Student digital experience insights survey 2021/22

UK higher education (HE) survey findings

Jisc data analytics
September 2022
Foreword from Professor Steve West CBE
President of Universities UK

Students want blended learning, but we still have a long way to go

During the pandemic universities and colleges showed resilience in adapting to uncertainties and changing contexts with the expansion of online learning. But this has since sparked debate around the quantity and quality of online learning, which became political when the UK government made clear its expectation that higher education institutions (HEIs) prioritise face-to-face teaching. But what is it that students actually want, and are we listening?

Jisc's annual digital experience insights student survey provides valuable insights to start to unpick these questions: it is one of the largest data sets of the student experience, with more than 33,000 HE students from 41 institutions across the UK taking part in 2021/22.

Almost two years on from the pandemic, the survey shows student support for a combination of online and face-to-face learning. When asked how they would like to be taught, 42% said mainly on site, 45% preferred a mix of on site and online and 13% wanted to be taught mainly online.

The survey suggests that students perceive what is currently on offer is a good standard – 74% rated the quality of online learning on their course as above average. But we must also acknowledge that the definition of ‘good quality’ learning is wide-ranging. There’s no one-size-fits-all answer to the question of what students want, so we must involve students in the design of the educational experience and the technology to support it, embracing continuous co-creation at all levels with students as partners.

Only 37% of students in this year’s survey agreed they were given the chance to be involved in decisions about learning platforms. It needs to be higher.

I recognise we have some way to go as a sector, but as Jisc’s CEO Heidi Fraser-Krauss has advised, universities cannot risk under-investing in technology if they are to deliver a high quality, digitally enhanced blended learning experience.

The sector also needs to deal with the continuing challenges that online study creates for some students: digital and data poverty have been around as long as the internet, but it took a pandemic to highlight the plight of a significant minority of disadvantaged students who don’t have access to the vital basics – suitable devices, a reliable internet connection, a safe and private place to work – and who cannot afford mobile data or broadband costs.

Institutions will need to consider the impact of the growing cost of living crisis in which some students are not able to travel to campus on a daily basis. Technology can only enable students to access their learning, as long as they have the access and devices to do so.

The support universities provide for blended learning could be better; just over a third (35%) of respondents rated the overall support to learn effectively online as average or below.

The findings of Jisc’s digital experience insights survey show that students see real benefits in universities continuing to innovate learning and teaching through online and digital technologies. The task now for the sector is to deliver this in a way that works for students.
Key statistics

The survey was conducted between November 2021 and April 2022 and there were 33,726 participants in the HE survey from 41 different universities and colleges delivering higher education. This represents 11% of all universities and HE institutions in the UK. 29 of these were based in England, five in Wales, five in Scotland and two in Northern Ireland.

The highest number of responses from a single HE organisation was 4,490 students (16% of their total student population) and the overall average response rate was 623 responses per organisation (on average 8% of the total number of students in each organisation that participated).

Gender of participants

- Female: 62%
- Male: 36%
- Other: 2%

Ethnicity of participants

- Other ethnic group: 3%
- Mixed ethnicity: 4%
- Black, African, Caribbean or Black British: 8%
- Asian or Asian British: 27%
- White: 59%

Ages of participants

- 18 or under: 9%
- 19 to 21 years old: 39%
- 22 to 24 years old: 20%
- 25 to 29 years old: 12%
- 30 to 59 years old: 19%
- 60 and over: 1%

Levels of study of participants

- Foundation: 4%
- Undergraduate: 64%
- Postgraduate (taught): 29%
- Other: 3%

International and overseas students

- 28% studying in the UK
- 6% studying in normal country of residence
- 66% UK students
Executive summary

Learning from past experiences to build a stronger future

The time when all learning had to be online has thankfully passed and students are once again able to engage with lecturers and peers face-to-face and to take advantage of campus facilities. The forced requirement for everyone to participate online means that most students have experienced at least some elements of digital learning and are more aware of the potential benefits and pitfalls. Many can now see the valuable role that technology can play in their learning experience and would miss it if it was no longer available.

Returning exclusively to pre-pandemic practices is not an option, but we need to listen to the student voices, acknowledge their experiences, both good and bad, to build a stronger more hybrid future. One that uses technology to provide authentic, flexible and interactive learning opportunities that equip students for their chosen careers.

