Student digital experience insights survey 2023/24

UK higher education (HE) survey findings

Jisc data analytics

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Introduction

The digital experience insights survey for higher education students took place between October 2023 and April 2024. Participating organisations were able to select their own survey period within these dates, typically a three to four week window.

There were 28,679 respondents from 40 different organisations (37 universities and three colleges offering higher education degrees). 27 of these were based in England, seven in Scotland, four in Wales and two in Northern Ireland. These 40 organisations represent 13% of all higher education providers in the UK.[1]

The highest number of responses from a single organisation was 5,034 students (13% of their total student population) and the mean number of responses was 733 per organisation (on average 3.5% of the total number of students in each organisation that participated). However, four of the 40 organisations contributed fewer than 100 responses.

A survey indicating the digital experience of further education learners was run simultaneously and results can be found in our **2023/24 FE learners report**.

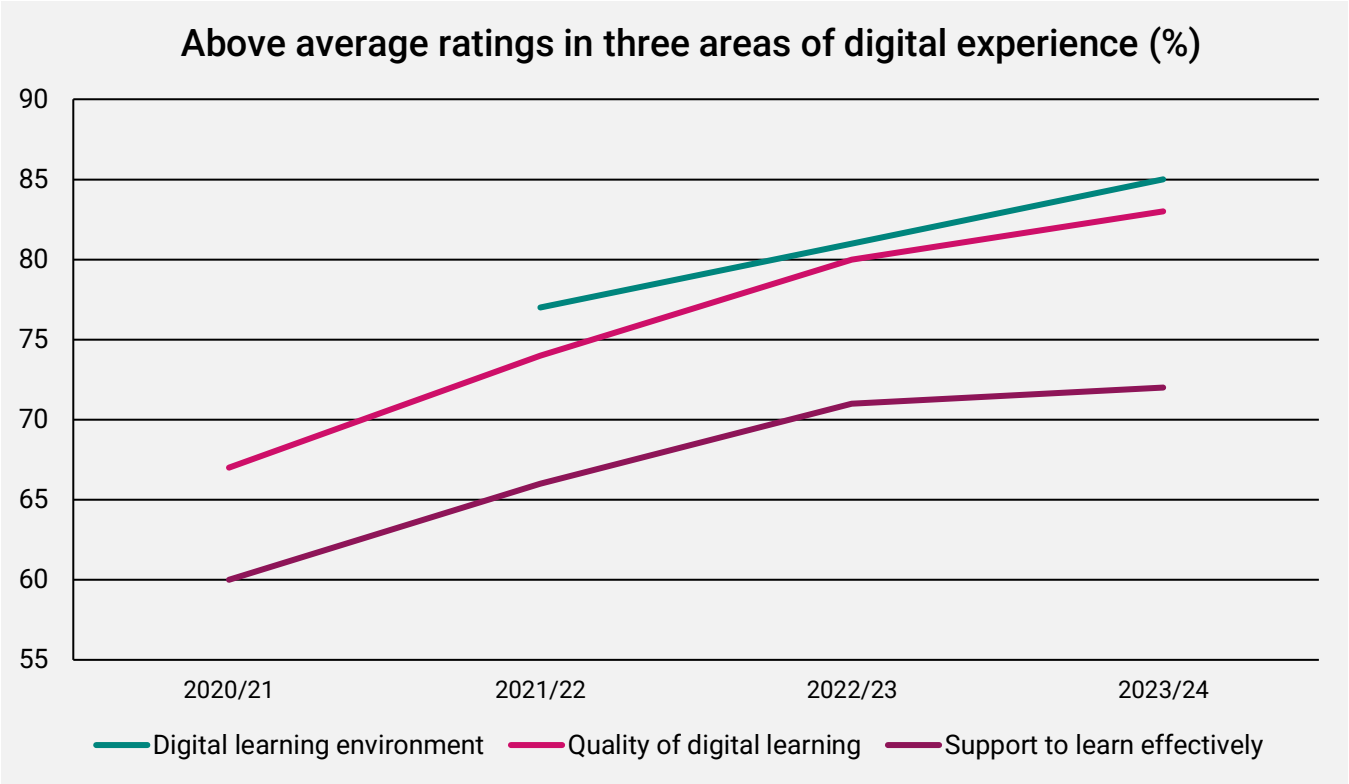
Through Jisc's digital experience insights service, organisations can gain valuable data to inform strategic, operational and digital investment decisions, evidence year-on-year improvements and demonstrate return on investment. Organisations that take part have access to their own data to assess their unique situations as well as benchmarking data. Full information about the digital experience insights surveys is detailed on our **information page**.

[1] Based on **HESA's list of current HE providers**

Executive summary

Our 2023/24 digital experience insights survey for students in higher education asked a range of questions about learning using digital technologies, including core questions asked each year about the environment for learning using digital technologies, opportunities to develop digital skills, the overall support provided for learning using digital technologies, and the devices used for learning. These core questions enable progress in these areas to be tracked over time and allow us to identify which elements of the student digital experience can be celebrated and which parts may need intervention.

This year, our survey showed that higher education organisations continued to make improvements on three key measures of the student digital experience. More students than ever rated the digital learning environment provided by their university to be above average (85% rated this as best imaginable, excellent or good). A similar number rated the quality of digital learning on their course as above average (83%). Ratings have also increased year-on-year for the support offered by higher education organisations for effective learning using technology (72% above average).



Investigating the elements that comprise these three areas indicates that students continued to receive a wide range of positive benefits from learning using digital technologies, and many are well supported by their organisations. They especially appreciated the flexibility afforded by online learning and on-demand course content, as well as the possibilities to undertake self-directed learning at their own pace, and the ability to collaborate with others. However, while some students had positive experiences, others continued to prefer on campus learning experiences, finding in person teaching and course activities more engaging, more social and less isolating. In addition, some students were prevented from fully participating and benefitting from digital technologies, even if they preferred online taught classes and learning online.

Some groups of students faced inequity in accessing digital technologies and had different experiences when using them for learning. This included uneven access to suitable devices for

learning, such as laptop computers, smartphones, tablets and a range of peripherals. More than a third (34%) of students experienced issues in learning because they did not have access to a suitable device. International, Asian/Asian British and Black/Black British students were more likely to have experienced issues in learning because of a lack of a suitable device. However, very few students of any background were offered financial support or were loaned or given devices by their organisation. In addition, cost of living issues have become more apparent. More than half (52%) of students took on paid work to mitigate cost of living expenses, which may have impacted progress in their studies.

Organisations should seek to continue to support different modes of teaching and learning. While there has been a continued shift towards mainly on campus teaching (67% of teaching was mainly on campus), many students preferred an online experience, at least some of the time. Around half (49%) preferred either online taught classes or a mixture of online and on campus taught classes. This increased to 58% when looking at where students preferred to learn. The investment in digital technologies so far has helped to deliver strong ratings for the quality of digital learning (83% above average). Progress has also been made on the percentage of students who agreed that the learning materials provided on their courses were engaging and motivating (55% this year, up from only 35% in 2019/20). In addition, most students considered their digital learning environment to be above average (85%). To meet students' preferences there may need to be continued investment in infrastructure, including upgrading wifi networks, investment in supporting students to use their own devices on and off campus, and providing a range of upgraded computers for use or loan on campus. Higher education organisations should also the address the accessibility needs of students, including international students. Many students used accessibility features for productivity purposes, including captions, transcripts and spelling features. International students were much more likely to use these features. Yet, more than half of students (51%) who said they needed support to use these features were not subsequently offered support.

This year we asked students about their use of artificial intelligence (AI) for the first time. Some students were concerned about the responsible use of AI, particularly around plagiarism and discerning reliable information. Others saw the benefit in using AI to help them to navigate a plethora of information. A small percentage (11%) of students were provided with access to AI systems, chatbots or virtual assistants, while 22% said they had used AI as part of their learning, and 18% said they used AI and tools likely to include AI to support them with digital skills development. 16% had been offered training specifically in the appropriate use of artificial intelligence tools.

Some improvements have been made since last year's survey in support for effective learning using technology. Universities should continue nonetheless to assess the support offered to students throughout their course and throughout the academic year. Overall, students were generally positive about the support offered by their organisation for learning effectively using technology (72% offered an above average rating). Some gains were made in the areas of training for learning online, basic IT skills and data analysis, and knowledge about the collection of student data. However, skills and training opportunities were not always felt to be available across the academic year or throughout a course of study. Students who had been at their organisation for a year or more were less likely than newer students to feel they had been offered training or the opportunity to develop their digital skills. Areas that may need redress are digital skills to aid future employment, course-related skills and specialist software support, as well as guidance around general digital proficiency and productivity skills and tools. In some instances, a well-advertised catalogue of available support and training would help.

The key findings below highlight some of the potentially more pertinent figures from the dataset. By responding to the issues raised by students, organisations can seek to offer a more equitable and supportive environment for using digital technologies in learning. This will help consolidate the already high ratings in some areas and improve some of the lower ratings seen in other areas. Throughout the report we point towards areas where some demographics of students may have experienced a deficit compared to other groups. We will explore some of these issues further through a number of spotlight reports to be published on the **digital experience insights** website later in 2024 and 2025.

