



# Application booklet



# The NHS Digital Academy

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## → Nurturing the next generation of digital leaders in the NHS

The NHS Digital Academy aims to develop a new generation of digital changemakers who will drive information and technology transformation in the NHS. It develops strong digital leaders who are capable of delivering change so that patient care and the way their organisations operate, can benefit from the opportunities and innovations the evolving technology landscape has to offer.

The Digital Academy provides the first national learning programme in change management, leadership and clinical informatics, resulting in a Postgraduate Diploma in Digital Health Leadership awarded by Imperial College London. It is aimed at CXOs (e.g. CIO, CNIO, CCIOs) and their deputies, and other senior digital change leaders who are operating within a context, and are in a role where they are required to drive and implement practical digital transformational change. Applicants to the Cohort 4 intake need to be working in an NHS, public health, or social care role.

This agenda remains of high importance for the ambitions of [Health Education England's Digital Readiness Programme](#), building on the recommendations of the [Wachter Review](#) and also [the Topol Review](#), recently reaffirmed through the Covid pandemic to support delivery of the [NHS Long Term Plan](#).

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## → An investment in digital health leadership

The NHS Digital Academy was set up in response to the findings of Professor Robert Wachter's review into how the English health and care system should best approach the implementation of information technology. The report, [Making IT Work](#), made recommendations outlining a need to develop and invest in the capability and capacity of digital change leaders who can drive forward the transformation agenda enabled by informatics and technology.

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## → NHS experience meets academic rigour

The Digital Health Leadership post-graduate diploma is the flagship programme of the NHS Digital Academy. It combines practical NHS expertise with academic rigour to deliver a unique and ambitious learning experience. The programme is designed and delivered by Imperial College London's Institute of Global Health Innovation and the Usher Institute at the University of Edinburgh, in partnership with Health Data Research UK and Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust. Our consortium unites NHS experts with world-class clinicians, researchers, and digital specialists, with unrivalled expertise in blended learning, health informatics and data science, leadership development and healthcare transformation.



# Postgraduate Diploma in Digital Health Leadership

## → A programme for aspirational digital health leaders

The year-long programme that is set to commence in September 2021, results in the attainment of a Postgraduate Diploma in Digital Health Leadership, awarded by Imperial College London.

The programme employs a blended learning approach that includes online modules, live sessions, and experiential learning. The online component of the programme will be highly engaging for participants, both supporting individual learning and creating a vibrant community of digital leaders. The programme expects and supports participants to apply learning to their professional practice, benefitting their organisation. It will impart tools and frameworks applicable to technology and change management in the workplace. A reflective practice will support leadership development throughout the year.

Experiential learning will be delivered in real-time learning sessions that span 2-3 days at a time. In 2021, the sessions will be held virtually. In 2022, we hope that the emerging landscape will allow us to bring participants together. These real-time experiential sessions offer participants an immersive learning environment to nurture communities of practice. Therefore, real-time participation is expected in these sessions.

## → Core learning modules

The NHS Digital Academy programme encompasses 6 modules:

1. **Essentials of health systems**
2. **Implementing transformational change**
3. **Health information systems and technologies**
4. **User-centred design and citizen-driven informatics**
5. **Decision support, knowledge management and actionable data analytics**
6. **Leadership and transformational change**

## → Programme leadership team



Professor Ara Darzi  
Co-Director



Professor Aziz Sheikh  
Co-Director



Rachel Dunscombe  
CEO

## MODULE 1

Essentials of health systems

**Module dates:**  
23 Sept – 10 Nov 2021  
**Journal assessment due:**  
13 Oct 2021  
**Final assessment due:**  
10 Nov 2021

## MODULE 2

Implementing strategy and transformational change

**Module dates:**  
11 Nov 2021 – 26 Jan 2022  
**Journal assessment due:**  
15 Dec 2021  
**Final assessment due:**  
26 Jan 2022

## MODULE 3

Health information systems and technologies

**Module dates:**  
27 Jan – 11 Apr 2022  
**Journal assessment due:**  
2 Mar 2022  
**Final assessment due:**  
11 Apr 2022