The devices and supportive features of technologies students had access to

- 93% of students used a laptop to support their learning and 63% used a smartphone. Less than a quarter used tablets or desktop computers
- Very few had access to additional peripheral devices that may have helped them in their learning, particularly for collaborative work and participating online (14% mic or headset, 12% screen, 6% camera or webcam)
- Only 9% of students were either given/loaned devices or received help to buy equipment that would have supported their learning
- Many software tools and apps now include features that previously would have been categorised as ‘assistive’. These days, they are just regarded as features of value to everyone. When asked which of the commonly available features students used we found that just over half (52%) said they didn’t use any of the named features (captions/transcripts, spelling or writing support, screen readers, dictation, screen magnification or alternative ergonomic devices). Nearly a third used captions or transcriptions (29%) and 22% used features that supported spelling or writing
- International students were more likely than others to use features like video captions, transcripts, spelling and writing support

Online environments, tools, apps and communication

- Overall, students were positive about the quality of the online learning environment provided. 77% rated it as above average (best imaginable, excellent or good) and only 6% rated it as below average (poor, awful, worst imaginable)
- Most students (98%) had access to a range of platforms and systems to support their learning, only 2% said they had no access. The most highly cited systems/platforms were live video classes (83%) and virtual learning environments (82%). Far fewer had access to online assessment or testing platforms (58%) or a dashboard to help them track their progress (38%). Less than a third (33%) had access to collaborative applications
- We asked students to tell us the apps they found particularly useful for learning. The top five apps mentioned were virtual learning environments or learning platforms designed to support online learning and communication apps
- When asked what they would like their universities to do, 42% would prioritise upgrading platforms and systems, 29% would choose specialist software relevant to their course, 15% asked for more computing devices and 14% requested more IT support

Technology used in learning

- 74% of students rated the quality of learning on their course as above average (best imaginable, excellent or good) while 7% rated it as below average (poor, awful, worst imaginable)
- Most students (71%) were learning from home, although many also conducted their online learning from student accommodation (34%) or on site study spaces and libraries (27%)
- There were differences between where students were conducting their learning and where they preferred to be taught. Overall, most students (45%) preferred their learning to be delivered using a mixture of on site and online learning although there was a stronger preference for on site learning (42%) than they had actually experienced (28%). Only 13% expressed a preference for mainly online learning yet for 30% of students this had been their main experience throughout the 2021/22 academic year
- 77% of students felt their learning materials were accessible and 62% agreed they were made available in good time
- Student perceptions of how engaging and motivating their learning materials were, were low (43%) and only just over half (54%) said they were at the right level and pace
- Higher percentages of students reported engagement in the more routine or transactional learning activities such as accessing recorded lectures of classes (68%) and taking part in live online lectures or classes (65%). Far fewer students experienced interactive activities such as collaborative tasks (17%) or online discussions (13%) that have greater potential to engage students or that emulate modern workplace practices
- 68% of students agreed that online learning was convenient for them (10% disagreed) and 49% said it allowed them to contribute in ways that they preferred, although 22% disagreed. 48% agreed it enabled them to progress their learning (18% disagreed)
- Only 28% of students agreed that online learning made them feel part of a community (41% disagreed)

Development of digital skills

- Around two-thirds of students (66%) rated the quality of support they received to learn effectively online as above average (best imaginable, excellent or good). 9% rated it as below average (poor, awful, worst imaginable)
- While 50% of students agreed they had received guidance about the digital skills they needed for their course, only 33% had an assessment of their digital skills and training needs
- Over half (57%) of students said they had received support or training to avoid plagiarism. Surprisingly low numbers agreed they had been supported to learn online (44%), develop basic IT skills (30%), use specialist software (28%), track progress and achievements (22%), behave safely and respectfully online (20%), keep personal data secure (19%), analyse data (19%), develop information literacies (13%), develop coding or scripting skills (13%) 14% of students said they had received none of this support
- When they need help with their digital skills, 57% of students turn to their peers, 53% use online videos and resources and 47% ask their lecturers/tutors. 10% say they don't seek help
Theme one: you and your technology

In theme one we establish which devices and technologies students used for learning and their demographic characteristics (gender, ethnicity, level of study, age and location).