Key findings

Inequity in access to digital technologies

- Most students used laptops (92%) and smartphones (73%) regularly for learning. Smartphone usage has increased since the 2021/22 survey when 63% of students used them for learning
- Fewer students used peripherals like microphones or headsets (22%), cameras or webcams (18%) and additional screens (13%). However, men and postgraduate students were more likely to use the range of peripheral devices for learning than women and undergraduate students
- Overall, 34% of students said they experienced problems in learning because they had no suitable device. This figure increased to nearly half when we looked at international students (47%), Asian/Asian British students (47%) and Black/Black British students (44%)
- Just under a quarter of students (22%) required financial support to buy devices, although only a third (33%) were offered financial help if they needed it, and only 13% were loaned or given devices by their organisation
- When we asked about their experiences with digital technologies, some students said that their laptops were not of a high enough specification to cope with the demands of their course. Some had issues with slow processing power and battery life, and some lacked peripheral devices that enhance productivity
- More than half of students (52%) undertook paid work to mitigate cost of living expenses. Some may not have travelled to campus due to travel related costs (40%) or, conversely, went to campus to minimise personal costs (40%). Students said they valued digital course resources and lecture recordings because it meant they did not have to travel to campus if money or work responsibilities (among other issues like caring responsibilities and disabilities) were a problem

Learning preferences and accessibility

- While most students learned using technology at home (89%) or on campus (77%), a significant percentage also learned in public spaces such as cafes (41%) or while at work (22%). Women (46%) and non binary students (47%) were more likely than men (35%) to have learned in public spaces
- Teaching continued to shift towards mainly on campus (67%) delivery, however almost half of students favoured either online teaching (11%) or a mixture of on campus and

online teaching (38%), and more than half preferred to learn either online (14%) or through a mixture of on campus and online learning (44%)

- For the first time, more than half (55%) of students agreed that the learning materials provided to them were engaging and motivating (from a low of 35% in 2019/20). While students generally agreed learning using digital technologies was positive for them in a range of areas, less than half (48%) agreed they felt part of a community of staff and students through the use of digital technologies. However, this area has seen a 20% increase in agreement since 2021/22. Indeed, when asked about the positive aspects of digital technologies, many students did feel that various tools and platforms enabled a sense of community
- Accessibility tools and devices were used by students for productivity as well as for accessibility purposes. Around a half of students used captions (53%), a range of productivity tools (eg mindmapping, planning or AI platforms; 50%), spelling or writing support tools (48%) and transcripts (44%)
- International students were significantly more likely to have used accessibility tools. Captions were used by 66% of international students and 46% of UK students, and spelling or writing support tools were used by 68% of international students compared to 36% of UK students
- Students were not always offered the support they needed to use accessibility or productivity tools. Only around a half (49%) received support if they required it

Experiences with digital technologies

- 85% considered the digital learning environment to be the best imaginable, excellent or good (3% considered it to be below average). Similarly, 83% rated the quality of digital learning on their course as the best imaginable, excellent or good (a 3% increase since last year's survey). Responses to free text questions indicated that many appreciated the flexibility offered by digital technologies, and allowed them to learn at times convenient for them, in the ways they preferred, and at their own pace
- Despite these high ratings, a significant number of students faced difficulties with digital technologies in their learning both on campus and off campus, including with wifi (55%), mobile data (42%), accessing systems (38%), and with having no private area to work (42%). International students were more likely to have experienced several of these issues, including mobile data (50%) and system access problems (44%)
- Students continued to show a preference (34%) for investment in upgrading platforms or systems, while 26% wanted more specialist course software and 17% wanted more computers or devices. In the free text questions, students also expressed a strong desire for wifi networks to be improved across campus, in terms of signal strength and reliability of access. Positively, more students agreed that they were involved in decisions about their digital experience this year (46%), a significant increase from 2021/22 when the figure was 37%
- Students were provided with a wide range of technologies that supported their learning and they engaged in various learning activities. 63% said they were provided with applications that supported collaboration, while only 30% said they actually collaborated online as part of their learning. Most students accessed recorded lectures (77%) and participated in live online lectures (66%). However, these figures have decreased from 82% and 70%, respectively, in last year's survey

- We asked about AI provision for the first time. 11% had access to artificial intelligence systems, chatbots or virtual assistants provided by their organisation, while 22% used AI as part of their learning. When we asked students about the negative aspects of using digital technology, some students were concerned about the responsible use of AI
- As in last year's survey, less than half of students agreed that they understood how their university used their data (40%)

Support for digital skills development

- Students were generally positive about the overall support for effective learning using technology (72% rated this as above average, 6% rated the support as below average)
- When we looked at a range of areas of skills development, the level of support has increased in most areas since last year's survey. However, there was still only one area where more than half agreed support had been offered: guidance about the digital skills needed for their course (54%). Only 28% of students agreed that they were given formal recognition or accreditation for their digital skills. 37% said they were given opportunities to build digital skills for future employment. 37% agreed that they were offered an assessment of their digital skills or training needs. International students and students who had been at their organisation for less than a year were more likely to agree that support had been offered across these areas
- Students wanted more opportunities to develop their digital skills and competencies, which may be embedded into their course or offered as a catalogue of training opportunities
- When we looked at training opportunities, improvements had been made since last year's survey. 54% of students were offered training on online learning (compared to 46% last year), 47% were offered basic IT skills training (36% last year), and over a quarter (26%) were offered data analysis training (21% last year). Students expressed a need for more support for course-specific software as well as for general communication and productivity tools used across organisations
- When we asked about the negative aspects of digital technologies, some students felt 'information overload' and found it difficult to find relevant or trustworthy resources. They also thought that virtual learning environments needed to be better structured in order for them to find course resources, and that these should be more accessible and uploaded in a timely manner.

Methodology

The question set

The core question set contained 36 questions (of which four were open ended qualitative questions). An additional nine questions were presented to participants who stated they were international students. Questions often had sub-questions, making the maximum number of individual questions 51. All questions were optional so that respondents could leave questions blank if they did not wish to answer.

Most questions were locked (ie standardised across all insights surveys) to allow benchmark comparisons. Additional pages were customisable so that organisations could add additional questions pertinent to their local needs. All core closed-ended questions had a non-response rate of 11% or less (with a mean non-response rate of 3.2%).

Qualitative open-ended questions

Qualitative open-ended questions were analysed using semi-supervised topic modelling, a form of Natural Language Processing (NLP). This used the CorEx algorithm, implemented in Python, using anchor terms developed with domain experts in Jisc to steer the model towards creating the most useful set of topics for classifying responses.

The algorithm then classified the responses from the survey according to the topics in the model, and this could be used to interpret the answers to the question. The analysts developed narratives based on this analysis.

Uses and limitations of data

The data is not weighted to match the national HE learner population (eg by gender). Additionally, different organisations have taken part in the survey year-on-year. Therefore, direct comparisons across the years should be treated with a degree of caution even when the question wording is exactly the same.

Please note that the number of responses is sometimes greater than the number of people who responded to a question (for the 'tick all that apply' questions) and so percentages may total above 100%. Totals may also not come to 100% due to rounding.

Survey findings

Theme one: you and your technology

In the first theme, 'you and your technology', we established student demographics (including age, location, gender, ethnicity and impairments or conditions that may impact learning). We also established key statistics on the devices and technologies used for learning. In addition, we asked international students about their experiences of using digital technologies for learning before coming to the UK.

Age of participants

- **10%** 18 or under
- **34%** 19 to 21
- **17%** 22 to 24
- **14%** 25 to 29
- **8%** 30 to 34
- **6%** 35 to 39
- **4%** 40 to 44
- **3%** 45 to 49
- **2%** 50 to 54
- **1%** 55 to 59
- **1%** 60 and over

Gender of participants

- **60%** woman
- **34%** man
- **2%** non binary
- **1%** identify in another way
- **4%** prefer not to say

Gender same as given at birth

- **96%** yes
- **2%** no
- **2%** prefer not to say

Ethnicity of participants

- **30%** Asian or Asian British
- **10%** Black, Black British, Caribbean or African
- **4%** mixed or multiple ethnic groups
- **51%** white
- **3%** other
- **2%** prefer not to say

Level of study of participants

- **60%** undergraduate
- **33%** postgraduate (taught)
- **4%** other
- **2%** foundation
- **1%** apprenticeship

Number of years participants have studied at the organisation

- **53%** less than a year
- **15%** 1 year
- **14%** 2 years
- **11%** 3 years
- **7%** 4 years or more

Participants with learning differences, health conditions or impairments

- **80%** no
- **15%** yes
- **5%** prefer not to say

Nationality

- **61%** UK students
- **31%** international students (studying in the UK)
- **7%** transnational students (studying in normal country of residence)

