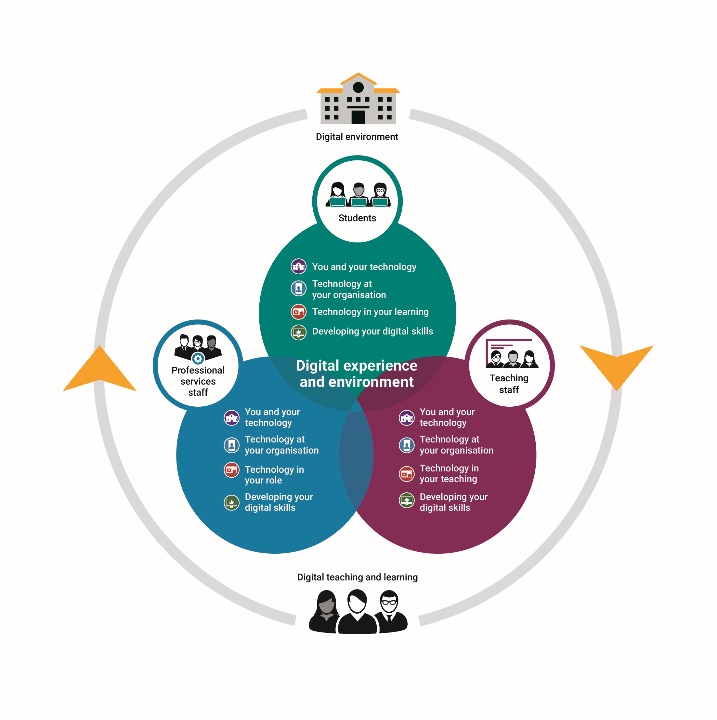
Jisc toolkit: supporting the digital experience of new students

Higher education (HE)

### About this resource

This resource is based on the findings from our **2018 – 19 student digital experience insights survey**. Responses were collected from 14,525 campus-based higher education students, studying at 19 universities across the UK. The survey provides unique insights into how students are using digital technology to enhance their studies. You can download and read the full survey report at [**digitalinsights.jisc.ac.uk**](https://digitalinsights.jisc.ac.uk/)

### Using this resource

**Engage students from the start:** this resource is designed to be fully customised so that you can use it to support new students as part of their induction and onboarding processes. This could be a great project to work on collaboratively with student partners or digital champions.

**Identify and work with your lead stakeholders – this includes students and their representatives: i**t is likely that those with overall responsibility for the student digital experience may lead in the organisation’s approach to supporting students with the digital aspects of induction and onboarding but it will strengthen and consolidate practice if other stakeholders are involved (eg e-learning team, digital strategy team, learner experience team etc).

**Make it your own – customise the toolkit**

1. In column one: **Finding**, if your university has run the Jisc digital student experience insights survey replace the national survey findings with your own. If not, the national findings may still be relevant to your students. We think they add interest to the messages in column three, but you can decide whether to include these.
2. In column two: **Considerations for your organisation**, review the considerations against the digital experience at your university. If you have added your own data in column 1, use this to guide your thinking as well.
3. Adapt the messages in column three: **Messages to students**, to reflect your situation. You may find that there are improvements that you want to make as a result of your review. This is great, but until you can put them into practice, be honest about what students can expect. Delete column two once you have finalised all the messages for new students. Check that the messages reflect what you offer and what you expect of arriving students. Add in links to your own resources and support services.
4. Finally consult with existing students (eg learner voice representatives, digital champions) about the final draft. Ask for their comments on the messages and also what advice they would give to new students. Use particularly good advice as quotes in your finished resource. You could also film students making their comments and edit these clips to create a short video resource.

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| **Be creative: rather than producing your own version you could just use this resource as a checklist for your existing student arrival and induction process. Or present the findings as a series of infographics, or an app.** |

# Theme one: your digital life

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| Headline messages to students: Your own digital devices (eg computers, laptops, tablets, smartphones), your apps, and the digital media you use are important resources for university life. The university will help you to develop your own independent habits of digital learning, as well as providing you with an excellent digital learning environment while you are a student. |

Key stakeholders: students and student representatives including digital champions/ambassadors, e-learning team, IT services, library, student experience team