Devices regularly used for learning (could tick all that applied)

- 93% laptop
- 63% smartphone
- 23% tablet
- 22% desktop computer
- 14% additional mic or headset
- 12% additional screen
- 6% additional camera or webcam
- 0% none of these

Nearly all students regularly used a laptop in their learning and many also had a smartphone. Less than a quarter were using tablets or desktop computers.

Further analysis showed that while 25% of students only used one device, 38% used two and 23% used three. Very few used four devices or more.

Not many students had access to peripheral devices that may have helped them in their learning (eg for online participation or collaborative work).

Use of tools or features that assist learning (could tick all that applied)

47% of students said that they used at least one of the following features commonly found in many apps or pieces of software that could assist them in their learning.

- 52% none of these
- 29% captions or transcripts on video
- 22% spelling or writing support
- 14% screen reader: text to speech
- 13% dictation: speech to text
- 8% screen magnification
- 3% alternative ergonomic devices

While more than half said they didn’t use any of these features, nearly a third used captions or transcripts and over a fifth used spelling or writing support features. International or overseas students were more likely to have used these features, particularly video captions or transcripts and spelling or writing support. They were also more likely to say they had been supported to do so.

Support to loan or buy devices

- 91% No
- 9% Yes

Only 9% of students said they were either given, loaned or received help to buy these. 91% said they had not received support of that nature.

Student quote:
“Reintroduce the hardship fund so that students have access to laptops, wifi and appropriate equipment.”

Support to use features that assist learning

Just under a third of students said they had received support to use any of the features listed.

- 30% yes
- 70% no

Student quote:
“I can study in my own time and at a pace that suits me. I am not good at taking in information from listening in lectures and find it hard to follow. Studying content online by accessing the internet and extra resources was the best way to study for me. My results got so much better since COVID and studying online more.”
Theme two: technology at your organisation

In theme two, we looked at student perceptions of the quality of the online learning environment, how well they were supported to access it off campus, and at communication online. We also looked at the apps that students found useful in their learning and their preferences for future investment.

Overall quality of online learning environment

77% of students rated the quality of the online learning environment as above average (best imaginable, excellent or good) and only 6% rated it as below average.

- 4% best imaginable
- 27% excellent
- 47% good
- 16% average
- 4% poor
- 1% awful
- 0% worst imaginable

Support, communication and involvement

The numbers of students who agreed with various aspects of support for using systems and services at their organisation and for communication online were:

- 69% supported to access online platforms and services off site (25% neutral, 5% disagreed)
- 63% were communicated with effectively online eg messaging, notifications (28% neutral, 9% disagreed)
- 58% supported to use their own devices (34% neutral, 8% disagreed)
- 37% were given the chance to be involved in decisions about learning platforms (38% neutral, 25% disagreed)

Future investment preferences

Students were invited to choose one item from four choices to indicate their preferred area for investment, should funds be available:

- 42% upgrade platforms and systems
- 29% specialist software for your course
- 15% more computers and devices
- 14% IT support

Students were asked to give an example of a tool or app they found useful for learning. There were 25,718 responses to this question.

The top three digital tools or learning apps mentioned are platforms specifically designed to support online learning and the next two are communication apps.

The top ten tools or apps that students named were:

- Microsoft Teams (2,524)
- Blackboard (3,728)
- Canvas (3,778)
- Moodle (2,765)
- Zoom (1,400)
- YouTube (555)
- Microsoft OneNote (533)
- Panopto (516)
- Google Docs (466)
- Microsoft Outlook (429)

Student quote:

“The online platform has lots of tabs and is ‘busy’, a streamlined version would be more useful.”

Figure 1. Word Cloud showing the top 50 most cited tools or apps that students found useful for learning.
Theme three: technology in your learning

In theme three we looked at how technology was used in learning – the quality of online learning, the range of activities students engaged in, where their learning was taking place and how closely this met their preferences. We also asked students whether they had experienced any problems when learning online.

The overall quality of online learning

74% of students rated the overall quality of online learning on their course as above average (best imaginable, excellent or good) while 7% rated it as below average.

- 4% best imaginable
- 26% excellent
- 45% good
- 18% average
- 5% poor
- 2% awful
- 1% worst imaginable

Where students did their online learning

(could tick all that applied)

Most students were learning from home, although many also conducted their online learning from student accommodation or used on site study spaces and libraries.

