



Gathering students experience of learning online:

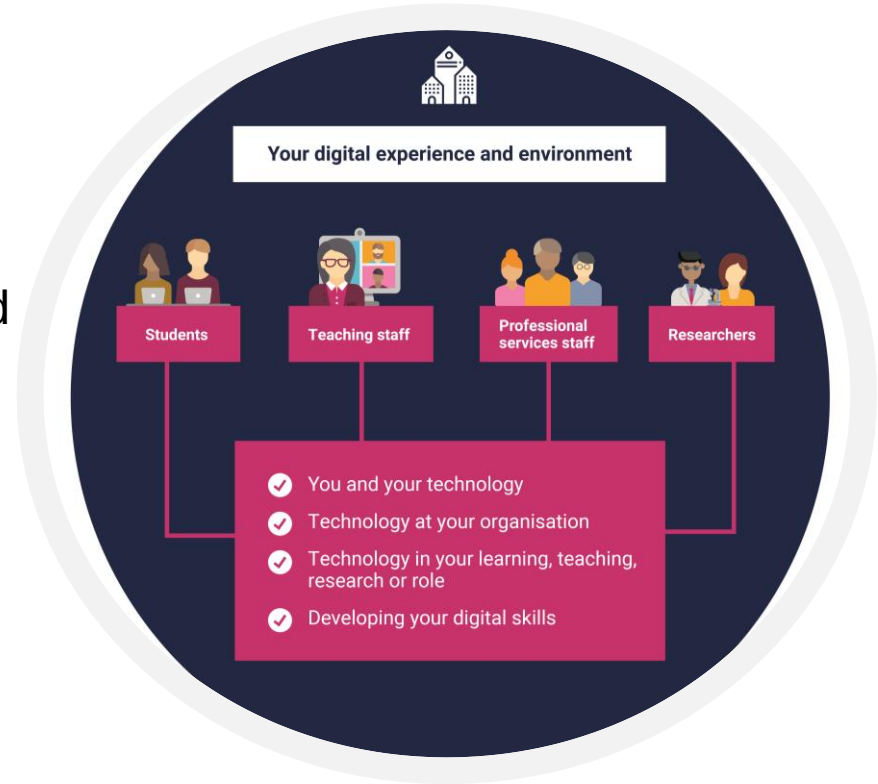
What the data from Jisc's digital experience insights 2020-21 student surveys is telling us