## Findings and guidance

| Survey finding | Considerations for your organisation | Draft messages for students (amend to suit your organisation) |
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| Many universities support students to ‘**Bring your own device’**, sometimes referred to as BYOD | * What is the status of your BYOD policy? * Make sure that on arrival students know:   + What devices are recommended for their course of study, and what will be available to them   + How to log on to campus services   + How and where to get support with their devices if they need it | This university supports you to bring your own device onto campus (laptop, tablet, smartphone, e-reader) and use it to support your studies.  You will be able to use your own device, if you have one, to access *[add local information]*  If you are having problems getting logged on, or using your device on campus, support is available here *[add local information]*  We also have an IT buddy scheme to help you with the basics…  *(Add links and messages from your own BYOD policy.)* |
| Over 90% HE students have and use their own **laptop** | * New students should be told how laptops can be useful and guided towards suitable options (giving a range of indicative costs) * If a loan or purchase scheme is available through the university, make sure students know about this in advance * Make sure charging points and secure storage for laptops are available and clearly signposted * Students without laptops should not be disadvantaged: as well as general loan schemes, consider whether tablets, or more specialist tools such as digital cameras, will be available for students to use in class * If you provide access to a productivity suite (Google Suite or Microsoft Office 365), do you inform students pre-arrival so they don’t buy any software you provide to them for free | Students use their laptops for taking notes in class, accessing the virtual learning environment (VLE), finding resources for study, managing all the information relevant to their course, and organising their time.  (*Add any other benefits highlighted by your own students here*.)  Advice on purchasing your own laptop is available here *[add local information]*  You shouldn’t be at a disadvantage if you can’t afford an up-to-date laptop of your own. Details of laptop loans/purchase schemes are available here *[add local information]*  You are responsible for keeping your laptop safe on campus. You can find secure lockers or charging trolleys etc on campus as shown here *[add local information]* |
| 86% of students have a **smartphone** and use it to support their learning. Other mobile devices students use include tablets and e-readers | * Make sure you know how the university supports mobile access to the student desktop, virtual learning environment (VLE) and other services * You could also look into the status of mobile networks. Connectivity is important for students to keep in touch with family and friends as well as with their studies * Make sure charging points are available and clearly signposted, especially if smartphones are used within learning | Students use their smartphones and tablets to access learning materials, and sometimes to participate in class [*identify how*].  You can use your mobile device to access [*a range of mobile-enabled services and resources]*  Details of how to log on are…  You are responsible for keeping your phone safe on campus.  There are dedicated charge points for mobile devices here… *[add local information]*  You can access all the main mobile networks on campus… *[add local information]* |
| 10% of HE students said **assistive technologies or adaptations were vital** to meet their learning needs, and a further 9% use them by choice | * Accessibility is increasingly seen as an agenda for all. Your university is responsible for providing an accessible, equitable learning experience to all students. Get up to date with current legislation and what’s available from your access service * Provide online guidance for students who may not identify as having special needs but who could still benefit from using adaptive features or specialist apps * Find out what apps students themselves recommend for accessibility. Many students use mindmapping and note-making tools, text-to-speech, spelling and grammar checkers, as well as the accessibility features in generic software and device operating systems * Find out if the university has an ‘assessment for all’ policy – one that ensures a variety of assessment types are available for students with different strengths and preferences | Find out how you can adapt your devices and interfaces to make learning more comfortable for you.  Your assistive and adaptive needs will be addressed by the access service… who can provide a range of technologies and solutions.  Play to your strengths … our … strategy means that students can submit assignments in a range of media and formats.  Our students find the following apps and resources useful to help their studies: Course resources are available digitally, and in a variety of different media, making it easier to study in a way that suits you best.  *(Add whatever messages your access service suggests are appropriate, plus links.)* |

# Theme two: your digital university

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| Headline messages to students: As a student you will have access to computer facilities such as desktops, printers, digital cameras and instruments. You’ll use general and course-specific software, email and file storage, and a variety of digital systems. How can you make best use of these opportunities to reach your goals? |

Key stakeholders: students and student representatives including digital champions/ambassadors, e-learning team, IT services, library, student experience team