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

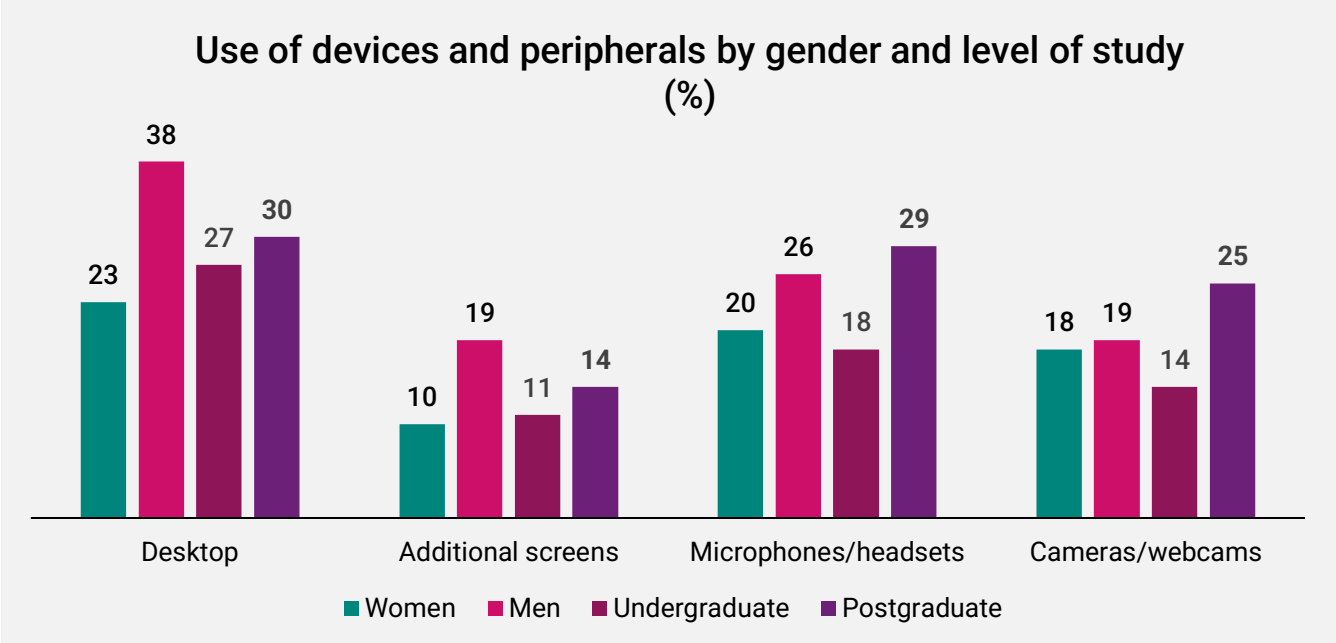
- **92%** laptop
- **73%** smartphone
- **29%** tablet
- **28%** desktop computer
- **22%** microphone/headset
- **18%** camera/webcam
- **13%** additional screen
- **1%** virtual reality headset
- **1%** other

Laptops (92%) and smartphones (73%) were used for learning by the vast majority of students. Smartphone usage has increased significantly since the 2021/22 survey (63%).

The use of separate peripherals such as microphones/headsets (22%) and cameras/webcams (18%) remained relatively low, as in previous years.

Men were more likely than women to use additional screens (men: 19%, women: 10%) and microphones/headsets (men: 26%, women: 20%). Men were also significantly more likely to use desktop computers than women (men: 38%, women: 23%). Additionally, postgraduate students were more likely than undergraduates to use a range of peripherals, including additional screens (postgraduate: 14%, undergraduates: 11%), microphones/headsets (postgraduates: 29%, undergraduates: 18%) and cameras/webcams (postgraduates: 25%, undergraduates: 14%).

On average, students selected three options from the list of devices. 1% of students were reliant solely on a smartphone for learning, while 14% relied on only a laptop.



Devices given or loaned

- **87%** no
- **13%** yes

Most (87%) students were not given or loaned devices by their organisation.

Financial support required to buy devices

- **78%** no
- **22%** yes

Less than a quarter (22%) of students required financial support to buy devices for learning. Students with a learning difference, health condition or impairment (31%), students aged 22 and over (26%) and international students (26%) were more likely to require financial support.

Financial help offered to buy devices

- **67%** no
- **33%** yes

If a student required financial help to buy a device for learning, only about a third (33%) were offered it by their organisation. International students (39%) were more likely to have been offered financial support than UK students (29%). Men (35%) were more likely to have been offered support than women (31%) and non binary (31%) students.

Use of accessibility or productivity tools

(could tick all that applied)

Tool	Combined (for accessibility or productivity)	For accessibility	For productivity
Captions	**53%**	31%	36%
Productivity tools	**50%**	26%	40%
Spelling/writing support	**48%**	26%	35%
Transcripts	**44%**	26%	29%
Text to speech/screen reader	**38%**	24%	26%
Screen magnification	**34%**	21%	21%
Speech recognition/dictation	**31%**	18%	21%
Alternative access method	**22%**	14%	13%
Other	**8%**	6%	5%

Students indicated whether they used a range of tools and devices, and for what purpose (accessibility, productivity, or both).

The most frequently cited tools used either for accessibility or productivity were captions (53%), productivity tools (eg mindmapping, time management, planning, AI tools; 50%), spelling/writing support tools (48%) and transcripts (44%).

For accessibility, the most commonly used tools were captions (31%), transcripts (26%), spelling/writing support tools (26%)

and productivity tools (26%). In contrast, the most popular for productivity purposes were the range of productivity tools (40%), captions (36%) and spelling/writing support tools (35%).

International students were significantly more likely to use the variety of tools or devices than UK students. Around two thirds of international students used captions (international: 66%, UK: 46%), productivity tools (international: 66%, UK: 40%), and spelling or writing support tools (international: 68%, UK: 36%).

Support required to use accessibility or productivity features

- **85%** no
- **15%** yes

Most students (85%) did not require support to use accessibility or productivity tools or devices. Students who stated they had a learning difference, health condition or impairment were more likely to have said they needed support (22%).

Support offered to use accessibility or productivity features

- **73%** no
- **27%** yes

Overall, only around a quarter (27%) of students were offered support to use accessibility or productivity features. Respondents who said they required support were more likely to have received it (49%).

International students

International students answered some additional demographic questions and questions about their experiences of using digital technologies before coming to the UK to study.

English as a first language

- **71%** no
- **29%** yes

Type of school previously attended

- **51%** state or government funded school
- **41%** private school
- **6%** international school
- **2%** other

Region from which international students came to the UK

- **53%** Asia
- **18%** Africa
- **17%** Europe
- **5%** North America
- **4%** Middle East
- **1%** Australia and New Zealand
- **1%** South America

Country from which international students came to the UK
The ten most named countries were:

- **18%** India
- **12%** Nigeria
- **9%** China
- **7%** Pakistan
- **3%** Romania
- **2%** United States
- **2%** Bangladesh
- **2%** Nepal
- **2%** Malaysia
- **1%** Hong Kong

Reliability of wifi before coming to the UK

- **23%** better than the UK
- **52%** similar to the UK
- **21%** worse than the UK
- **4%** no access to wifi

Frequency of power cuts that impacted the ability to use digital technologies

- **16%** daily
- **11%** weekly
- **9%** monthly
- **27%** less than monthly
- **38%** never

Frequency of use of digital technologies before coming to the UK

- **73%** daily
- **14%** weekly
- **5%** monthly
- **5%** less than monthly
- **3%** never

Frequency of teachers' use of digital technologies before coming to the UK

- **55%** daily
- **20%** weekly
- **8%** monthly
- **9%** less than monthly
- **7%** never

Theme two: technology at your organisation

In theme two, ‘technology at your organisation’, we asked students how they felt about the technology provided by their organisation to help them learn using digital technologies. This included what tools or features were offered as part of the digital learning environment, how well organisations supported students to access systems and services off campus, and how well students understood how their data was collected and used by universities. Students also indicated their preferences for future digital investment.

The digital learning environment

- **5%** best imaginable
- **34%** excellent
- **46%** good
- **12%** average
- **2%** poor
- **1%** awful
- **0%** worst imaginable

85% of students considered the digital learning environment provided to be above average (best imaginable, excellent or good). This represents a 4% increase compared to last year’s survey.

Only 3% considered the digital learning environment to be below average (poor, awful or worst imaginable).

Support for devices, communication and access to services

- **64%** agreed they were supported to use their own devices (30% neutral, 6% disagreed)
- **72%** agreed they were supported to access platforms and services off campus (23% neutral, 5% disagreed)
- **67%** agreed they were supported to communicate effectively online (26% neutral, 6% disagreed)

All these areas of support have improved slightly since last year’s survey. Around two-thirds (64%) agreed that they were supported to use their own devices (a 3% increase since last year).

Students’ agreement that they were supported to access platforms and services off campus, and that they were supported to communicate effectively online both showed a more modest improvement of 1% since last year’s survey.

