XL Vision: Excelia's innovative and holistic digital transformation plan

The digital revolution is well underway in higher education and Excelia's pioneering digital transformation plan is the perfect example of this. Entitled XL Vision, Excelia's holistic, multi-campus plan aims to reinvent our educational approach through innovative and immersive teaching methods and to improve the overall experience of all our group's stakeholders. Aligned with Excelia's core values, and included in its 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, this 5-year digital transformation plan is based on a comprehensive range of innovative pedagogical and organisational initiatives that are unprecedented in the realm of higher education in France. A total budget of €5.6 million has been allocated for its implementation.

DRIVING TRANSFORMATION TO BUILD A NEW MODEL FOR LEARNING

A comprehensive range of innovations to shape the future of education

Excelia's digital transformation plan sets the stage for the future of education and how educational institutions of tomorrow will be structured. It responds to the threefold desire to rethink learning methods, to extend the mission of education beyond the mere transmission of knowledge, and to allow for instability in pedagogy by remaining agile. Transforming the school, rethinking its mission and investing in pedagogical innovation, research, and in smart, connected campuses that are accessible to civil society... this is the main purpose of the digital transformation plan. It constitutes a veritable break with convention, paving the way for an innovative business model that encourages responsible development and creates value for all of the group's stakeholders (learners, partners, personnel, companies, and local regions). This complete overhaul will enable Excelia to develop an educational model that favours the modularisation and personalisation of study paths. With a strong desire to push the boundaries, Excelia has launched an extensive programme of innovations called XL Vision.

4 pillars to drive an ambitious digital transformation

Entitled XL Vision, Excelia's digital transformation plan will enable the group to successfully transform its activities whilst tackling the challenge of digital sobriety. The plan's ambitious objectives are reflected in its four strategic priorities:

- **Reinventing the experience of learners, teachers and administrators** with new services and forms of collaboration which are people-centric
- **Strengthening a digital culture** with an HR strategy focussing on skills development
- **Developing and nurturing innovative/immersive approaches to teaching** with new pedagogical opportunities for teachers focussing on the needs and the success of learners

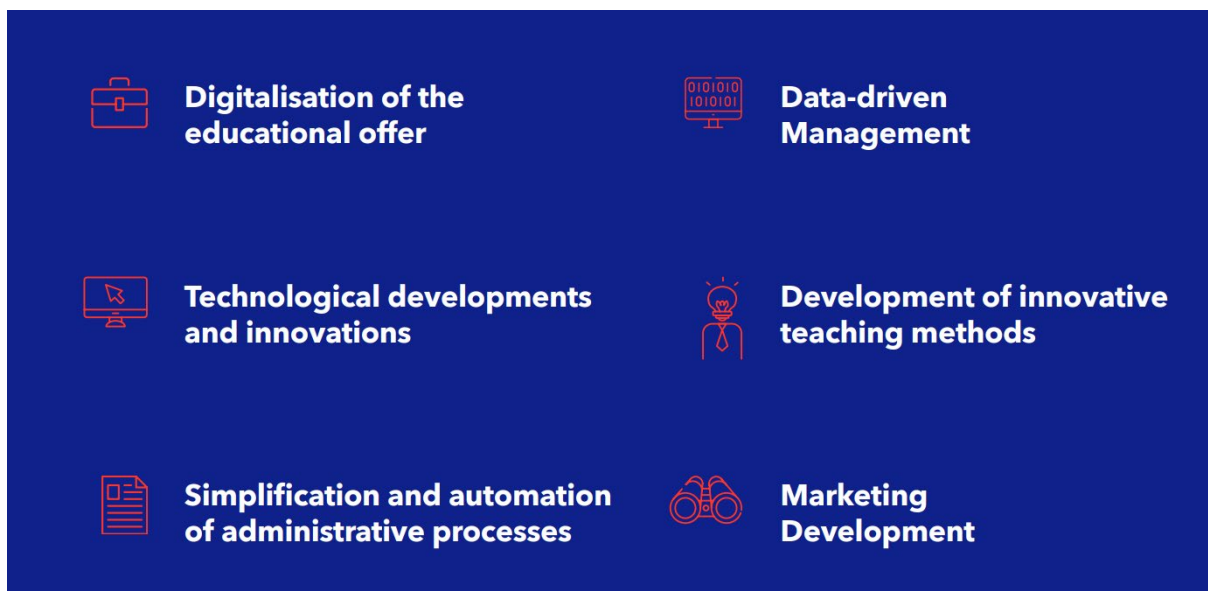- **Deploying state-of-the-art technology** to support Excelia's growth and to ensure continuous improvement