## MODULE 4

User-centred design and citizen-driven informatics

**Module dates:**  
21 Apr – 29 Jun 2022  
**Journal assessment due:**  
25 May 2022  
**Final assessment due:**  
6 Jul 2022

## MODULE 5

Decision support, knowledge management and actionable analytics

**Module dates:**  
7 Jul – 14 Sept 2022  
**Journal assessment due:**  
10 Aug 2022  
**Final assessment due:**  
14 Sept 2022

Digital onboarding  
Aug – Sept 2021

## MODULE 6

Leadership and transformational change

**Residential 1 (virtual):**  
21 - 22 Sept 2021  
**Residential 2 (virtual):**  
7 - 9 Dec 2021  
**Residential 3 (Manchester):**  
26-27 Apr 2022  
**Residential 4 (Durham):**  
12 Jul 2022  
**Journal assessment 1 due:**  
22 Dec 2022  
**Journal assessment 2 due:**  
4 May 2022  
**Final assessment due:**  
22 Jun 2022

Module and assessment dates are estimates, correct at the time of publishing.

# Essentials of health systems

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## → Module overview

This module aims to equip participants with essential knowledge for understanding health systems. It provides a foundation of knowledge for the modules that follow. To achieve this, content is delivered in two parts: part one introduces the essential stakeholders and structures in health systems, and part two introduces key principles for evaluating the impact of process, policy or product changes within a system. Key topics in part one include: 1) the role of information in health systems; 2) the evidence-based rationale for investing in health; and 3) an introduction to recent, influential policy reform. In part two, essential principles for understanding health systems' complexity are introduced. Process mapping is a core discipline introduced here and, by the end of the module, participants will appreciate its importance to quality improvement and system re-design. Content is delivered through short videos from leading academics, which are supplemented with core readings to guide participants through the module.

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## → Module lead



Alexander  
Carter

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# Implementing transformational change

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## → Module overview

As reflected in Module 1, we work in a complex health and social care system; digital leaders require a toolkit to assist them in implementing transformational change. The ability to manage risks and opportunities whilst taking your organisation / locality and senior leaders on this journey is essential for the success of any digital transformation.

In this module, you will gain the skills to develop and implement a digital transformation strategy within your organisation. Drawing on insights from experienced healthcare and informatics faculty, industry leaders, case studies, and from among your peers, you will develop a robust understanding of digital cultures, foundations, and frameworks to craft your own transformational strategy.

This module focuses on human interactions including strategy setting, accountability and risk management, leveraging opportunities, and collaboration with partners. The reference points in this module will form that basis for your approach to continually scanning the environment for opportunities to improve health and social care.