- 71% at home: own, shared or family home
- 34% student accommodation
- 27% on site: study spaces, libraries
- 8% in public spaces eg cafés
- 4% at work
- 0% none of these

Location of online learning and taught classes

(single choice)

Overall, most students preferred their taught classes to be delivered using a mix of on site and online learning although there was a stronger desire for on site learning at the time the survey took place and less appetite for mainly online learning.

Preferred location

Most students preferred to be taught using a combination of on site and online learning or mainly on site.

- 42% mainly on site
- 45% a mix of on site and online
- 13% mainly online

Actual location

Many students experienced a mixture of on site and online learning although some reported either being taught mainly on site or mainly online.

- 28% mainly on site
- 42% a mix of on site and online
- 30% mainly online

Problems when learning online

(could tick all that applied)

63% of students experienced one or more problems when learning online, although 36% reported none of those listed. Over half experienced issues with wifi.

- 51% poor wifi connection
- 16% no safe, private area to work
- 15% mobile data costs
- 13% can’t access learning platforms
- 12% no suitable computer/device
- 36% none of these

Student quote:

“I think it would improve online learning immensely if there was a greater sense and opportunity for collaboration, contribution and relevant discussion about the topics covered during the online lectures.”

Continued overleaf...
The percentages of students who agreed with statements about various aspects relating to the learning materials they experienced were:

- 77% were accessible to them (20% neutral, 3% disagreed)
- 62% were available in good time (29% neutral, 8% disagreed)
- 54% were at the right level and pace (36% neutral, 10% disagreed)
- 43% were engaging and motivating (41% neutral, 16% disagreed)

Student perceptions of how engaging and motivating learning was were low, and issues remain about the level and pace of learning.

The percentages of students who agreed with statements about online learning were:

- 68% was convenient for them (22% neutral, 10% disagreed)
- 49% allowed students to contribute in the ways that they preferred (30% neutral, 22% disagreed)
- 48% were at the right level and pace (39% neutral, 13% disagreed)
- 48% enabled students to make good progress in their learning (34% neutral, 18% disagreed)
- 28% made them feel part of a community of staff and learners (32% neutral, 41% disagreed)

Most students agreed that learning online was convenient, but less than half agreed with other statements. High numbers of students disagreed that learning online made them feel part of a community, that they were able to contribute in ways they preferred or were able to make good progress. Many gave neutral responses in relation to fair assessment.

Higher percentages of students reported engagement in the more routine or transactional learning activities, like accessing live or recorded lectures. Far fewer experienced interactive and collaborative activities that have greater potential to engage and transform learning experiences and support the reality of modern workplace practices.
Theme four: developing your digital skills

How much support, guidance and training did students receive to help them develop their digital skills and to use technologies effectively to learn online? In theme four, we find out more about the overall digital development support offer.

**Overall support for effective online learning**
- 4% best imaginable
- 21% excellent
- 41% good
- 25% average
- 7% poor
- 2% awful
- 1% worst imaginable

66% of students rated overall support to learn effectively online as above average (best imaginable, excellent or good) and 9% rated it as below average.

**Support for online learning and digital skills development**
The percentage of students who agreed they had received support for online learning and digital skills development were:
- 50% guidance about the digital skills needed for their course (36% neutral, 13% disagreed)
- 39% time to explore new digital tools and approaches (40% neutral, 21% disagreed)
- 33% an assessment of their digital skills and training needs (39% neutral, 27% disagreed)
- 24% reward and recognition for their digital skills (39% neutral, 37% disagreed)

Only 50% of students said they received guidance about the digital skills needed for their course. All other responses were significantly lower.

**Skills training and support** (could tick all that applied)
- 57% avoiding plagiarism
- 44% learning online
- 30% basic IT skills
- 28% specialist software for your course
- 22% tracking your progress and achievements
- 20% behaving safely and respectfully online
- 19% keeping personal data secure
- 19% data analysis
- 13% information literacy
- 13% coding or scripting
- 14% none of these

**Who did students turn to for help with online and digital skills** (could tick all that applied)
- 57% other learners on my course
- 53% online videos and resources
- 47% lecturers/tutors
- 34% friends and family
- 24% IT staff
- 13% library/learning resources staff
- 10% teaching and learning/e-learning staff
- 6% other student service
- 10% don't look for help

10% of students don’t look for help with online and digital skills. Of the majority that do, most turn first to other learners on their course, online videos and resources and to lecturers/tutors. Less than a quarter turn to IT staff, and even fewer seek help from library/learning resources and teaching and learning/e-learning staff.

