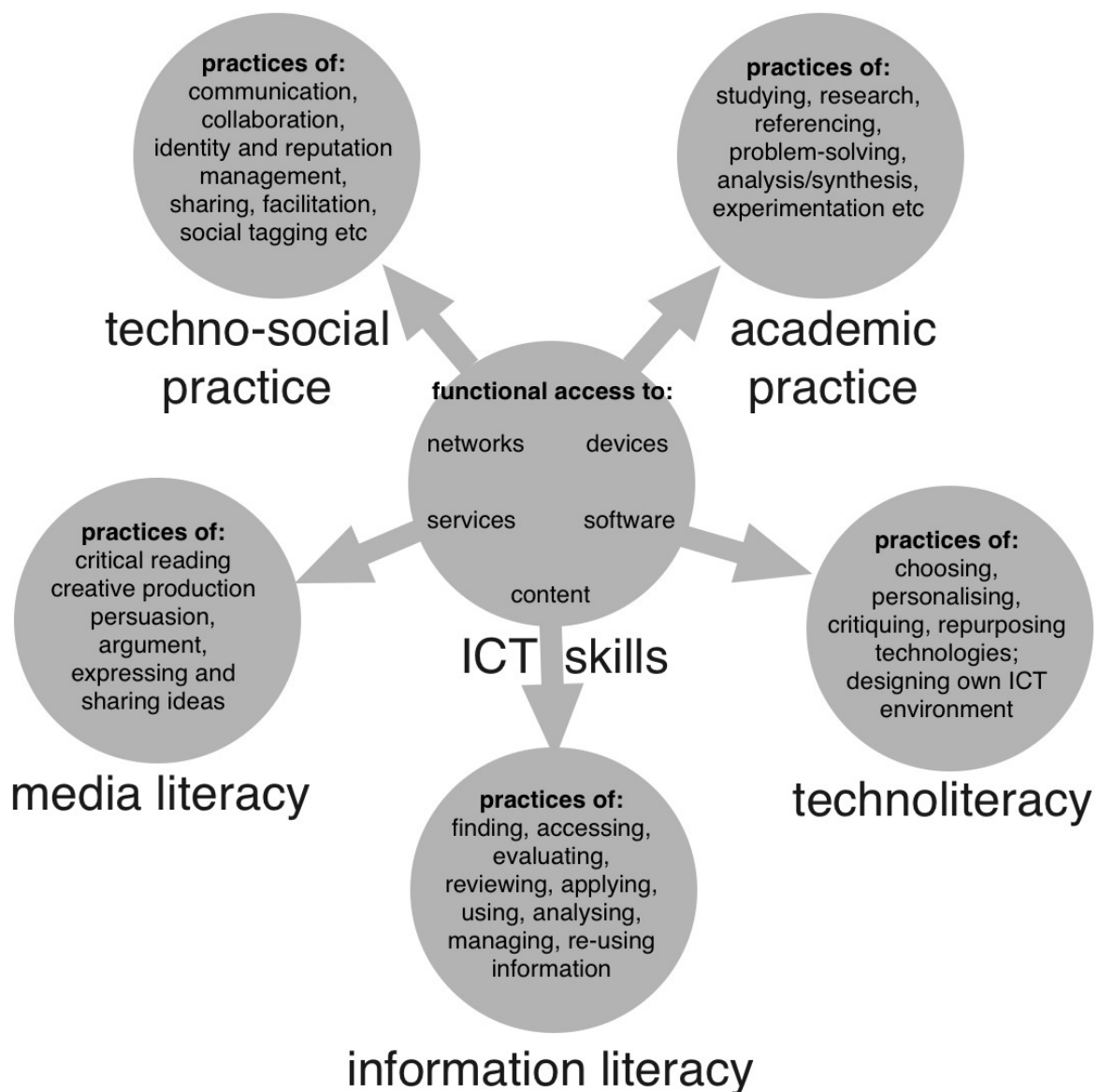
It can also be helpful to situate digital literacy as a term in relation to other agendas. The following two pages show how digital literacies can be situated, first in relation to the different capabilities of learners that are typically being developed, and second in relation to the different contexts in which those capabilities might be expressed.

How would you define digital literacies in your context, in the best way to develop consensus and create opportunities for positive change?

## 2. Digital literacy as a range of capabilities

This model shows how ICT skills can be relevant to a range of different capabilities – termed literacies or practices to show that they are complex, developed over time, and situated in particular contexts of action. The *digital literacy pyramid* has functional access and basic ICT skills as the foundation of development (here at the centre of the model), with practices being built on this foundation. The model shown here can be used to illustrate how digital literacy encompasses all these different components, and is itself dependent on functional access to digital technologies and networks.

There are competence frameworks associated with several of these areas of capability: see <http://caledonianacademy.net/spaces/LLiDA/index.php?n=Main.RelevantFrameworks> for details.



### 3. Digital literacy as contexts for action

This model shows how digital capability (the previous model compressed into the central circle of the diagram) can be expressed in a range of different contexts. Applications of digital capability to learning may seem most relevant to further and higher education, and this should certainly be a central concern of any digital literacy intervention, i.e. creating effective learners who can use digital opportunities. On the other hand, the goal of tertiary education is also to fit people for these other contexts. The model shown here can be used to illustrate how digital skills, practices and capabilities impact on many areas of learners' lives. Care should be taken, however, not to assume that skills and capabilities developed in one area can easily be transferred to another.