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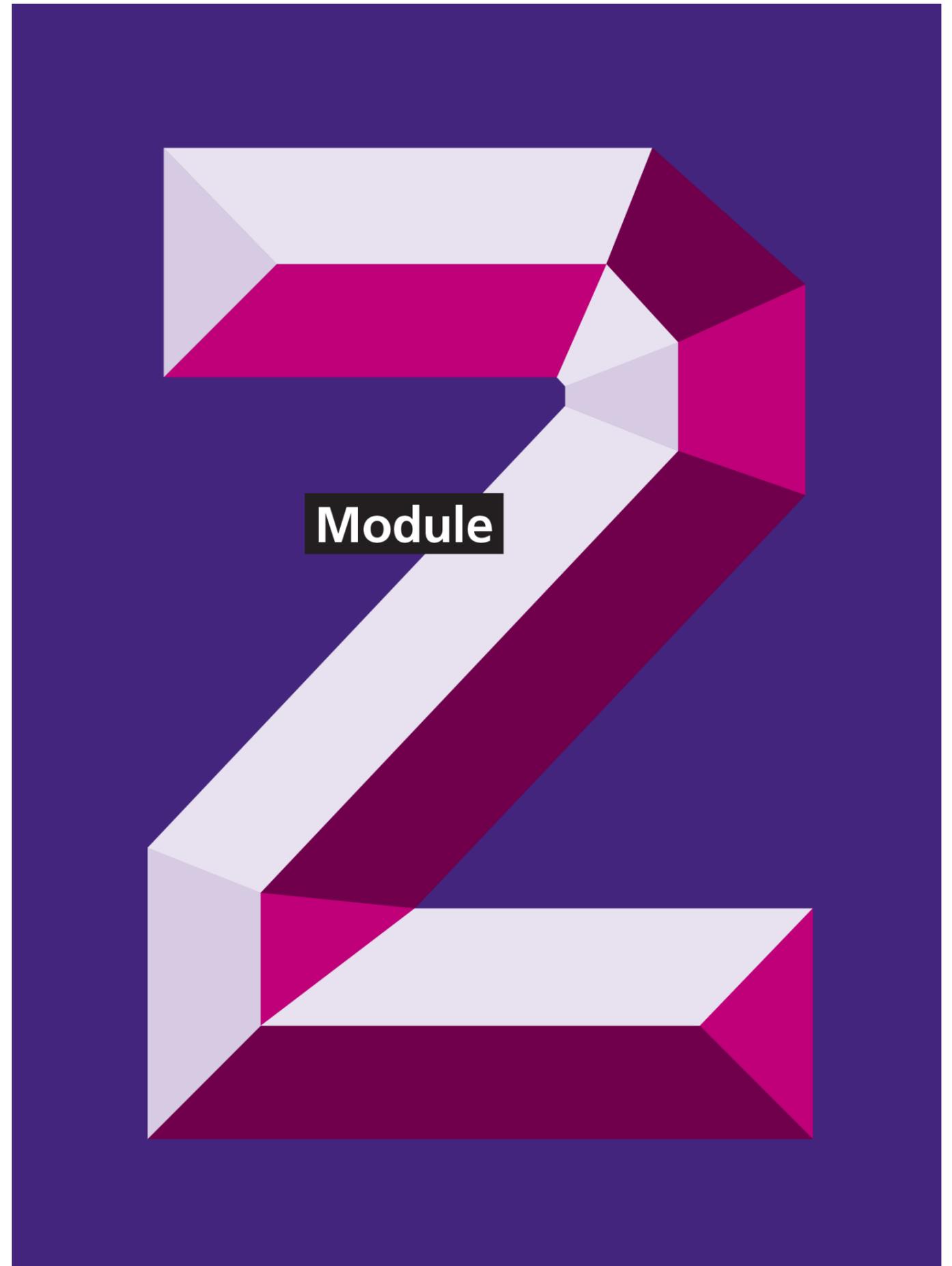
## → Module lead



Rachel  
Dunscombe



Alisdair  
Smithies



# Health information systems & technologies

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## → Module overview

In this module, we will introduce participants to new frameworks for understanding digitally enabled change. The Information Infrastructures perspective helps to understand distinctive features of the contemporary health digitisation landscape. It highlights how simple, stand-alone “discrete” IT applications become knitted together into increasingly complex “systems of systems”. These Health Information Infrastructures emerge and evolve over extended periods of time, never reaching a final state. Major upgrades are extremely expensive, slow, and difficult to implement.

The generic options available within packaged solutions have to be matched against the specific methods and procedures of particular settings and specialties. Benefits evolve only slowly as organisational stakeholders learn to exploit the new functionality. These features call into question many of the recipes you might find in popular change management handbooks or courses. For example, change management guidelines all agree on the importance of engaging the user – but how does this work with a project that takes many years to unfold in which staff who took part in engagement activities at the outset may have moved on by the time the change goes live?