Technologies provided that support learning
(could tick all that applied)

- **78%** virtual learning environment
- **74%** recordings of live sessions
- **68%** recorded/pre-recorded content and resources
- **63%** applications that support collaborative activities
- **59%** online assessment/testing platform
- **48%** live stream of lectures
- **39%** dashboard for tracking own progress
- **16%** augmented/virtual/extended reality (AR/VR/XR) technologies
- **12%** e-portfolios
- **11%** artificial intelligence systems, chatbots or assistants
- **2%** none of these

More than three-quarters of students (78%) stated that they were provided with virtual learning environments or learning platforms. This is a large increase since last year’s survey (49%). It should be noted that this year examples of virtual learning

environments were added into the question text, having been removed last year. The lower percentage last year may have been the result of fewer students understanding what a virtual learning environment was without examples. The large increase in the percentage of students who said they were provided with applications that support collaborative activities (63% this year, 27% in 2022/23) may be explained similarly.

Just under three-quarters of students (74%) were provided with recordings of live sessions, while around two-thirds (68%) said they were offered recorded or pre-recorded content and resources. Both these areas have seen a 2% decrease since last year's survey.

11% of students were provided with access to artificial intelligence systems, chatbots or assistants. 16% of students were provided with either augmented, virtual or extended reality technologies, a large increase from 5% in 2022/23.

Useful digital tools or apps

Students were asked to provide an example of a tool or app they found useful for learning. There were 15,635 responses to this question.

The top three tools or apps cited were virtual learning environment or online learning platforms: Canvas, Blackboard and Moodle.

The top 10 tools or apps named by students were:

1. Canvas (**23%**)
2. Blackboard (**12%**)
3. Moodle (**6%**)
4. YouTube (**4%**)
5. Microsoft Teams (**4%**)
6. ChatGPT (**3%**)
7. Microsoft Office (**3%**)
8. Microsoft OneNote (**3%**)
9. Notion (**3%**)
10. Google Scholar (**3%**)

Data collection and use

- **40%** agreed that they understood how their university collected and used their data (36% neutral, 24% disagreed)
- **44%** agreed that they were comfortable with how their university collected and used their data (49% neutral, 7% disagreed)

Less than half of students agreed they understood how their university collected and used their data (40%) and were comfortable with how their data was collected and used (44%).

There has been a slight improvement since last year's survey, with a 2% increase in understanding how data is collected and used (38% agreed in 2022/23).

Future investment preferences

- **34%** upgrade platforms and systems
- **26%** specialist course software
- **17%** more computers and devices
- **13%** digital content
- **10%** IT support

When provided with the option to select one category of the digital environment for their universities to invest in, around a third (34%) of students said they would prefer platforms and systems to be upgraded.

Theme three: technology in your learning

In theme three, ‘technology in your learning’, we looked in detail at how technology was used in learning, alongside students’ preferences. We highlighted a range of issues with which students may have experienced problems while using digital technologies, in both on and off campus contexts. We also investigated the wide range of activities students engage in as part of their learning, as well as their opinions on the quality of learning resources. Additionally, we asked students about cost of living issues that may have impacted their learning.

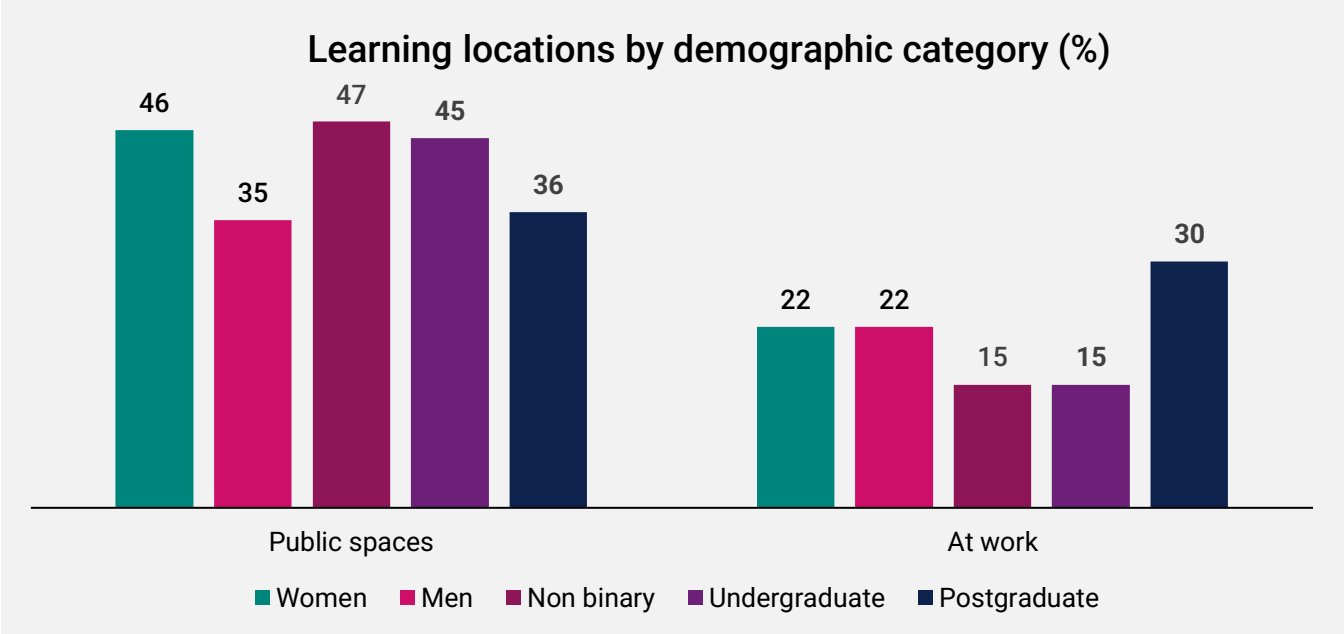
Quality of digital learning

- **6%** best imaginable
- **32%** excellent
- **45%** good
- **13%** average
- **3%** poor
- **0%** awful
- **0%** worst imaginable

The majority of students (83%) rated the quality of the digital learning on their course as above average (best imaginable, excellent or good). This represents a 3% increase since last year’s survey. Only 3% rated the quality of digital learning as below average (5% below average in 2022/23).

Location of learning using technology
(could tick all that applied)

- **89%** at home (own, shared, family)
- **77%** on campus (eg study spaces, libraries, lectures, labs)
- **41%** public spaces (eg cafes)
- **39%** student accommodation
- **22%** at work
- **2%** other



Most students worked at home (89%) or on campus (77%) when learning using technology. 41% of students learned in public spaces (eg cafes), while 22% of students learned while at work.

There are some notable differences between groups of students. More undergraduates (84%) learned while on campus than postgraduates (67%). Postgraduates (30%) were more likely to have learned when at work than undergraduate students (15%). Conversely, undergraduates (45%) were more likely than postgraduate students (36%) to have worked in public spaces. Additionally, women (46%) and non binary (47%) students were more likely to have learned in public spaces then men (35%).

Actual and preferred location for teaching and learning over the academic year

Taught classes took place:

- **67%** mainly on campus
- **22%** a mix of on campus and online
- **11%** mainly online

Students preferred to be taught:

- **51%** mainly on campus
- **38%** a mix of on campus and online
- **11%** mainly online

Students preferred to learn:

- **42%** mainly on campus
- **44%** a mix of on campus and online
- **14%** mainly online

Over two-thirds (67%) of taught classes took place on campus. This represents a 3% increase since last year's survey. The percentage of students reporting that taught classes were delivered between on campus and online settings has decreased by 4% (22% this year, 26% in 2022/23).

Just over half (51%) of students showed a preference for on campus taught classes. This has decreased from 53% last year. Slightly more showed a preference for a mix of on campus and online teaching this year (38%) compared to last year (36%).

When asked about where they preferred to learn, students preferred a mix of on campus and online learning (44%) compared to 42% of students who preferred mainly on campus learning. In 2022/23, the preference slightly leaned towards on campus learning (45% on campus learning, 41% a mix).