A unique holistic digital transformation plan

XL Vision has been designed as **a holistic plan** to improve the overall experience and meet the needs of all of Excelia's communities:

- **Learners** – by encouraging the development of innovative/immersive teaching methods (XR-eXtended Reality, learning analytics, hybrid and adaptive learning) and preparing them for the careers of the future (AI, Metaverse, Data Science, etc.)
- **Teachers** – by offering them new and immersive teaching methods suitable for new practices
- **Support service personnel** – by training them in the skills required to face the current and future digital transformations within the context of interdisciplinary projects
- **Governance** – by introducing innovative approaches for guiding decision-making, managing, forecasting, organising, and identifying new sources of value creation

A budget of €5.6 million: transformation on an ambitious scale

XL Vision comprises 38 projects that underpin the 6 main themes of Excelia's digital transformation plan:

Digitalisation of the educational offer

Data-driven Management

Technological developments and innovations

Development of innovative teaching methods

Simplification and automation of administrative processes

Marketing Development

AN INNOVATIVE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE TO DELIVER XL VISION

As part of its digital transformation plan, the organisational structure implemented by Excelia reflects the twofold objective of involving all communities in XL Vision and of guaranteeing a return on investment for all.

XXL Digital Transformation Department

XL Vision means rethinking the conventional organisational structure by creating a dedicated dynamic Digital Transformation Department. As the backbone of the transformation plan, it will bring together Excelia's core business (teaching), human resources (adapting the organisation and supporting change) and the traditional IT Department, which has become a one-stop shop for the development of new services across multiple campuses. The IT Department will work closely with two new units based within the Digital Transformation Department:

- **Business Support and Change Management Unit** – to facilitate the implementation of methods and tools, working in close collaboration with the HR and Transformation Department

- **Digital Innovation, EdTech and Experiential Learning Unit** – to manage the digitalisation of teaching in conjunction with the pedagogical engineering team (traditionally affiliated to the Deanship), and to encompass new areas of expertise (Metaverse, Data Science, DevOps, etc.)

HR and Transformation Department: an interface with all Excelia Departments

The human element is central to the success of XL Vision, which is why Excelia's transformation plan is being implemented in close collaboration with the HR and Transformation Department. HR strategy is structured around two main areas: strengthening the digital culture at all levels of the organisation and supporting change. With this in mind, the methods and tools adopted will ensure that the desired benefits are understood, projects are embraced, wellbeing at work is assured, and that the satisfaction of Excelia's communities is guaranteed.

Initiatives include:
- Setting up a 'twin' structure (a duo of project managers - one from the Digital Transformation Department and one from each of Excelia's Departments) to jointly develop digital uses whilst ensuring that business needs are fully considered
- Creating an in-house Change Management Unit
- Developing training initiatives designed to provide new skills for long-term employability, to encourage mobility, and to promote management transformation in line with Excelia's values (Sharing, Humanity, Courage, Responsibility, Commitment)

Working in synergy with the Pedagogical Engineering Team

The digitalisation of the educational offer is at the heart of XL Vision, but pedagogical added value is paramount. The use of innovative technologies is only relevant if it responds to the needs expressed by people and if it enhances their overall experience. This reasoned use of technology is based on successful working relations between the Digital Transformation Department and the Pedagogical Engineering Team. The aim of this permanent collaboration is…
- to combine neuro-education with technology for better knowledge retention and recall
- to jointly develop new educational resources for teachers
- to implement support initiatives for those involved in the pedagogical re-engineering of systems
- to conduct research in order to assess the effectiveness of the innovative learning methods implemented

XL VISION PROJECTS

Excelia Metaverses at the heart of the transformation

Excelia has developed its own collaborative and educational Metaverses. They promote immersive learning experiences that maximise and stimulate cognitive abilities, and contribute to improved knowledge retention. Asynchronous, and free from the constraints of time and space, they reflect Excelia's multi-campus strategy.