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## → Module leads

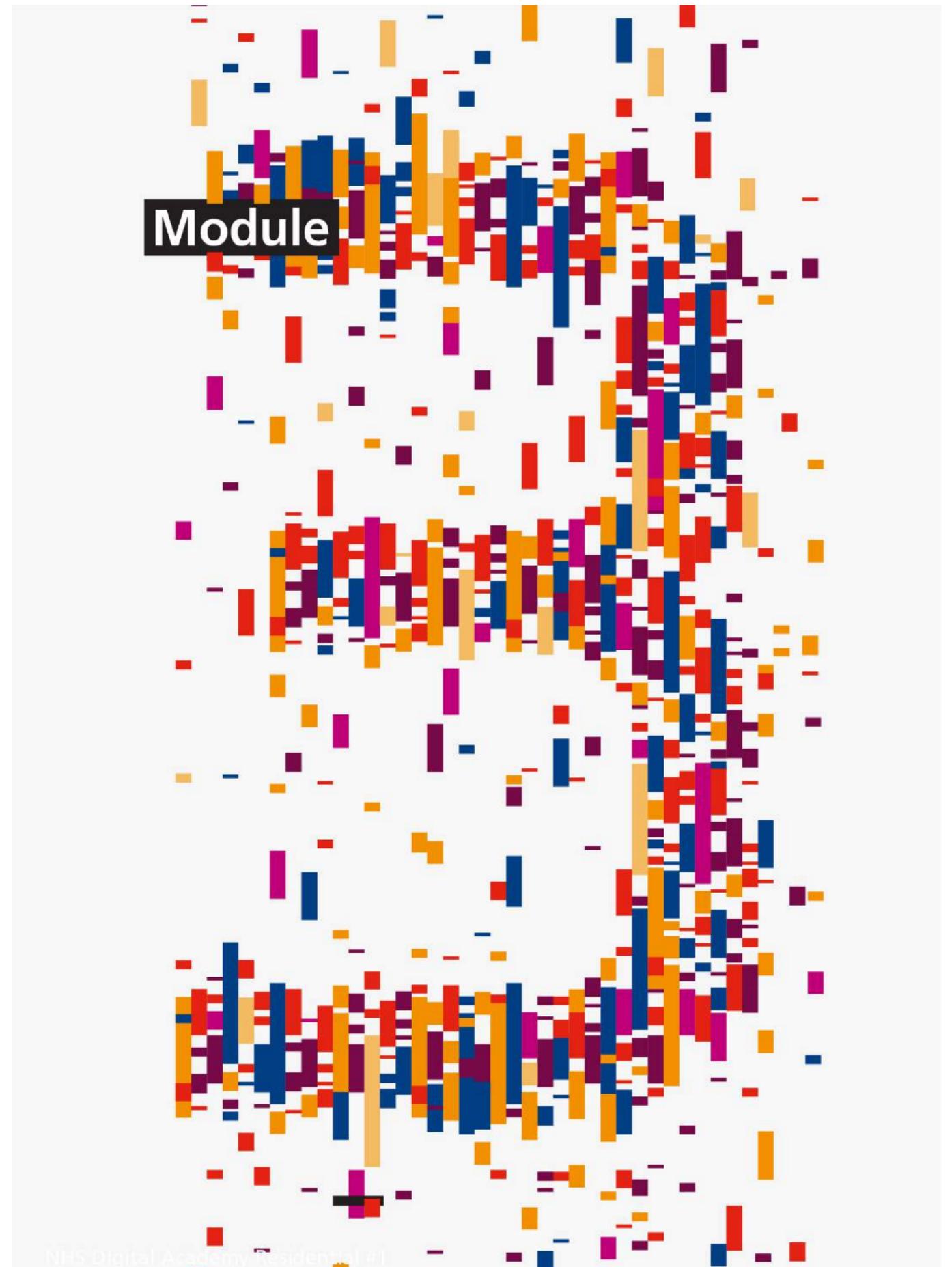


Robin  
Williams



Kathrin  
Cresswell

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# User-centred design & citizen-driven informatics

## → Module overview

Patients are seldom just passive recipients of care; they also play a role in shaping the outcomes of that care, which can be influenced by the quality of their experiences in interacting with health and social care services. While health and social care philosophies and practices are adjusting to and capitalising on this collaboration, the growing digitisation of services presents a dilemma. On the one hand, digital and data innovations bring opportunities for greater engagement and personalised care delivery, whilst on the other, they risk distancing patients from providers and depersonalising the care experience. Bridging this gap requires a sound understanding of users' needs, motivations and behaviours and how to harness them to optimise new and existing services.