Student quote:
"Ensure that the training for the platforms is completed by all staff and students."

Student quote:
"Give an in-depth ‘tour’ of all the online learning tools we will be required to use (Teams, Zoom, discussion tools etc) and provide more support for IT skills development."
Listening to student voices

Students were asked to say what they thought the most positive and negative aspects of online learning were, and what one thing they felt their universities should do to help them learn effectively online. Their responses were diverse – preferences can be very individual and what works well for some does not necessarily work for all.

The most positive aspects of online learning

There were 24,625 responses to this question.

Students were positive about:

Lecture recordings

Students valued lecture recordings to review and consolidate their learning, improve note-taking, pause and research aspects they hadn’t understood. Lecture recordings offered flexibility and allowed them to better manage their time around other commitments (employment, care) and timetable clashes. Knowing they would not miss out or fall behind if their learning was disrupted by ill health was reassuring.

Accessibility features like captions and transcripts were beneficial to many, including those for whom English was not their first language.

Student quote:

“When I watch flipped/pre-recorded lectures I can pause and rewatch a specific part that I hadn’t understood to ensure I fully understand it. Online quizzes and formative assessments are a really good way to practice/reinforce knowledge.”

Convenience and efficiency

Students who lived some distance from the campus reported financial savings in not having to commute (travel, fuel, parking) and in child care costs which would have prohibited study for some. Time saved from not commuting was used for study.

Online learning and assessment

Many different advantages were cited:

• Being able to work in comfortable surroundings with a set up that worked best for them (physical and psychological)

• Feeling part of a community and being able to easily communicate with staff and peers with improved opportunities to ask questions

• Having all the resources available 24.7 in one place accessible from anywhere. Some also felt that the accessibility of the resources had improved (formats, alt-text, captions etc)

• Being able to access the library and resources remotely/online

• Fewer distractions and improved concentration, better able to relax, manage time and deadlines

• Able to more confidently contribute in discussions and collaborative activities with reduced pressure and less fear of being judged by peers

• Able to use accessibility tools they wouldn’t necessarily feel comfortable using around others

• Open book exams that enabled students to show their application of knowledge rather than how much they could remember. A more accurate reflection of abilities and more authentic

Student quote:

“Exams online are much better as they are a test of application of knowledge rather than memory. Also less stressful.”

Student quote:

“Listen to the opinions of students more. I, and a lot of students that I know of, feel that many staff in the university do not listen to us, or, if they do, do little in the way of taking our opinions and transferring them into action.”
Interactivity and communication

• Some students felt that online learning was more interactive and offered more opportunities for communication between peers and lecturers. They liked the mixture of videos, quizzes, discussions and the greater variety of resource formats and types with enhanced accessibility.

• Opportunities to engage in collaborative activities and discussions were valued. Some felt less anxious about contributing in this way. They felt it was more egalitarian, that it was easier for lecturers to diplomatically answer questions in turn and that questions could be posted without interrupting others. Small group sessions were particularly effective.

Wellbeing

Being able to study in their home environment helped to reduce stress and anxiety, allowing students to choose the time and place that suited them best and to establish a positive life balance. The option to contribute anonymously was important to those who were anxious about privacy. Some also said that they felt safer in their own homes due to the reduced risk of infection.

**Student quote:**
“It allows me to carry on learning when my disabilities make it hard for me to leave the house.”

The most negative aspects of online learning

There were 24,236 responses to this question. Students were negative about:

Community and collaboration

The lack of meaningful interaction with peers and teachers had a wider impact on their overall education experience. There were fewer opportunities to learn from each other and to share and discuss their work. Discussions were unproductive and stilted, they were not able to build trusted relationships necessary for group learning. This led to reduced participation and less individual accountability.

**Student quote:**
“Technology can be unpredictable and I’m not that familiar with IT. This occasionally causes anxiety which holds me back from conversing with others.”