ILE, a brand to endorse the impact of immersive experiences

A totally unique initiative in higher education, ILE, or Immersive Learning Experience, is a hallmark of excellence registered by Excelia. The aim is to guarantee the quality of immersive learning experiences, whether on campus or in the metaverse. It is a bold approach to exploring innovative pedagogical opportunities based on neuro-education. The systems developed under the ILE brand will guarantee the impact of immersive learning. Based on the relationship between learning and emotions, the ILE approach avoids the pitfall of neuromyths, which are misconceptions about how the human brain works.

XL Factory, a key tool for managing transformation

XL Factory is a physical space open to all (learners, teachers, personnel). Unlike conventional learning laboratories, which are a place for experimentation, XL Factory is a space where innovative learning experiences can be transformed, jointly created, tested, and shared.

It comprises 4 main dimensions:

- Think - Collective Intelligence
- Create - Micro-learning Studio
- Explore - Captivating Learning
- Lab - Learning Innovation

This important initiative injects transformation into the organisational structure so as to ensure it filters through to the classroom.

With the same aim of overcoming the constraints of time and space, XL Factory has its own digital twin: a synchronous Excelia Metaverse, a tool for collaboration and experimentation perfectly aligned with Excelia's multi-campus structure.

Learning Experience Platform

Focussing on learners' progress, the Learning Experience Platform (LXP) is a unique gateway for the implementation of…

- an e-learning platform with micro-learning modules that meet the growing demand for micro-certifications and skill sets; initial projects include a 'Data Science for Business' skills set that is already operational, and a 'Sustainable Development and Corporate Social Responsibility' skills set that is currently being developed
- adaptive learning (ultra-personalisation of education, micro-learning, etc.)
- enhanced social experience

Digital Workplace, the central digital workspace

Designed as a collaborative environment, the Digital Workplace is a resource centre and a central information gateway for all of the institution's communities (students, professors, support services). This Digital Workplace also aims to simplify the online application process for candidates by offering an omnichannel and multi-device experience.

DataLab, a catalyst for continuous improvement

The purpose of DataLab is to facilitate the use of Big Data for the benefit of learners, and to manage the data held in different places (student services, Digital Workplace, educational resources, CRM, etc.) that is required by the various Excelia departments and services (accreditations, teaching departments, finance, learning analytics, organisational processes, marketing, etc.). This interdisciplinary DataLab enables all this data to be cross-referenced and analysed, with the support of data science skills and new professions (Data Scientist, Data Engineer, Data Architect, etc.). This progressive approach, based on data maturity, makes it possible to identify areas for improvement (processes, learning experience, etc.) and value creation. It responds to the major challenge of analytics, seldom addressed in higher education and research, which is a source of continuous improvement and a new model for growth.

Excelia Digital School's training courses and programmes

As of the 2022-2023 academic year, Excelia will start to offer its first training courses in the field of immersive technologies with the aim of eventually launching a Bachelor programme in 'Virtual Reality and Metaverse' at Excelia Digital School.

The timeline is as follows:

- 2022-2023 – Workshops and Masterclasses on immersive technologies (Virtual Reality, Metaverse, etc.) to be offered as part of Bachelor and MSc programmes
- 2023-2024 – Virtual Reality and Metaverse modules and specialisation
- September 2024 – Launch of the first Bachelor programme in 'Virtual Reality and Metaverse'

"The digital transformation of our institutions is an absolute necessity if they are to remain relevant for students' education and for society. The result of a joint initiative involving all of the institution's communities, XL Vision constitutes a radical departure from the teaching model currently used in schools. It focusses, in particular, on the potential for transformation brought about by digital technologies, and addresses the changing needs of companies, and the expectations of the generation of so-called 'digital natives'. XL Vision represents a veritable break from convention which Excelia is implementing by focussing on social and societal issues, and by pursuing its commitment to education and research in its core areas of expertise: the environment and CSR, health, tourism and digital technology. This is a first in French higher education and I am very proud that Excelia is driving this pioneering approach."
Bruno Neil, CEO, Excelia

About Excelia
Created in 1988, Excelia is one of the leading French Higher Education groups, located in La Rochelle, Tours and Orleans. With a strong presence in its local regions, and an international outlook, it comprises 5 Schools: Excelia Business School, Excelia Tourism School, Excelia Digital School, Excelia Academy, Excelia Executive Education. It currently educates some 5,000 students and boasts an alumni network of 40,000 members. It holds the following labels and accreditations: EESPIG, AACSB, EQUIS, AMBA and EFMD, as well as UNWTO.TedQual (United Nations) in the field of tourism.

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