Difficulties with digital technologies in learning

(could tick all that applied)

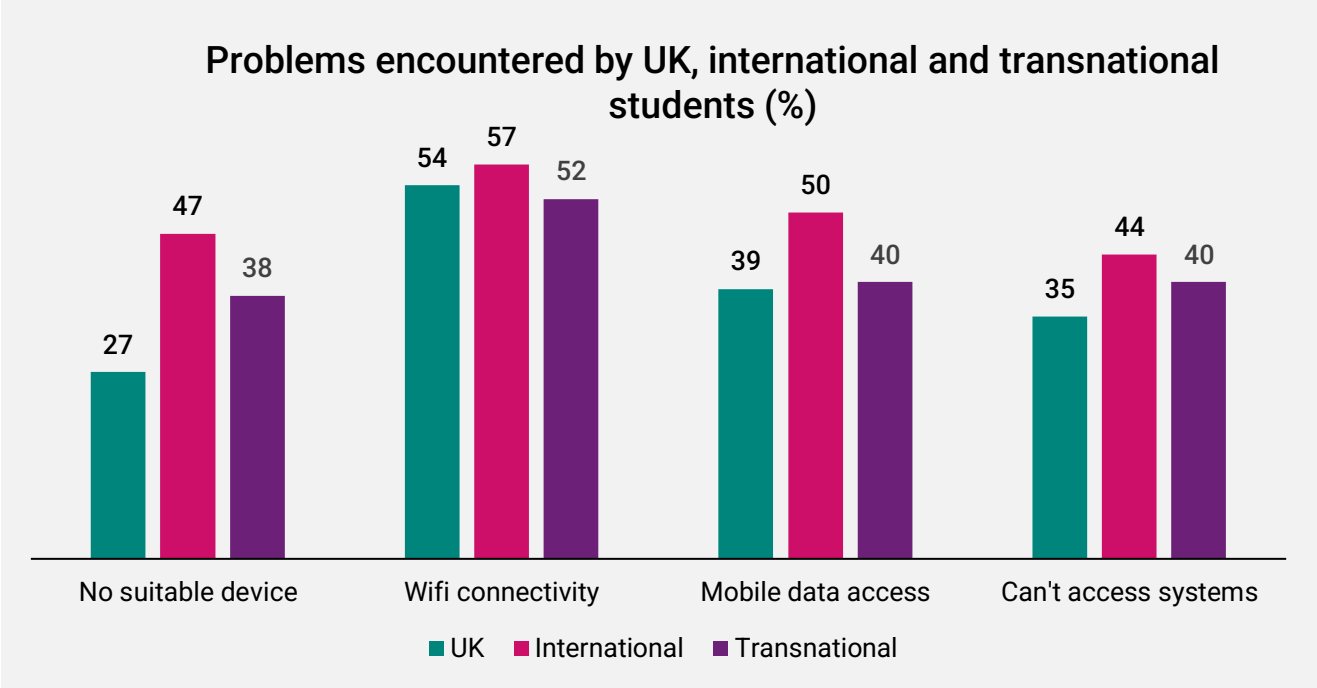
- **34%** no suitable device (16% on campus, 21% off campus)
- **25%** no safe area to work (10% on campus, 17% off campus)
- **42%** no private area to work (26% on campus, 20% off campus)
- **55%** wifi connectivity (34% on campus, 30% off campus)
- **42%** mobile data access (27% on campus, 22% off campus)
- **38%** can't access systems they need (17% on campus, 27% off campus)

A number of issues impacted students' ability to use digital technologies in their learning.

Wifi connectivity was the issue reported by the most students (55%), with this being more prevalent on campus (34%) than off campus (30%). International students (57%)

were slightly more likely to have reported problems with wifi connectivity than UK students (54%) and transnational students (52%).

Mobile data issues were experienced by 42% of students (an 8% increase from 2022/23 when 34% reported problems). Like wifi connectivity, problems tended to be on campus (27%) more than off campus (22%). International students (50%) were much more likely to have experienced mobile data issues than UK students (39%).



Over a third of students had problems accessing the systems they needed (38%) with over a quarter of students (27%) experiencing this off campus. Again, international students (44%) were more likely than UK students (35%) to have had issues with systems access.

42% of students said they had difficulties with digital technologies in learning due to no private area to work, while a quarter (25%) said they had no safe area to work. Both areas have seen a 6% increase in students reporting problems with those aspects since the 2022/23 survey.

Some categories of student were much more likely to have encountered issues due to no suitable device (34% overall). 47% of international students reported this issue, compared to 27% of UK students. Asian/Asian British (47%) and Black/Black British (44%) students were much more likely than white (24%) students to have reported the lack of a suitable device. Men were slightly (35%) more likely to have reported the problem of no suitable device than women (32%). Non binary students (42%) however were much more likely to have reported the problem.

Cost of living issues
Students were asked about cost of living issues that may have impacted their ability to learn or increased their reliance on using digital technologies to learn.

Kept away from campus due to travel related costs:

- **60%** no
- **40%** yes

Made use of campus facilities to minimise personal costs:

- **60%** no
- **40%** yes

Took on paid work to mitigate cost of living expenses, which may conflict with ability to study:

- **48%** no
- **52%** yes

More than half (52%) of students took on paid work to mitigate cost of living expenses, and this may have conflicted with their ability to study. Students with a learning difference, health condition or impairment (58%) were more likely to have taken on paid work than those without one (50%). Women (54%) and non binary (55%) students were more likely than men (48%) to have taken on paid work.

A significant number of students were kept away from campus due to travel related costs (40%) and, conversely, similar numbers (40%) made use of campus facilities to minimise personal costs. Undergraduate students (37%) were less likely to have been kept away from campus than postgraduate students (45%). Again, students with a learning difference, health condition or impairment were more likely to have answered 'yes' to these questions (45% to both) than those without a condition (38% and 39%, respectively).

Range of learning activities
(could select all that applied)

The percentages of students who had carried out a range of online learning activities in the last academic year were:

- **84%** accessed course materials online
- **77%** watched recorded lecture/class
- **66%** participated in live online lecture/class
- **55%** online quizzes
- **53%** computer-marked test/assessment
- **52%** mixed face-to-face/online class
- **45%** online research tasks
- **30%** live polling
- **30%** collaborated online
- **24%** online text-based discussion
- **22%** used artificial intelligence
- **13%** virtual lab/practical/fieldwork
- **9%** online game/simulation
- **4%** VR/AR/XR
- **3%** none of these

The vast majority (84%) of students accessed course materials online, watched recorded lectures (77%) and participated in live online lectures (66%). However, the percentage of students participating in these learning activities has decreased since last year (85%, 82% and 70% respectively).

22% of students said they used artificial intelligence tools as part of their learning.

The percentage of students who engaged in other activities remained broadly the same as last year's survey. Students who rated the quality of digital learning in their organisation as above average were more likely to have participated in most of these activities than those that rated the quality of digital learning as average or below average.

Opinions on learning resources
The percentages of students who agreed with statements about various aspects relating to the digital learning resources they experienced were:

- **55%** were engaging and motivating (38% neutral, 8% disagreed)
- **59%** were at the right level and pace (34% neutral, 7% disagreed)
- **77%** were accessible to them (20% neutral, 3% disagreed)
- **63%** were available in good time (29% neutral, 7% disagreed)

Most students had positive opinions about the digital learning materials provided to them. Almost all these areas have seen year-on-year increases in agreement.

For the first time, more than half (55%) of students agreed that digital learning resources were engaging and motivating. This has increased from 35% in 2019/20. The percentage of students who disagreed has also halved to 8% from 16% in 2021/22.

Convenience, fairness, impact and effectiveness of learning using digital technologies
The percentages of students who agreed with statements about using digital technologies in learning were:

- **82%** was convenient for them (15% neutral, 2% disagreed)
- **68%** allowed students to contribute in ways that they preferred (27% neutral, 5% disagreed)
- **74%** enabled students to make good progress in their studies (23% neutral, 3% disagreed)
- **48%** made them feel part of a community of staff and students (37% neutral, 16% disagreed)
- **61%** allowed students to be assessed fairly (33% neutral, 5% disagreed)

Students generally agreed that learning using digital technologies was positive for them in a range of areas. The vast majority (82%) said that learning using digital technologies was convenient (2% disagreed). Around three-quarters (74%) said that technology allowed them to make good progress in their studies (3% disagreed)

The sole area where less than half of students agreed (48%) was whether digital technologies made them feel part of a community of staff and students (16% disagreed). However, this area has seen a 4% increase in agreement since 2022/23 (44%).

Involvement in decisions about digital technology

- **46%** of students agreed that they had the chance to be involved in decisions about their digital experience (41% neutral, 13% disagreed).

The percentage of students who agreed that they had the chance to be involved in decisions that affect their digital experience has increased over the last three years from 37% in 2021/22 to 46% this year.

Theme four: your digital skills

Theme four, ‘your digital skills’, investigated how supported students felt in developing their digital skills and their ability to use technologies to learn effectively. We asked about digital development opportunities provided to students and the support offered by universities, whether these were felt to be adequate, as well as students’ preferred sources of support.

Overall support for effective learning using technology

- **6%** best imaginable
- **24%** excellent
- **42%** good
- **22%** average
- **5%** poor
- **1%** awful
- **0%** worst imaginable

Students generally indicated that their organisations offered them a good level of support to help them effectively learn using technology (72% above average). 6% rated the support they received as below average (poor, awful or worst imaginable).

Although this is above the 60% above average rating recorded in the 2020/21 survey, there has only been a 1% improvement since last year.

