Wide Angle

Digital Sobriety: An Ingredient for Success in Higher Education?

Digital sobriety now appears as a **necessary shift**, both to **reduce the environmental footprint** of digital technologies and to address **public health issues**. Should sobriety also be considered from the perspective of **student success**?

- ✓ Digital sobriety can help **reduce the harmful impacts** of technologies on the environment, health and learning.

- ✓ Education is a privileged pathway to **develop awareness** of the impacts of digital technology and promote digital sobriety.

- ✓ Higher education institutions can take steps to **initiate the shift** toward digital sobriety.

Who Should We Be Concerned About This?

Digital technology represents 10% of the electricity consumed and 3% to 4% of GHGs worldwide. This footprint is increased tenfold by the growing use of AI.

(OBVIA & al., 2024, p. 33; Leiser, 2024; Massen, 2024.)

The mere fact of having a smartphone on your desk **impairs attention and comprehension, and increases the level of anxiety** of students in class.

1 What is Digital Sobriety?

Sobriety promotes **sustainability**, **slowness**, **community** and **frugality**.

(Szilas, 2024)

"Moving from a use of digital technology that has become **instinctive** to a use of digital technology that is **conscious and thoughtful**."

(Shift Project, 2020, p. 18)

A Few Key Concepts

- Prioritization of uses
- Rebound effect
- Low-tech
- Eco-design

2 Digital Sobriety Practices for Higher Education

- Developing **literacy** in digital sobriety
- Implementing the principles of digital sobriety at **the institutional level** using an action plan
- **Making a concrete commitment** to digital sobriety through policies, financial support or training

In a Nutshell

Taking action for digital sobriety means developing a healthier and more thoughtful relationship with technologies.

Food for Thought

For institution administrations

O How **to equip personnel** for the judicious and critical use of technologies?

O Is enough time taken to **think about the implications** of a new technology before its implementation?

O Does our institution promote the **right to disconnect**?

O How can we question our **relationship of dependence** on technology at an institutional level?

O How can **we change our purchasing processes** and administrative choices?

O At which **levels in the organization** should the principles of digital sobriety be implemented, and what **resources** should be devoted to them?

O How to move from a **strategic vision** to concrete and evaluated commitments?

For teaching staff and those working with the student population

O Are we role **models** for students in terms of digital sobriety?

O What can be **our role** as agents of change in our workplace?

O What attitude can we adopt in the face of the **incessant pace of technological change**?

O How can we help students develop their **critical thinking skills** when faced with technology?

O How can we promote the use of **low-carbon technologies** in our activities?

O Does the use of technology always respect **the pedagogical alignment** of our courses?

Access to full text

Consult the references

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