



Job title	Director of Digital Partnerships	Job family and level	Administrative, Professional and Managerial Level 7
School / Department	Digital & Technology Services	Location	University of Nottingham Campuses

Purpose of role

The Digital and Technology Services (DTS) department is the central IT provider for the University of Nottingham, serving a global, digital community of over 46,000 students and 8,000 staff across the university's UK, China and Malaysia campuses.

Digital and Technology Services is led by a Chief Digital and Information Officer (CDIO), who is supported by a Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and a department of approximately 280 FTE responsible for ensuring the university's digital services are fit for purpose, enabling the university's strategy through the delivery of world-class digital products and services to students, staff and visitors.

The **Director of Digital Partnerships** is a senior strategic leadership role reporting directly to the CDIO, providing leadership capability across a combination of capabilities as follows:

- **Ecosystem Strategy & Scouting:** Proactively identifying and assessing emerging technology trends and innovative SME capabilities to solve complex problems and create a competitive edge
- **Partnership Orchestration:** Cultivating and nurturing a diverse network of external technology partners and startups, creating a "plug-and-play" capability that enhances the University's digital maturity
- **Innovation & Value Realization:** Establishing collaborative engagement models—such as sandboxes and pilot frameworks—that allow the University to experiment rapidly and integrate high-value external innovation into our digital estate

Role Description

The **Director of Digital Partnerships** is accountable for the university's external technology ecosystem, ensuring that strategic partnerships and emerging digital capabilities deliver sustained, innovative value to support the University's strategic goals.

Operating with delegated authority from the CDIO, the role acts as the university's "front door" for external technology innovation. The role integrates ecosystem strategy with execution, ensuring that external technology decisions are consistent with the university's digital strategy and accountability framework. While the role does not manage core infrastructure operations, it maintains strong line of sight into the university's strategic pain points, ensuring that external partnerships are realistic, executable, and reinforced through agile governance, performance management, and effective knowledge transfer.

	Main responsibilities (PPrimary accountabilities and responsibilities expected to fulfil the role)	%
1	Ecosystem Strategy & Horizon Scanning - Lead the strategic scouting of the global digital landscape to identify emerging technologies, high-growth SMEs, and innovative startups that align with the university's long-term digital ambitions - Translate complex market intelligence into actionable partnership roadmaps, identifying where "buy vs. build vs. partner" is the optimal strategic path for the university - Maintain a multi-year blueprint of the university's technology ecosystem, ensuring that the partnership portfolio addresses current pain points while preparing for future institutional needs	40%
2	Partnership Orchestration & Engagement - Act as the university's primary "front door" for external technology innovation, cultivating a diverse, vibrant network of digital partners - Design and implement agile, lightweight partnership frameworks that enable rapid experimentation and pilot testing, bypassing the friction of traditional enterprise procurement for non-core capabilities - Collaborate with DTS technical leads to ensure that external partner solutions are architecturally compatible and seamlessly integrated into the university's digital estate	30%
3	Innovation Governance & Value Realisation - Establish a "sandbox" or innovation lab environment, providing a safe, governed space to trial SME technologies and validate use cases before full-scale deployment - Monitor the health and impact of the partnership ecosystem, ensuring that pilot projects evolve into sustained, value-adding institutional capabilities - Liaise across academic and professional departments to connect the technology ecosystem with research and teaching needs, fostering interdisciplinary digital innovation	20%
	Strategic Representation & Capability Building - Represent the university at innovation hubs, tech forums, and industry events to build the university's reputation as a "partner of choice" in the digital innovation space - Mentor internal DTS teams on the dynamics of agile partnership management, shifting the departmental mindset from "supplier oversight" to "ecosystem orchestration"	10%

Person specification

	Essential	Desirable
Skills	• Ecosystem Orchestration: Ability to manage a complex, multi-partner network, aligning disparate external capabilities with internal institutional goals • Strategic Scouting: Strong aptitude for horizon scanning; ability to distinguish between "market hype" and technologies with long-term strategic viability • Translational Leadership: Exceptional ability to communicate complex digital concepts between high-growth tech founders/startups and academic/governance stakeholders • Influencing Without Authority: Proven success in navigating complex, matrixed organizations to drive adoption of new partnership models • Agile Engagement: Ability to design "lightweight" collaboration frameworks that prioritize speed and experimentation over heavy-handed procurement • Commercial Acumen: Understanding of startup/SME business models, equity/IP implications, and innovative deal structures • Pragmatic Governance: Ability to apply "light-touch" oversight that balances institutional risk with the need for agile innovation	• Sandboxing Expertise: Direct experience in establishing innovation labs or "sandbox" environments for rapid pilot testing • Technical Fluency: Ability to quickly grasp the technical requirements of an external service to assess its integration viability with the university's architecture • Network Building: A pre-existing network within the UK/Global innovation, accelerator, and venture capital ecosystem
Knowledge and experience	• Innovation Strategy: Deep understanding of "Open Innovation" principles and the lifecycle of technology-led partnerships, from scouting to pilot to institutional scale • Ecosystem Orchestration: Demonstrable track record of scouting, vetting, and successfully integrating external digital capabilities—specifically high-growth SMEs and startups—into a large-scale enterprise environment • Strategic Representation: Proven experience acting as an organizational "front door" for external technology innovation, including representing the institution at industry forums and innovation hubs	• Higher Education Sector: Direct experience working within the unique nuances of a research-intensive, highly autonomous academic environment • Innovative Deal-Making: Proven track record in negotiating non-traditional partnership agreements (e.g., co-development, strategic alliances, or pilot-to-scale contracts)

	• Change Agency: Significant experience in mentoring internal teams to shift from "traditional supplier oversight" to "ecosystem orchestration" and agile partnership management • Risk & Governance: Experience navigating the tension between enterprise-grade security/compliance requirements and the agile, often less mature processes of high-growth tech partners • Cross-Sector Liaison: Proven ability to connect external technology capability with internal research, academic, and professional department needs	• Global Perspective: Understanding of the regulatory, legal, and cultural considerations of digital partnerships across international jurisdictions (e.g., UK, China, and Malaysia) • Sandboxing/Lab Models: Experience designing and running "Innovation Labs" or "Sandboxes" to validate emerging technology use cases in a safe, governed space
Qualifications, certification and training (relevant to role)	▪ Educated to degree / masters level in relevant or related field <i>and/or</i> ▪ Proven track record of relevant work experience working in IT and business/industry in a CTO, Chief Architect or similar leadership role	▪ MBA or equivalent qualification ▪ Relevant professional certifications (e.g., Strategic Alliances, Agile Project Management, Lean Startup, or Innovation Management)



Expectations and behaviours

The University has developed a clear set of core expectations and behaviours that our people should be demonstrating in their work, and as ambassadors of the University's strategy, vision and values. The following are essential to the role:

Valuing people

Role models the highest ethical standards to cultivate a collaborative workplace that develops talent and enhances wellbeing, whilst also balancing the needs of the various stakeholders.

Taking ownership

Translates the vision into a strategy for own area, enabling people to take the right action for the wider organisation. Can resolve complex problems, balancing the needs of varied stakeholders.

Forward thinking

Always has the overall strategic goal in mind, manages to stimulate agile and forward thinking in others, motivating them and giving them the confidence to drive for continuous improvement.

Professional pride

Goal is to be best in class; ensuring this can be achieved in line with long term strategy regardless of short term challenges. Supports people to do what is best for both the organisation and the department.

Always inclusive

Promotes how collaboration and positive partnerships are essential to success, constantly looking ahead to explore how to involve other potential stakeholders.

Key relationships with others