Support for digital skills development

The percentage of students who agreed they had received support for digital skills development were:

- **54%** guidance about the digital skills needed for their course (35% neutral, 11% disagreed)
- **37%** assessment of their digital skills and training needs (37% neutral, 26% disagreed)
- **40%** time to explore new digital tools and approaches (41% neutral, 19% disagreed)
- **28%** formal recognition, accreditation or certification for their digital skills (38% neutral, 34% disagreed)
- **37%** development opportunities to build digital skills for future employment (41% neutral, 21% disagreed)

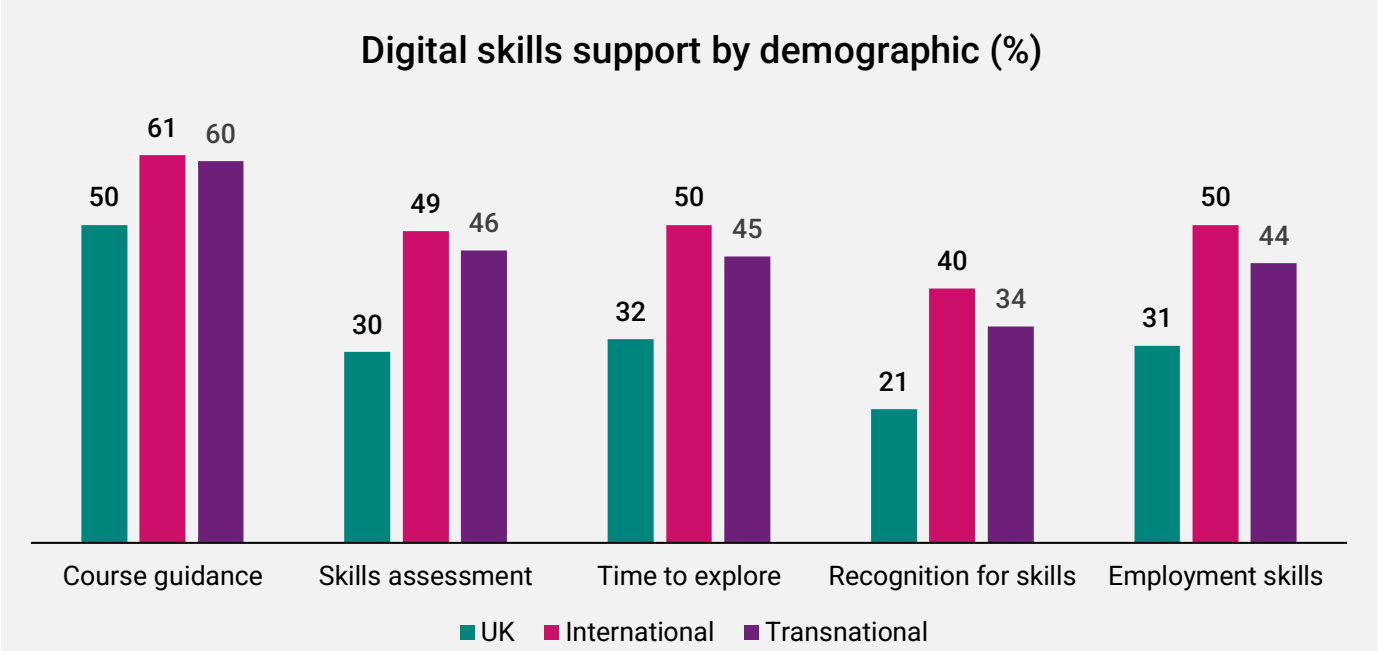
Students were asked to agree whether or not support had been offered in a range of areas related to digital skills development. More than half agreed in only one area: guidance about the digital skills need for their course (54% agreed, 11% disagreed).

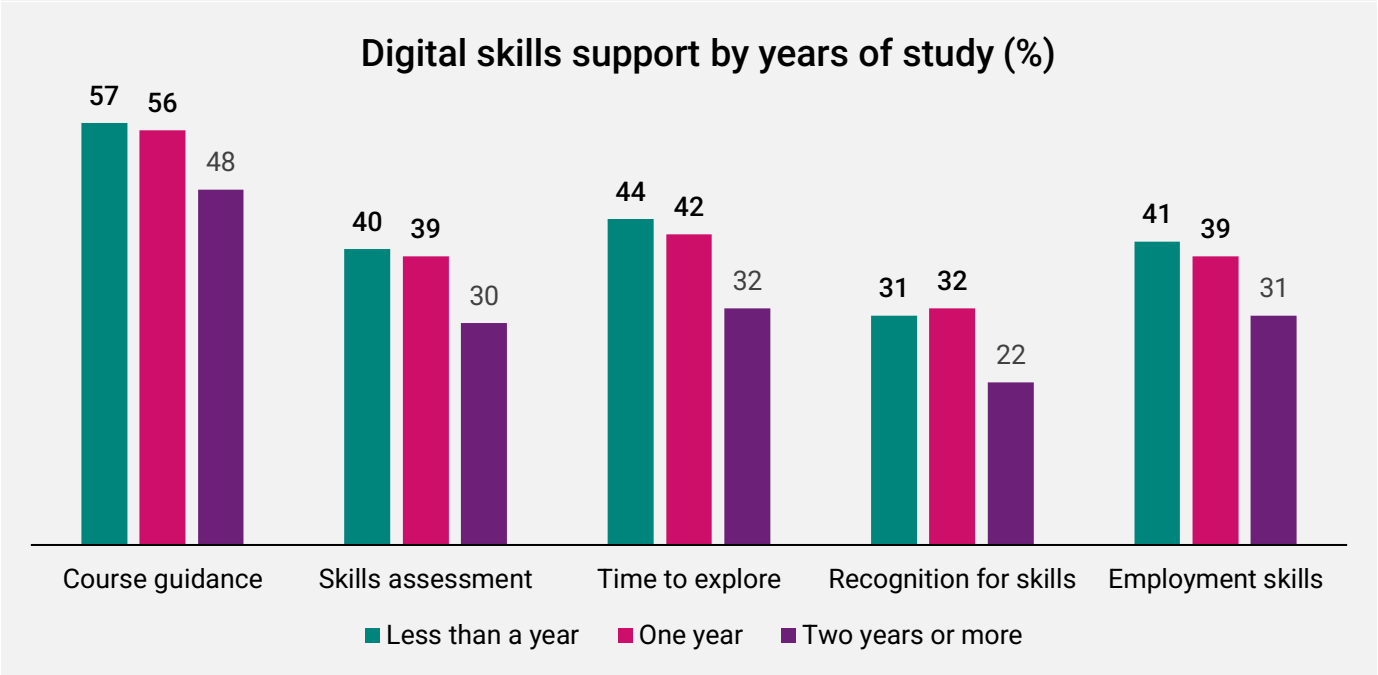
40% of students agreed they had the time to explore new digital tools and approaches (19% disagreed). More students disagreed (34%) than agreed (28%) that they were offered formal recognition or accreditation for their digital skills. Around a quarter (26%) disagreed that they were offered an assessment of their digital skills and training needs (37% agreed).

In the above four areas, there have been only slight improvements since the 2021/22 survey. However, fewer students (37%) agreed they had been given development opportunities to build digital skills for future employment than in last year’s survey (when it was 39%).

In all areas, transnational and international students were much more likely to have agreed that support had been offered. The difference in agreement between UK and international students was around 10% for course-related digital skills guidance, but close to 20% in the other four areas.

Students who had been at their organisation for one year or less were much more likely to have agreed that support had been provided in all five areas compared to students who had been at their organisation for two years or more.





Sources of help for digital skills
(could tick all that applied)

- **62%** other students
- **52%** lecturers/tutors
- **48%** online videos and resources
- **38%** friends and family
- **35%** IT staff
- **29%** library/learning resources staff
- **18%** artificial intelligence and tools likely to include AI
- **14%** teaching and learning/e-learning staff
- **13%** other student service
- **11%** employer or work colleagues
- **1%** other

On average, students selected 3 sources of support in response to this question.

Students tended (62%) to turn towards other students for help with digital skills and learning. Just over half (52%) sought the help of lecturers or tutors. Just under half (48%) used online videos and resources while 18% used AI and tools likely to include AI.

The percentage of students seeking the help of IT staff (35%) has increased by 5% since last year's survey, and 11% since the 2021/22 survey. Similarly, this year, more students sought the help of library or learning resources staff (29%) than in 2021/22 (13%).

Skills training and support
(could tick all that applied)

- **54%** learning online
- **49%** avoiding plagiarism
- **47%** basic IT skills
- **29%** specialist software for your subject
- **26%** data analysis
- **26%** participating in digital assessments
- **26%** behaving safely and respectfully online
- **23%** handling digital information, data and media
- **22%** keeping data secure
- **19%** coding/scripting
- **16%** appropriate use of artificial intelligence tools
- **14%** creating accessible digital content
- **11%** online publishing
- **10%** managing social media or public webpages
- **12%** none of these

In all but one area of a wide range of digital skills areas, most students responded that training or support had not been offered.

However, almost all these areas have seen marked improvement since the 2022/23 survey. For example, learning online increased to 54% from 46% in 2022/23, basic IT skills increased to 47% from 36% in 2022/23, and data analysis increased to 26% from 21% in 2022/23. The only area that saw a decrease was avoiding plagiarism (49%, a decrease of 9%) although 16% reported the offer of training on the appropriate use of artificial intelligence tools (a new category in this year's survey).