Health and social care service users and members of the workforce also have increasing expectations for the accessibility and usability of the digital systems they have to interact with. Effective, responsive health and social care organisations need to consider not only the interoperability of systems and data, but also the smooth and seamless transition of users between digital platforms, information systems and care settings. In addition, direct-to-consumer health technologies are also bringing new opportunities and risks which need to be taken into account.

This module aims to give participants an insight into the latest developments in human-centred design and consumer health informatics, drawing on in-depth case studies and expert interviews, underpinned by relevant theory and literature. In the module, we also reference current affairs in digital health policy, innovation, and practice, as well as relevant ethical and societal issues.

## → Module leads



Claudia  
Pagliari



Lenny  
Naar





# Leadership & transformational change

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## → Module overview

This module runs throughout the academic year, with four experiential learning sessions that are delivered in live virtual or in-person setting. These are called residentials. In order to successfully progress with the programme, we expect full participation in the sessions, whether virtual or face-to-face.

The module is centred around developing communities of practice, alongside with experts and practitioners sharing reflection on leadership challenges and experience with operating in health, policy, and innovation settings. The learning sessions will also offer touchpoints on the encompassing modules, guiding participants to apply theory and principles to transform their professional practice

Participants will gain an appreciation for concepts of leadership theory, and how to lead transformational change in the workplace with the added dimensions of complexity, diversity, and disruption. They will be invited to explore methods to engage stakeholders, advocate for digital innovation, enable collaboration, and hone negotiation skills.

## → Module lead



Alison  
Singleton



# Achieving measurable impact in transformational change

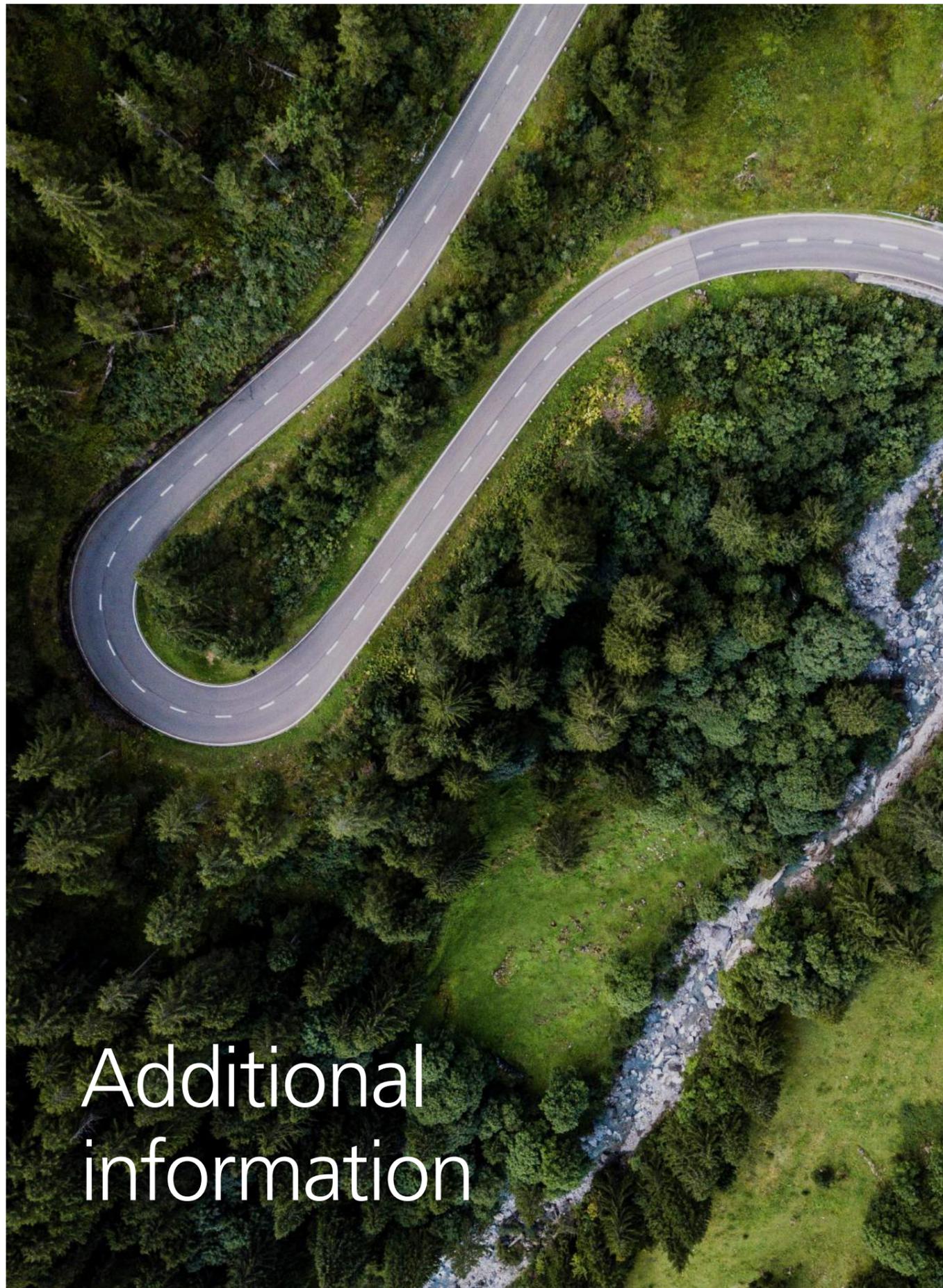
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At the start of the programme, participants will set out their goals for the year ahead in a Personal Development Plan. This will be agreed by an Executive Sponsor, a Board-level stakeholder at their organisation who commits to supporting the participant in their applying learning to the workplace.