## Findings and guidance

| Survey finding | Considerations for your organisation | Draft messages for students (amend to suit your organisation) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Despite so many owning their own devices, 43% of HE students said they would like more computers in computer rooms and a further 32% said they would like more laptops and tablets available in class | * Many of the complaints that students have about digital provision relate to computer rooms – not enough, not well maintained, not sufficiently up to date, not enough variety (eg all open plan). Ideally some spaces should be bookable for private/small group study. Despite bringing their own devices, students still value the study culture of fixed computing rooms, and the reassurance that ‘everything I need to succeed’ is available in the one place. Let students know about the variety of fixed computing available, eg bookable pods, large labs etc * Students are often concerned about printing (including costs) and about file storage/transfer, so it’s worth mentioning what’s available to them | The university provides a wide range of fixed computing options to support your studies…  Ask about ‘plug and play’ facilities, bookable computer rooms, and wireless printing from your laptop.  You will have your own personal file store that you can access from everywhere you like to study.  Printing is taken care of too… *[add local information]* |
| Students want to see university **systems better joined up** eg with a single user-name and password, or with links from reading lists to course materials to library catalogues etc | * Learners have a right to expect systems to be properly integrated, and for accessing them to be a simple operation. However, you do not have to satisfy all learner requests to make their lives easier: in the real world they will have to navigate different sources of information | There are many digital systems available to support your studies, from email to the library catalogue. You will find these user-friendly and easy to access. But university is also about becoming an independent learner and learning to navigate different sources of information. You will learn how to find and evaluate information, manage passwords, and develop your own strategies for organising notes and references. |
| Only about half of students in our survey agreed that their university protected their **data privacy** and only about a third agreed that they knew how their **personal data** was stored and used | * Check the guidance from IT services * Consider how this is communicated to students. Could it be more engaging, actionable, concise? A project for some creative students could be designing an infographic or animation to convey these messages in an engaging way | The university is committed to protecting your data privacy and security. You can find out about the university’s policy here… *[add local information]*  Look for guidance from IT services on keeping your data safe and follow any updates carefully. |
| About half of HE students felt that **teaching rooms** were well adapted for digital ways of working | * Students who are using their own devices complain about a lack of charging points, secure storage, reliable wifi and mobile networks. These and other basic transactional issues - such as clean computer rooms and keyboards - make a big difference to the students’ experience and satisfaction overall * Consider how facts such as the location of charging points can be communicated in an engaging way | The university has a programme of… *[add local information]*  Find out where you can charge your devices, and where you can work with them comfortably between classes.  *[add location information]* |
| HE students tend to ask lecturers on their course and other students for **help with digital issues** or look at how-to videos online | * Digital issues may be supported by learning support teams, course tutors, IT services, student digital champions, accessibility or career teams, library/learning resources staff and more. Signpost what’s available, ideally from a single jumping-off point (app screen, web page, ‘map’ etc) | The university subscribes to an on-demand video service… *[add local information]*  You can use this at any time to help you with a technical problem or to learn new skills.  If you need more personal support, you can find it from… *[add local information]*  There is a student hub where you will find… *[add local information]*  e-learning/digital champions are available… *[add local information]* |
| Less than a third of students agreed that they were given the chance to be **involved in decisions** about digital services | * Discuss how students are involved and could be more involved, whether as course reps, digital champions, or through regular feedback online or at physical locations around the campus | If you see a chance to have your say, take it. It doesn’t need to take up lots of time – often it’s as simple as filling out a comments card or survey.  Consider becoming a course rep or a digital champion if you really want to make a difference. |

# Theme three: your digital course

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| Headline messages to students: The digital activities you carry out on your course will depend on the subject you are studying. However, there are some things that all students do, and it’s worth making sure you get the most from these activities. Look out for opportunities to gain valuable digital skills and experience. |

Key stakeholders: students and student representatives including digital champions/ambassadors, e-learning team, course teams, educational development/teaching and learning team  
NB: It may be preferable to use this section and the following one separately, as part of course induction, rather than university induction. The briefing for teaching staff has more detail for these key stakeholders (briefing available from: [**digitalinsights.jisc.ac.uk/our-service**](https://digitalinsights.jisc.ac.uk/our-service/our-reports/)).

