Digital students are different

“I need high-speed broadband for my digital services - everywhere, and all the time”

Students have a lot to say about their digital environment, if we listen. But behind the headline messages what they want is complex and contradictory. Different learners need different kinds of technology and technical support to succeed. And the same learners want different things at different points in their learning career. What incoming students expect is not always what they end up valuing from their digital experience at college. So we need to respect the differences among groups and between individuals too.

“Sometimes I need to disconnect completely from my social media so I can concentrate.”

“Streaming video for leisure time, but on campus I’m more interested in getting access to course materials.”

“Please help me to understand what the fair use policy means.”

“I’m confused about copyright – what can I download and share?”

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Digital students are different
“I want to be able to use my own device(s) on campus”

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“I may have the latest laptop/tablet/smartphone but I don’t really know how to use it for academic work.”

“But only if I have secure storage, and places I can plug and play.”

“I don’t have a laptop and my phone is rubbish – I still rely on what the institution provides.”

“Who can help me get connected?”

“I prefer working in the computer suite because that’s where the rest of my course group go.”

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“I want access to my social media and I want to use it alongside institutional services”

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“I like to have everything in one place so please send me information on my personal email, mobile phone or social media.”

“It’s helpful to know when I am crossing over into institutional spaces or services, because the rules are different.”

“I expect college to provide me with everything I need to study successfully, including virtual spaces.”

“I like to keep my home and college life apart so please don’t contact me through social media.”

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Digital students are different
“Let me use my own search engines to find my own content”

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“Please tell me which online references will help my grades and which will get me in trouble.”

“So I can’t use Google or Wikipedia? Show me some better strategies then.”

“The library ran some courses about online journals during induction week but we didn’t get to practice in class so I’ve forgotten most of it.”

“I can find better materials online than I get in my lectures - but that’s my secret!”

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Digital students are different

“Lecturers should be able to manage the data projector without embarrassing themselves”

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“I expect my lecturers to be up to speed with the latest technology – they are our role models.”

“I’d rather my lecturers were interesting than they used every tool in the box.”

“I actually quite like it when lecturers ask us for help – we are meant to be the digital natives.”

“Lecturers are all different. So long as they get the point across I don’t mind how they do it.”

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Digital students are different

“I expect the technology I use here to be better than the technology I have at home or in school”

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“In the course my cousin is doing, they use all the latest design software, and I expect the same.”

“In our country we don’t really use computers in school so I didn’t know what to expect.”

“The VLE is a bit clunky - I expected something much more sophisticated.”

“I’m happy with whatever the tutors recommend – they are the experts.”

“I don’t want to give up contact with my tutors for contact with technology, however good it is.”

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Digital students are different

“Learning to use the latest software is something I expect from my course”

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“It’s really frustrating when an assignment is due if there aren’t enough software licences for everyone to get on.”

“I’d like to know more about free and open source equivalents. I can’t afford the software we use in college.”

“Actually I’m not that interested in computers - just tell me what I need to know so I can concentrate on my subject.”

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Digital students are different
“Please don't make IT induction compulsory - everyone knows that stuff these days”

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“I am already working in a foreign language and now I have to work with new computer systems too - I need plenty of time to practice.”

“Don't assume everyone is a digital native - I've hardly used a computer before.”

“At least have basic materials on demand - online guides or videos - so we can go at our own pace.”

“Mostly I pick up IT stuff from friends and online, but I need a drop-in surgery for when things go wrong.”

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Digital students are different

“I want my course to equip me for the job market, and that means digital skills”

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“Digital technologies really aren’t relevant to what I want to do – I’d rather build personal networks.”

“I don’t want sessions on ‘employability’, I want to explore my subject and find out where it can take me.”

“I expect a professional-looking e-portfolio, lots of digital skills, and an excellent Linked-In profile when I leave here.”

“Digital skills should be integrated into everything we do at college – there aren’t any serious careers that don’t need them.”

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Digital students are different

“I expect other students to be up to speed with online systems, otherwise they’ll hold me back when we’re doing group work”

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“I rely on having lecture notes and transcriptions because of my hearing problem, but I’ve found that other students appreciate having them too.”

“There should be a computer test before you come here to check you know the basics, otherwise you’re not really going to benefit are you?”

“I like it that we have a mix of skills in my year group.”

“Other people are always asking me for help because I’m a bit of a geek, but I quite like that.”

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