The programme is designed to enable participants to apply the skills and knowledge they acquire to their practice in the workplace. They will demonstrate emerging knowledge by applying best-practice models, frameworks and approaches to improve outcomes and add further value to NHS initiatives. Throughout the programme, participants will use a learning journal to reflect on their changing practice, and to capture the impact they bring to their organisation or system. This will help them to work toward their Personal Development Plan, as well as prepare them to implement practical transformational change to the strategic benefit of their organisation.

Participants celebrate the completion of their digital health leadership journey by presenting the highlights of their professional achievements, personal growth, and demonstrating their impact in the workplace.





Additional  
information

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→ What is the time commitment?

Across past cohorts, the recommended study time has been 5-8 hours on average, and up to 10-15 hours per week. This breaks down as approx. 3 hours of engagement with online content, 2 hours of core reading, and additional time to engage with peers. During assessment weeks, these hours will be put towards completing specified assessments.

For Module 6, there are four live experiential learning sessions where we expect full participation in live teaching, whether delivered virtually or in-person.

- **Residential 1: 21-22 Sept 2021**
- **Residential 2: 7-9 Dec 2021**
- **Residentials 3: 26-27 Apr 2022**
- **Residential 4: 12 Jul 2022**

*Note that, individual needs may differ, depending on previous exposure to teaching and learning. Therefore, some participants may need to commit more time to the programme, and undertake additional self-directed study in order to successfully complete the programme and achieve the learning outcomes.*

*Throughout the programme, participants will have access to tutoring support and bespoke pastoral care, along with the extensive learning resources of Imperial College London, and reasonable adjustments provision, should learning differences require or unforeseen circumstances require.*

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→ Who should apply?

Applicants should be employed by NHS, public health, or social care organisation in England. Provision for the nations and the British Isles are currently being explored, and updates will be available on the [NHS Digital Academy website](#).

**The programme is suited to those who are:**

- Applicants will have 3-to-5 years' relevant experience of health informatics or digital health
- They obtain the support of an Executive Sponsor from within their organisation or system
- They are empowered to apply learning, behaviours, and new skills to their organisational setting
- They are able to commit to attending and participating fully at live experiential learning sessions
- They have a demonstrable commitment to embed learning for the strategic benefit of their organisation or system, and to the professionalism of the workforce

With questions about accessibility requirements and reasonable adjustments, please contact Imperial College London's programme delivery team in confidence at [NHSDigitalAcademy@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:NHSDigitalAcademy@imperial.ac.uk)