## Findings and guidance

| Survey finding | Considerations for your organisation | Draft messages for students (amend to suit your organisation) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Around seven in ten students use digital tools or apps on a weekly or more frequent basis to **find resources beyond those recommended by their lecturers**. They use a wide range of tools to do this, including Google Scholar, online journal catalogues, and specialist video channels. These students are at an advantage in their assignments – but only if they use academically credible sources | * Where and how do students acquire digital information skills? * Work with colleagues in the library to make sure arriving students get an early introduction, with meaningful tasks to embed the learning * Most students will be some way into their course before they fully understand issues such as plagiarism, or the value of reference management. An induction in week one is not enough | Look for library tutorials to help you make the best use of online resources. Librarians and course tutors can help you to find and reference appropriate academic content for your subject area. *[Add links and local information].*  Reference management and bookmarking are good practices that help you to keep track of useful resources across your assignments and courses.  Always ask your tutor if you’re not sure which resources are OK to use and why. |
| Many students **produce work in digital formats***.* Text documents and presentation slides are the most common | * Writing a PowerPoint presentation is a common learning task but there are more interesting ways to get students using their digital skills. How about making an animation or producing an app? * You will be allowing students to play to their strengths if you encourage them to use different media to meet the same learning outcomes * See if the university has a policy on ‘assessment for all’, or look out for examples of student assignments in different digital formats | You will gain useful experience, and credit for originality, if you explore other media - so long as they meet your course requirements. You might author a web page or blog post, create a short video or animation, or produce an infographic.  Try different software for producing your presentations.  Look out for opportunities to develop and demonstrate your digital creativity in the tasks you are set. |
| Not all students **work online with others**. Nevertheless, most jobs involve collaborative work in digital spaces, whether on group projects, focused discussions, collaborative writing, or peer review | * Explain why group work is valuable and how you will assess it. Group work is often more acceptable to students if they can be assessed on their individual contribution as well as the shared outcome * Some people find it harder than others to feel connected through digital media. Many people find it easier to make a good connection face-to-face initially and only after this to connect digitally (eg by email or discussion forum). At the start of the year make sure new students have opportunities to work together, form connections as a cohort, and meet their lecturers * Unless you are committed to working within a VLE or other closed environment – for example, so that you can track student contributions more easily – allow students to share ideas about how best to collaborate, and favourite apps for doing so | Embrace the opportunity to work in groups and rise to any challenges as part of the learning process. Whether you are assessed on your joint outcomes, or individually for your contributions, you will be gaining valuable skills for the contemporary workplace.  *[Include here any information about group work and group assessments on the course].* |
| Not all students get the chance to **create a digital record or e-portfolio** of their work, these can be helpful in showcasing achievements to future employers | * Find out whether the university supports an e-portfolio, and how different course teams are using it with their students | Ask your tutor if you can present your work in formats that can be taken with you beyond university or exported to your own social media sites, so that you have more than a degree certificate to show for the work you have put in.  *[Include here any background on the use of e-portfolios at your university]* |
| Students enjoy **polling and quizzing** in classes, either with special ‘clickers’ or with students’ own devices | * Experiment with using clickers or polling apps for different purposes – to check students’ understanding before and/or after a class; to teach adaptively; to engage students; to explore a range of different views; as a way of structuring buzz groups (groups can vote on a solution to a problem) * Also consider setting live internet tasks and then polling on the results | Polling responses are anonymous and can’t be used for assessment, so you don’t need worry about getting things wrong. Different lecturers might use them in different ways – to check your understanding, find out your views, or encourage discussion. |
| We asked students what **other activities** they found really useful for learning. Examples students cited include:  *“Having access to lecture content before the lecture has helped me keep up to speed and engaged.”*  *“Polling during class as a method of reviewing prescribed reading. Quiz game helped me remember important points quickly.”*  *“Creating posters and presentations together through a design project. The use of Photoshop and 3D design software to present a portfolio of my learning.”* | * A varied diet of digital learning tasks keeps students motivated and allows them to explore different strengths * Ideally, they will also reflect the kinds of activity undertaken in contemporary research and professional practice * Consider whether digital skills will be explicitly assessed and given feedback   Examples of activities that students found useful are available in the [**appendices** that accompany the full report](http://repository.jisc.ac.uk/7672/1/32323h2_JISC_DEI_StudentReport19_A4_Appendix123_HR_Web.pdf). | Look out for these in class or try them in your own study time. Not everything will suit you but try to see your time at university as a chance to experiment with different ways to learn. |
| 60% of HE students agreed that the **software** used on their course was **industry standard and up-to-date** | * Software is a real value-for-money issue for students and expectations need to be managed. If the prospectus says that students will be working with cutting-edge software in a high-tech subject area, that is what they will expect * If the underlying skills (eg of data analysis) matter more than the version number, that should be communicated so students don’t feel short-changed | Use every opportunity to practice skills that will be relevant in your future career. If you feel systems need updating, talk to your course rep or course tutor. But remember that university is about learning the underlying skills: in work you will be expected to use whatever systems are available. |
| Students would like course software to be available on their own desktops, and ideally on their own devices for study away from campus | * Students appreciate being able to access specialist software in a variety of on-campus locations, so check that this will be possible, especially with the software they have to use for assignments * Offer advice on how to find free or low-cost software they can install on their own system or remote desktop, perhaps with reduced functionality | This is a reasonable request to make but if the university can’t offer it, find out what free or low-cost alternatives are recommended, perhaps with a lower level of functionality. |
| Most students agreed that **online assessment** was delivered and managed well | * Students experience more anxiety around assessment than any other issue and consequently it can have a negative impact on their experience. Make sure students fully understand how they will be assessed, ideally through a variety of different challenges and using different media to express their ideas * Prioritise timely feedback in a format that students will be able to keep and review later | Make sure you understand how assignments are submitted online before you reach any critical deadlines.  Also find out how the university uses plagiarism detection and how you can use detection systems to improve your assignments.  If you’ve forgotten what you were told at induction, there should be online resources and workshops to get you back up to speed.  *[Add local information]* |
| In our survey, around seven in ten HE students thought **digital skills** would be important in their chosen career, compared with workplace trends that suggest the figure is closer to 95% of professional roles. Only around four in ten agreed that their course was preparing them for the digital workplace  Also, only about a third of students agreed that they understood what digital skills were required on their course before they started, and only 37% agreed they were given regular opportunities to review and update their digital skills. Our analysis found that many of these issues are important in terms of students’ satisfaction with their overall experience | * These are issues that can only really be addressed at the course/curriculum design stage, where digital futures should be considered alongside other issues. But even within an established course of study, teaching staff can discuss with students how digital technologies are changing methods, practices and careers * Teaching staff should be confident users of digital technology themselves and should be able to signpost students to further support if they need it. Opportunities to connect with employers can be offered alongside the curriculum (eg via career fairs, employer-sponsored awards, placements etc) | Make sure you don’t miss out on opportunities to develop digital skills, whether they arise on your course or outside of it (eg in student projects, volunteering, hobbies and interest groups).  If your course doesn’t cover digital technology in the workplace, or up to date digital methods, ask your course tutor if time can be set aside for this.  A careers adviser will be able to help you explore these issues.  You may never have such good access to IT training as you do at university. So be pro-active - sign up for workshops, drop in to sessions in the library or IT services, watch how-to videos and access online training.  The university offers you… *[mention specific opportunities eg the Jisc discovery tool]* |