Student voices: positive and negative aspects of learning using digital technologies

Students were asked to say what they thought were the most positive and negative aspects of learning using digital technologies, and what one thing their organisation could do to help them use digital technologies effectively. Responses were grouped together into key themes. The diversity of learning preferences and experiences was revealed in the free text responses. Almost all tools, platforms or features of digital technology were considered variously positively or negatively by different students, within and between organisations.

Positive aspects of learning using digital technology
11,620 students responded to this question. Students identified a number of key positive aspects of learning using digital technology.

More effective learning – digital technology offered students the flexibility to access learning materials whenever and wherever, and to learn at a pace that suited them. The multimodal nature of some courses was appreciated, and they valued pre-recorded and livestreamed lectures, as well as the ways in which they could participate when off campus. Students found it simple to switch between different devices when learning, and to use a variety of platforms and tools in order to effectively access content and undertake learning activities.

Some appreciated how well-structured course materials were on virtual learning environments (VLEs), and the wide range of resources available to them. This included readings, including the latest research articles and up-to-date learning content like textbooks, activities, discussion boards, and recordings of previous lectures and seminars. Digital technology better enabled self-directed learning and a more personalised learning experience. As a result, many felt empowered to develop their own learning schedules around lectures, and it was felt that a wide range of learning styles and preferences was catered for. The learning resources provided beyond course content allowed some students to develop skills considered valuable for future employment such as coding, data analysis, and audio-visual editing skills.

> *"Having the same standard of experience as campus-based students in terms of access to learning materials, opportunities to engage and collaborate with fellow students, and availability of staff"*
> **Student quote**

Revisiting lecture content – students could catch up on lectures or revise lecture content if they felt they were not paying full attention during a live lecture, if they needed to refresh their knowledge, or if they missed a session. Learning differences, impairments and the language needs of some international students were well addressed. Students felt that it was easy to use captions, review transcripts and use features like pausing and slowing down or speeding up videos. Course content such as lecture recordings and associated materials (eg slide decks, readings and quizzes) let students make more detailed or accurate notes and offered an essential starting point for undertaking more in-depth research into topics of interest. Several students said they used artificial intelligence tools to summarise lecture content and to provide pointers for essays or assignments.

"It makes catching up on missed learning due to illness really easy and stops me from falling behind"

Student quote

Curated course resources – students named a range of VLEs and other content stores. They appreciated that the various resources for their courses or modules were curated into easily navigable spaces. Course timetables, course readings, further materials, quizzes, lecture recordings and access to support could all be found in one place. Resources could be accessed from different devices, either by browser or on an app, and from anywhere they chose to study. When resources were uploaded in advance of lectures, students found it easier to focus on the content in lectures since they could annotate slide decks or similar resources rather than taking extensive notes. Many students also appreciated the various routes by which they could get help, such as through learning support staff, IT staff and teaching staff. However, students found that the level of support, the quality and accessibility of resources could vary significantly across courses and modules.

"The accessibility and layout of the [VLE] app ensures I'm aware of topics that have been and are going to be covered. It also allows me to prepare for my week and look over materials, such as PowerPoints, before I go to lectures and seminars"

Student quote

"You can always tell if a lecturer will be good if their Canvas course is live on time and already has materials in accessible formats"

Student quote

Working at one's own pace – students appreciated the ability to learn according to their personal schedules. Digital materials were accessible whenever they were required and could be used from different locations (eg cafes, on campus, in student accommodation) as long as an internet connection was available. Cloud storage (eg OneDrive), intranets and VLEs were named by students. These platforms allowed students to be more flexible according to personal commitments, such as caring responsibilities or employment. In addition, students were able to work at a pace that suited them and in accordance with their personal learning styles or needs. For some, digital content was more accessible since hosting platforms offered captions and transcripts to aid their understanding or productivity, while others used peripheral devices to learn more effectively. Some students also found that they were able to get the support they needed on demand, including via digital resources, tutors, lecturers or IT staff

"I think seamless connectivity is the best aspect of learning using digital technologies. It is amazing that I can access resources no matter where I am or what time it is. This allows me to pace my study better"

Student quote

"The ability to watch recorded lectures and seminars in my own time. Without this as a possibility, I would not have been able to undertake this study alongside a full-time job"

Student quote

Cost and travel savings – digital technology saved some students time as well as money. As lectures may have been livestreamed or made available as recordings, and a vast range of learning resources were available digitally, some

students did not have to go physically on to campus (eg lecture theatres, libraries, labs or other locations) in order to learn. The option of learning online meant students with different personal circumstances could still progress with their studies despite, for example, caring or work responsibilities, disabilities, travel restrictions and travel costs.

> *"I am a commuter. I need to travel to the university campus and it is two hours, normally using two buses. Having recorded lectures or a digital platform with the course materials helps me save time and money"*
>
> **Student quote**

Collaboration with others and a sense of community – students appreciated the sense of community that digital platforms enabled. Teams, Discord, Slack and WhatsApp were often cited as tools that helped students to create a community or support group around their course. These communities were used to facilitate group work, for motivation, as well as for moral support. Many students felt group study improved the quality of their work and that they could more effectively learn with the support of others on their course.

Some interactive tools used in lectures (eg Padlet) enabled discussion and allowed several students to more confidentially engage in activities and express their thoughts to the rest of their class. This significantly improved the learning experience for those who found it more difficult to interact in person or had social anxiety. Students also appreciated the ability to get feedback from their lecturers or tutors in a timelier manner via various communication tools. This was felt to be more convenient than scheduling meetings or attending office hours. In addition, some students communicated and networked with industry professionals around the world, which was especially helpful when exploring employment opportunities in their chosen field.

> *"I like the anonymity behind certain aspects of learning. As someone with a lot of social anxiety, speaking out loud is hard and so being able to contribute anonymously online helps immensely to feel productive"*
>
> **Student quote**

Negative aspects of learning using digital technology
Students also identified some of the negative aspects of using digital technology for learning. 10,201 responses were received for this question.

Digital distractions – students may have found it challenging to stay fully engaged with learning content owing to distractions from other digital platforms, especially social media. Some students noted that it was difficult to focus, including as a result of many notifications or announcements via communication apps and VLEs. Some students found it difficult to find the motivation to learn and some engaged in procrastination when away from in person learning contexts.

> *"It feels like you don't get a break sometimes. Receiving emails all hours of the day can be overwhelming"*
> **Student quote**

Information overload and finding relevant resources – many students experienced a plethora of information which felt overwhelming to navigate, with some using the phrase 'information overload'. For some, this pertained to information literacy, particularly difficulties in discerning credible sources from misinformation, and finding the most relevant resources when searching large databases or using search engines. Some students were concerned with avoiding plagiarism and using intellectual property they found online responsibly.

Other students had more problems with finding relevant resources for their course or module resources on an intranet or VLE. Information was not always well organised across pages or folders, and there was a lack of consistency across some modules or courses in the way information was uploaded and tagged. The quality of resources also varied, with some finding resources inaccessible. VLEs and their associated mobile apps were not always intuitive or user friendly, making navigation and tasks like submitting assignments difficult, and search functionality did not always surface relevant resources or information. Some noted they had not had inductions or training on how to use VLEs effectively.

> *"There are too many resources scattered around Canvas, making them hard to find. It needs to be concise, only the relevant things, and well labelled"*
> **Student quote**

Hardware and software problems – students faced problems with a wide range of software essential for their studies. Some students encountered new tools at university without support or training in how to use them, including at a basic level and the more advanced features which may have improved their productivity. Several students particularly struggled with how to use Microsoft apps effectively, as well as artificial intelligence tools. Additionally, students were not always aware of the wide range of software packages that may have been available to them via institutional licenses. Students did not always have access to the software they needed or wanted, while some course software had limited on site licenses which made assignments and course work problematic to complete. Students encountered problems connecting to cloud applications on and off campus (eg OneDrive) also making it difficult to make progress with their studies.

A number of issues with hardware were also faced. Not everyone had access to suitable devices for their course. Older or lower specification devices struggled to deal with some digital content, causing lagging, crashes, and posing battery life issues for students. Some students also lacked access to peripheral devices which may have increased their productivity. A particular issue faced by several students was a lack of locations to charge laptop devices across campus.

> *"It is embarrassing coming to university with my old laptop and phone to be surrounded by new, shiny MacBooks"*
> **Student quote**

> *"I find it harder to engage with online classes and online exam formats. My laptop is old and the sound system is not great, so I often have audio issues that I cannot rectify without getting a new laptop which is an expense"*
> **Student quote**

Feedback and assessment – there were concerns about cheating on online exams and organisations' ability to detect cheating and plagiarism. Some students felt that others on their course may have been cheating when undertaking various kinds of assessment, eg submitting group work rather than individual work, copying information from the internet, or using AI. Others felt that AI-powered assessment systems resulted in unfair grading or insufficient personalised feedback. Students may have had more detailed and sufficient feedback when talking to lecturers or tutors in person. They also found it difficult to get answers to very specific questions in online settings, since the queries may have required a conversation to clarify certain points, or it may have taken too long to compose a message and wait for an answer.