Motivation and concentration

Some felt overwhelmed by the sheer volume of content and recorded lectures and videos which were often very long. Live sessions over-ran and students found it hard to concentrate in the intense online environment. Some struggled with excessive screen time and insufficient breaks.

Online learning

A wide range of issues had a negative impact on the online experience of learning:

• Many students missed the face-to-face elements of study and felt that lack of engagement made online learning less effective and a less rich experience

• Difficulties accessing resources, including interoperability problems and late release/uploading of resources impacted on students’ ability to complete work on time

• Not all resources complied with accessibility requirements in terms of format, colours used, captions and transcripts

• Discussion boards and sessions were underused

• The quality of recordings and audio varied – some were inaudible, badly filmed or had poor lighting

• Some students found it difficult to communicate with tutors online and found it difficult to get a reply to their queries

• Not all students were confident in using technology and were unsure where they could get support

**Student quote:**
“There is no, or very limited, ability to interact. This is limiting both in an academic sense as well as personally.”
Exams and assessment
- Not all students liked the open-book approach to exams and some felt they were unfair or not appropriate for their subject. Concerns about the lack of invigilation or measures to prevent cheating being in place were expressed.
- Insufficient formative assessment hindered learning and poorly written exams and unclear assignments caused problems as did a lack of personalised feedback.
- Students expressed anxieties about network and connectivity problems affecting their exams.

Equipment and technical issues
- Wifi connectivity was the major issue – on campus, at home and in student accommodation. Many said that they, and their lecturers, had experienced technical difficulties with breaks in connection, time lags, drop outs and crashes and this disrupted their learning and engagement in activities considerably.
- It was sometimes difficult to access the equipment and software needed. Not all had access to devices with a robust enough specification or sufficient memory. Being able to access technical support at time of need was challenging.
- Not all students and staff were confident in using the technologies effectively or had the digital capabilities necessary to confidently keep themselves safe online.

Wellbeing and social isolation
- Along with health concerns such as eye strain, screen fatigue, back ache and postural problems, students also reported feeling overwhelmed mentally, isolated, lonely, anxious and depressed.
- Lack of interaction in learning and lack of engagement in group activities compounded these problems. Peer support is a valued part of learning but without mechanisms that foster this, some students find it hard to engage. They miss the sharing of ideas, inspiration and peer support.

Examinations and assessments
- Have more informal quizzes and formative assessment opportunities to consolidate learning and help students manage their progress.
- Share specifications for exams along with past papers and model answers.
- Retain open-book exams.

Structure, navigation and learning resources
- Ensure feedback is timely and sufficiently detailed to aid progress.
- Increase the number of copies of resources and purchase more licences to key/in-demand resources.
- Minimise confusion and improve navigation by reducing the number of platforms being used.
- Ensure structure is consistent across modules.

Wellbeing
- Offer comprehensive mental health care solutions for those that struggle to learn and engage in learning online.
- Provide guidance on how to manage online workload.

Improving the effectiveness of online learning

Students were asked what one thing their organisations could do to help them to learn effectively online. There were 17,617 responses to this question. Students would like universities to:

**Provide timely and comprehensive support**
- Promote the benefits of digital learning, the experiences and skills students will develop and how these will benefit their future careers.
- Offer responsive support for technical and user-related issues.
- Support students and staff to develop their IT skills.
- Demonstrate use of all platforms, systems and software at the start of the year and at regular intervals throughout the academic year.
- Offer regular check-in sessions to help students see how they are progressing academically and personally and identify additional support needs.
- Improve communication by setting out clear channels and by responding promptly.

**Facilitate access to digital learning**
- Help students to loan or buy the equipment and software they need to participate in digital learning.
- Share details of appropriate device specifications.
- Ensure accessibility requirements are addressed for all resources (alt-text, alternative formats, colour contrasts, captions, transcripts).
- Address wifi issues on campus and in student accommodation.

**Improve the interactive aspects of online learning**
- Encourage more socialisation, collaborative learning and discussion to build a more community orientated approach – ask students what works well and work with them as active partners in their learning.
- Use quizzes, games and polls for formative assessment and to consolidate learning.
- Create bite-sized learning episodes.

**Examining and assessment**
- Signpost useful tools and strategies within learning episodes – make online learning a routine part of the overall experience.