# Theme four: your digital views

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| Headline messages to students: All students have their own strengths and preferences for learning. Your taught sessions, assignments and independent study should provide you with a variety of approaches, so you can develop different strategies and discover your strengths. Be willing to try new things, but let your tutors know if you are not getting what you need. Get involved in decisions about the digital environment for learning if you have the chance to do so. |

Key stakeholders: students and student representatives including digital champions/ambassadors, course teams, learning support and e-learning   
NB: It may be preferable to use this section and the previous one separately, as part of course induction, rather than university induction. The briefing for teaching staff has more detail for these key stakeholders (briefing available from: [**digitalinsights.jisc.ac.uk**](https://digitalinsights.jisc.ac.uk/our-service/our-reports/) ).

## Findings and guidance

| Survey finding | Considerations for your organisation | Draft messages for students (amend to suit your organisation) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Around three quarters of our HE respondents agreed that the **use of digital technologies** allowed them to be **more independent in their learning** and to fit learning more easily into their lives | * Make sure the use of digital technologies on courses takes advantage of these known benefits and communicate them to students * Be prepared for a variety of responses from students when introducing new methods. It helps if you acknowledge this and ask students afterwards for feedback. This gives them a chance to share positive strategies as well as airing any problems | Maximise these proven benefits by using digital apps to organise your study time and to-do lists, or by linking your course timetable with your personal calendar.  Make sure you can access all the software and resources you need to study away from campus, for example, by downloading materials whilst you have access to the network. |
| Most students also felt that their **understanding and enjoyment** were greater when they had the opportunity to use digital tools and media |  | Experiment with learning formats and resource types until you find what works for you.  Engage your creative side by producing digital posters, presentations, web pages and other media when you get the chance. Explore digital simulations, interactive media and games – or try language learning or brain training apps if you enjoy them.  Ask other students what makes their study time fun and effective. |
| A majority of HE students said they preferred a mix of **group and individual work**, but a sizeable minority – more than four in ten – preferred to work independently. This may reflect the way that A-level and HE students are assessed | * Explain why group work is important and how it can be beneficial * Have students tackle group tasks that clearly benefit their own learning, such as sharing reference lists or bookmarks, setting up an online forum to comment on each other’s work, producing revision materials for one another, or looking at how other students have tackled a problem. | Think about how other students could be a resource for your learning. Collaborative working is the norm in most workplaces, and job candidates will often be tested on how they perform in collaborative settings, so it’s worth finding out how to get the most out of this way of studying and working. |
| About half of HE students were happy with the level of **technology-supported learning** on their course, and most of the rest wanted digital technologies to be used more  Students had many innovative and insightful suggestions for how their course could use digital technologies more effectively | * Give students the chance to say for themselves what they want from digital learning and give them responsibility for trying out alternative ideas (if they are not costly or difficult to implement) * You can use our full report to explore some of the student ideas put forward, but there is no substitute for listening to your own students | We are using the Jisc digital experience insights service to find out how students feel and put your best ideas into practice.  Join in the discussion at your university by… *[add local information]* |