> *"Some people choose to use AI bots and go undetected, which is unfair to the people who did all the work without abusing that resource"*
> **Student quote**

Online lecture problems – a range of issues around recorded and livestreamed lectures were encountered. Students noted that recordings were not always uploaded in a timely manner and in some cases out of date older recordings were linked to from course pages on VLEs. Captions and transcripts were not always supplied, or were inaccurate, which caused issues for those who relied on them for accessibility purposes or to aid comprehension. Visual cues such as body language and gestures, which may aid comprehension and engagement, were also missed by some students.

Recordings and livestreams were sometimes of poor quality, particularly audio quality when teaching staff did not use good quality microphones or when they did not directly speak into the microphone. Some recordings were automatically cut-off based on the scheduled lecture time. Online lectures also failed to capture peripheral content that took place outside of the main screen being captured, such as notes on a whiteboard or class discussion. Diminished interactivity was also noted by some students, with fewer opportunities to discuss content with lecturers or classmates.

Diminished face to face interaction – students occasionally found online learning isolating and they missed out on some of the more social aspects enabled by in person lectures and activities like in class discussions, group projects and networking opportunities. Some found it challenging to build rapport and relationships with other students, lecturers and staff. Feelings of

loneliness and a lack of motivation to attend or participate in lectures were experienced by some.

Students appreciated the immediacy of response in person learning provided, and online lectures meant they struggled to get instant feedback or clarification on areas they did not understand in a lecture. Instead, alternative channels for communication like email or collaboration apps often meant much slower response times for help. Some courses were better than others at establishing online communication channels, and this may have depended on proactive students setting up chat groups themselves. Mixed in person/online lectures may have disrupted learning for some students, particularly when it was felt that some of those joining remotely did not participate equally.

> *"There is little sense of community in our year. It can be very disheartening to go days on end without seeing any peers or staff. If we ever run into trouble or personal difficulties, distance learning has left us with few familiar faces to approach"*
>
> **Student quote**

> *"We lose the ability to ask questions and gain additional insight from the experts... A lot can be gained from speaking to the experience and wisdom of the staff"*
>
> **Student quote**

Health issues – various kinds of physical problems were experienced because of prolonged screentime. This included headaches, eye strain, fatigue and discomfort. In addition, mental health issues were experienced by several students. Alongside feelings of loneliness, some students felt disconnected from the learning environment. Others felt stressed by learning using digital technologies, overwhelmed, or distracted and found it difficult to focus on their studies.

> *"Probably the health of my eyes would be the most negative [aspect]. I sometimes feel tired because of spending so much time in front of the computer"*
>
> **Student quote**

Wifi and network issues – a range of network and connectivity issues were reported. The most common problems were around the speed of wifi and signal strength around campus, as well as in home environments. Some students were unable to connect to university wifi networks, and relied on guest wifi networks, mobile data, or moved to other locations to study. This caused issues for exams and assessments, class attendance check-ins, and the ability to use organisational apps or platforms on campus. Some students found it difficult or frustrating to use multifactor authentication and found themselves unable to login, or having to login to systems or VPNs multiple times per day.

> *"Sometimes I just run into a problem where I do not have wifi access. That disconnects me from the world, and the resources that I need"*
>
> **Student quote**

One thing to help students use digital technologies effectively
Students were asked what one thing their organisation could do to help them use digital technologies more effectively. 9,276 students responded to this question. Students would like universities to:

Offer more opportunities to improve digital literacy:

- Provide more regular sessions for developing general digital literacy and digital productivity/proficiency. These should be offered in a variety of formats including online and in person sessions, in-depth and bitesize recordings, and guidance and information on VLEs. Embed training in programmes of study where possible
- Ensure students are aware of new features and important updates of regularly used tools and platforms
- Help students to navigate essential platforms like VLEs during induction programmes, and offer refresher sessions throughout their courses
- Offer a catalogue of additional digital skills training programmes, which cover key skills like information literacy, time management, plagiarism guidance and responsible use of AI, as well as guidance on how to use collaboration apps
- Consider developing a further catalogue of training courses which may boost employability, such as data analysis, coding, project management and graphic design
- Liaise more regularly with students and stakeholders to understand their training needs and how these change throughout their course of study
- Offer an assessment of digital skills and competencies and personalised steps required to improve these
- Ensure the training needs of those with disabilities and learning differences are addressed
- Offer more training to teaching staff and professional support staff to use digital technologies more effectively so that they can better provide support to students

> *"As an older student returning to education after 30 years, I probably don't even know what I don't know. An online digital assessment would be engaging and highlight skills I need to acquire"*
> **Student quote**

> *"Put more tutorials and workshops into the degree programmes to improve digital literacy, rather than having it as an optional extra to do in your own time – nobody has the time"*
> **Student quote**

Provide a more accessible central repository for resources:

- Review the user interface and user experience of virtual learning environments. Some students find these difficult to navigate and require more support to use them effectively
- Ensure course materials are uploaded and organised consistently across courses or modules
- Where possible, make sure information and resources are available from a central repository rather than distributed across multiple platforms

- Use VLEs to signpost digital skills training available internally, as well as signposting appropriate external opportunities, eg MOOCs or LinkedIn Learning courses

> *"I believe that [the university] probably does have good resources to help us use digital technologies effectively already. I'm just not sure where exactly I'd find these, so Google is usually my first port of call"*
> **Student quote**

Offer more hardware and software support:

- Students do not always have access to appropriate devices, and may own older or lower specification laptops. At least ensure students are able to use the software and applications required by their courses on their devices
- Consider investing in more computers or laptop loan schemes. Alternatively, consider providing more monitors and docking stations so students can better use their own devices
- Provide more power sockets in lecture rooms, study areas, and other communal areas on campus
- Signpost how students can get technical support when they encounter problems, and provide a number of routes to do this
- Offer an overview of all internal training opportunities for software, and a catalogue of all software available to students. Highlight alternative free software approved by the organisation
- Consider investing in premium features of commonly used software such as writing or spelling support tools

> *"Provide more laptops in libraries as sometimes none are available to loan"*
> **Student quote**

Support different modes of learning:

- Continue to support different modes of learning. Some students preferred primarily in person teaching while others preferred online learning, and others still preferred a mixture
- Provide recordings of lectures and seminars, and support live streaming where possible
- Where courses are primarily online, ensure in person activities or events are offered to students to help them develop connections with other students and course staff
- Support lecturers to use digital tools that enable interactivity when delivering lectures online, and consider ways community or discussion can be built around recorded content
- Support teaching staff to improve the quality of lecture recordings, and upload these as soon as possible after in person lectures. Especially improve audio quality to enable more accurate and accessible captions and transcripts

> *"Make learning more interactive – not just lecturers reading off presentations. More polls, quizzes, and discussions between students"*
> **Student quote**

Offer more training in course specific software:

- Students require a wide range of course and industry specific software, as well as general productivity applications. Liaise with teaching and learning staff to stay up to date with course requirements so

that appropriate software training can be offered

- Where possible, increase the number of licenses available for course-specific software and allow students to access software remotely, or provide guidance on alternative free software
- Offer in depth masterclasses for specialised software packages where only basic introductions are offered as part of a course
- Consider how accreditations in particular software can be offered as part of, or separate to, a course of study
- Consider assigning IT specialists to different departments/faculties so support can be more responsive
- Understand better the specific training needs of postgraduate students

> *"Have in-person sessions organised as part of our course to give us some dedicated time to learn the software specific to our course. When things are offered externally to our course they are not always completely relevant"*
>
> **Student quote**

Improve wifi and network connectivity:

- Invest in the improvement of wifi infrastructure across campus locations, including more access points and boosting signal strength
- Consider installing mobile signal boosters to improve mobile data connectivity
- Investigate the student experience of signing into digital platforms and using security features like multifactor authentication.

Get involved

See the digital experience through the eyes of your students and staff. Our 2024/25 digital experience insights survey for students will open in October 2024.

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 or professional services staff, please contact us at **help@jisc.ac.uk** putting 'digital insights' in the email subject line.

Digital transformation in higher education

A toolkit to support the development of digital strategies, assessment of digital maturity across your organisation and the creation of actionable roadmaps and plans for implementation.

Researching international students' digital experience

Highlighting alternative perspectives and considering issues that might affect the digital experience of international students

Our **phase one report** centred on reviewing issues and perspectives from UK HE providers, policy makers, academic and grey literature, and advocates working in this space. The **phase two report** involved direct consultation with international students in UK HE and provided recommendations for the sector.

Beyond blended

Beyond blended: rethinking curriculum and learning design

This new guide helps curriculum teams consider the pedagogic differences between in person and online learning, and the need to balance flexibility with the specific needs of students.

Building digital capability

Our digital capabilities service – helping staff and students develop digital skills and confidence

This service offers a discovery tool that allows students and staff to reflect on their digital capabilities. It also allows you to identify current strengths and areas for development across your organisation. A variety of question sets and resources are available, including new question sets on employability and artificial intelligence.

Let's work together to transform your digital experience

Contact your **relationship manager**.

Acknowledgements

Our thanks go to all the universities and colleges who took part in the student insights survey this year.