**Student quote:**
"Use a variety of different mediums such as Padlet, videos, quizzes etc to create an engaging discussion/activity. This makes it more memorable and fun."

**Wellbeing**
- Create bite-sized learning episodes.

**Structure, navigation and learning resources**
- Share specifications for exams along with past papers and model answers.

**Examinations and assessments**
- Retain open-book exams.

**Student quote:**
"Poor wifi, both my own and that of my lecturers, actively impacts my ability to understand and learn."
There’s no going back!

How we can use the data and recent experience to inform and shape the future student experience

Key actions we would urge universities to consider:

**Develop a sector-wide evidence base that demonstrates the value of digital technology in education**

Collaborate with UUK, Jisc and other sector bodies to develop an evidence base and to evaluate the benefits of digitally enhanced learning. This evidence can be used to inform the most appropriate and effective blends of face-to-face and online learning, teaching and assessment.

**Raise awareness of the strategic importance of embedding digital technologies within the curriculum**

Universities cannot risk under-investing in technology if they are to deliver quality blended learning and digital enhancement that adequately equips students for the workplace. Strategic investment in people and infrastructure is required to support pedagogically sound learning opportunities. Staff need time and space to innovate, supported by professional development opportunities if they are to reimagine and redesign courses that seamlessly integrate digital learning.

**Reward and recognition for the development of digital practice**

This means that academic staff must also have the opportunity to hone their skills.

**Support new digital student communities**

To support the development of digital practice, universities need to ensure that they have the workforce capable of delivering blended learning. This means that academic staff must also have the opportunity to hone their skills.

**Support colleagues by sharing, recognising and rewarding innovation and good practice**

Similarly, it is important that universities share best practice and reward innovation and good practice within the sector.

**Prioritise building digital capabilities**

Higher education leaders have a role to play in building the digital capabilities of staff and students. While a student and graduate perspective, those with the knowledge and skills that industry and businesses need have an edge in a competitive jobs market. This means that academic staff must also have opportunities to hone their skills.

**Involve students as curriculum co-creators**

Similar to the recommendation in the UPP Student Future’s Commission ‘student manifesto’ our survey identifies student interest in co-creating their curriculum design. This needs to be an ongoing dialogue at every level across the whole organisation to make sure decisions consider academic course design, assessment, and wider student support as well as to reflect the needs of all students and subjects.

Work with students to encourage them to make effective use of technology in their learning. The survey results suggest support and provision is available but that there is a lack of awareness in how to access it.

Make a long term commitment to tackle digital inclusivity

Issues around digital and data poverty, inclusivity and inequality highlighted in this report are not new, as evidenced in our pre-pandemic digital experience insights surveys. As we emerge from COVID-19 into a world where blended learning is – or will become – the norm, the sector must collaborate to address multifaceted issues which go beyond support for devices and connectivity and extend to socio-economic issues like the cost of living, the affordability of traditional models of learning that assume living on/ near campus and the need to earn while they learn. There will be no ‘one size fits all’ solution so working with students present and future is vital as we research and implement appropriate approaches.

The digital experience insights surveys are a starting point for universities. Our Jisc benchmarking online learning toolkit (https://bit.ly/DEItoolkits) will help you consider the needs of an increasingly diverse student population, including international students.
Get involved

See the digital experience through the eyes of your students and staff

Our 2022/23 digital experience insights survey for students will open in October 2022.

If you would like to find out more about your students’ digital experience or if you are interested in participating in our other surveys for teaching staff, professional services staff and researchers, please contact us at help@jisc.ac.uk putting ‘digital insights’ in the email subject line.

Find out more at: digitalinsights.jisc.ac.uk

Supporting you

Higher education strategy 2021-2024: powering UK higher education

See how our HE strategy for 2021-2024 will support universities towards a technology-empowered future.

Learning and teaching reimagined

Working with you to help plot your organisation’s path to the future of higher education.

- Read the report, learning and teaching reimagined: a new dawn for higher education
- Explore the research, visions of the future, examples of emerging good practice and tools to get you started

Let’s work together to transform your digital experience

Contact your relationship manager: https://jisc.ac.uk/contact/your-account-manager

Acknowledgements

Our thanks go to our expert panels of higher and further education representatives and stakeholders who assisted us in shaping this report, and to all the universities and colleges who took part in the student insights survey this year.