**Ruth Drysdale, Senior Consultant
– data and digital capability Jisc**

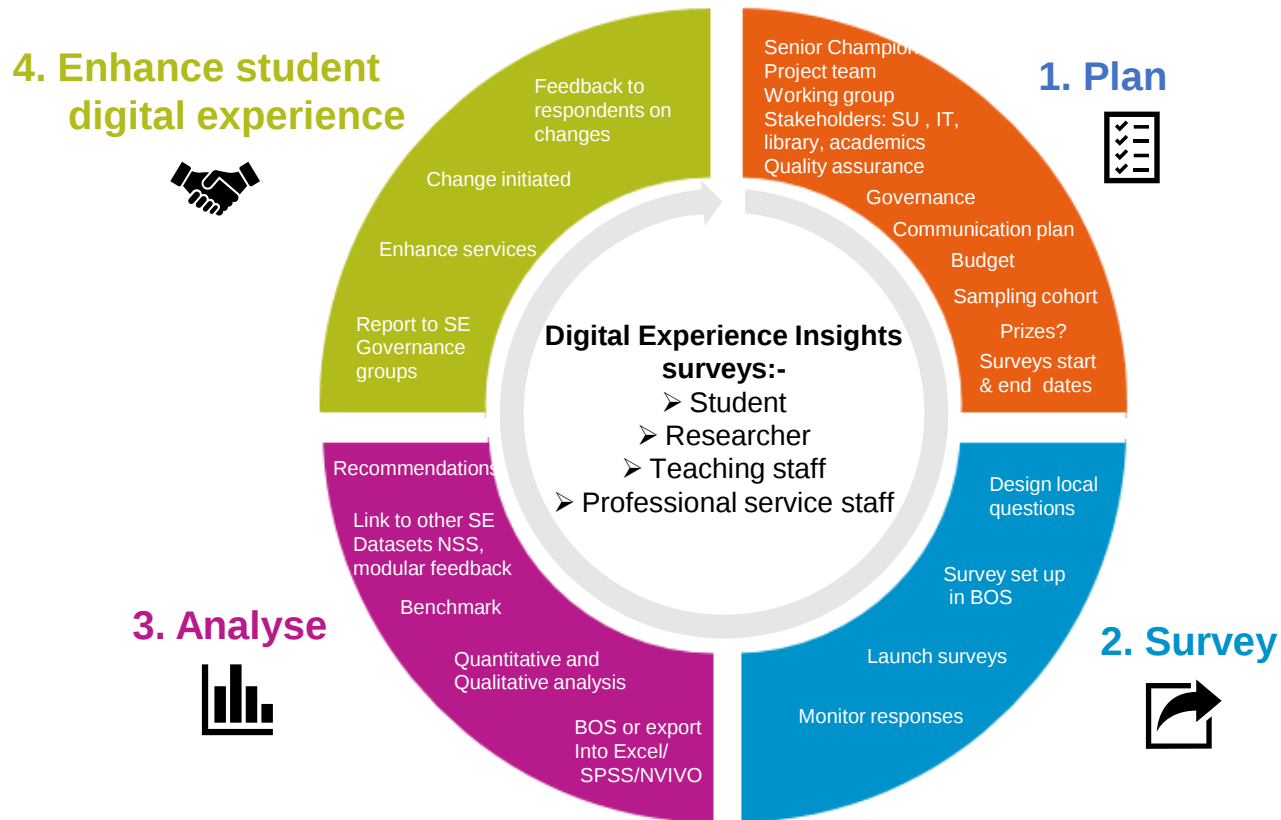
Digital experience insights

- Our insights surveys provide powerful data on how students, teaching and professional services staff, and researchers, are using technology
- Designed to help to understand and improve the digital experience in FE and HE
- Provide baseline and benchmarking data to inform your digital strategy
- New question sets for 2020-21 surveys running from October 2020 and reflect the COVID-19 context

<https://digitalinsights.jisc.ac.uk>



Institutional insights project process



Listening to our students

Data gathered from October – December 2020

- 5,599 responses from learners studying at 10 further education and sixth form colleges
- 21,470 responses from students studying at 11 higher education institutions



Theme 1 – your current learning situation for HE

In the last 2 weeks **HOW** have you mainly been learning? (answered between Oct-Dec 2020)

- **1%** – physically on site
- **18%** – a mix of physically on site and online learning
- **81%** – online learning (with the other students on course/shielding/quarantine)



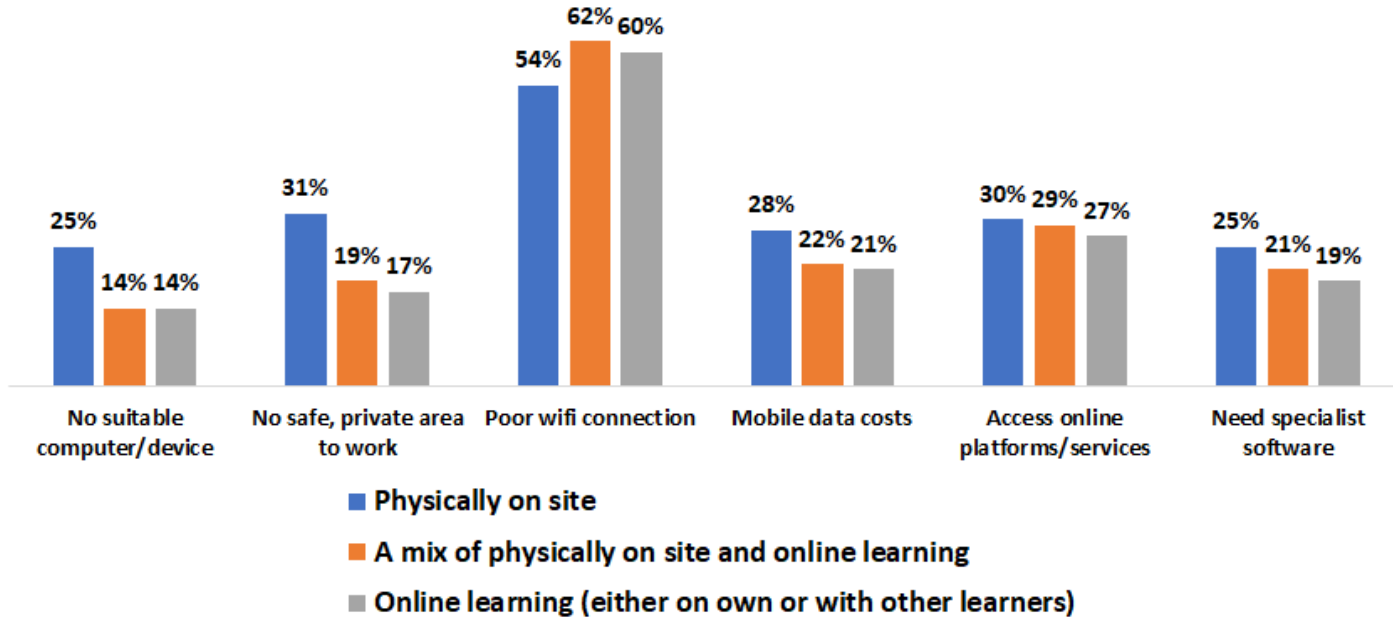
Theme one - WHERE were HE students learning online?

- **72%** – at home, own or family home
- **32%** – student accommodation
- **11%** – on campus in study spaces, libraries etc
- **3%** – off campus in public spaces (eg cafes)
- **1%** – I have not been learning online



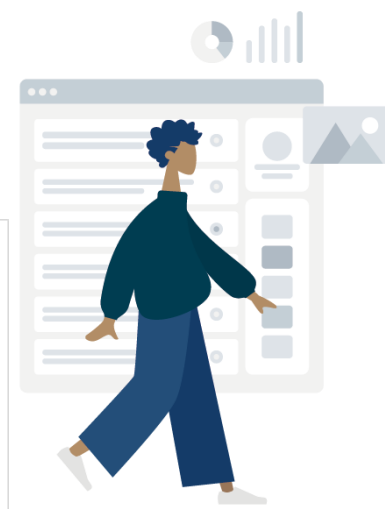
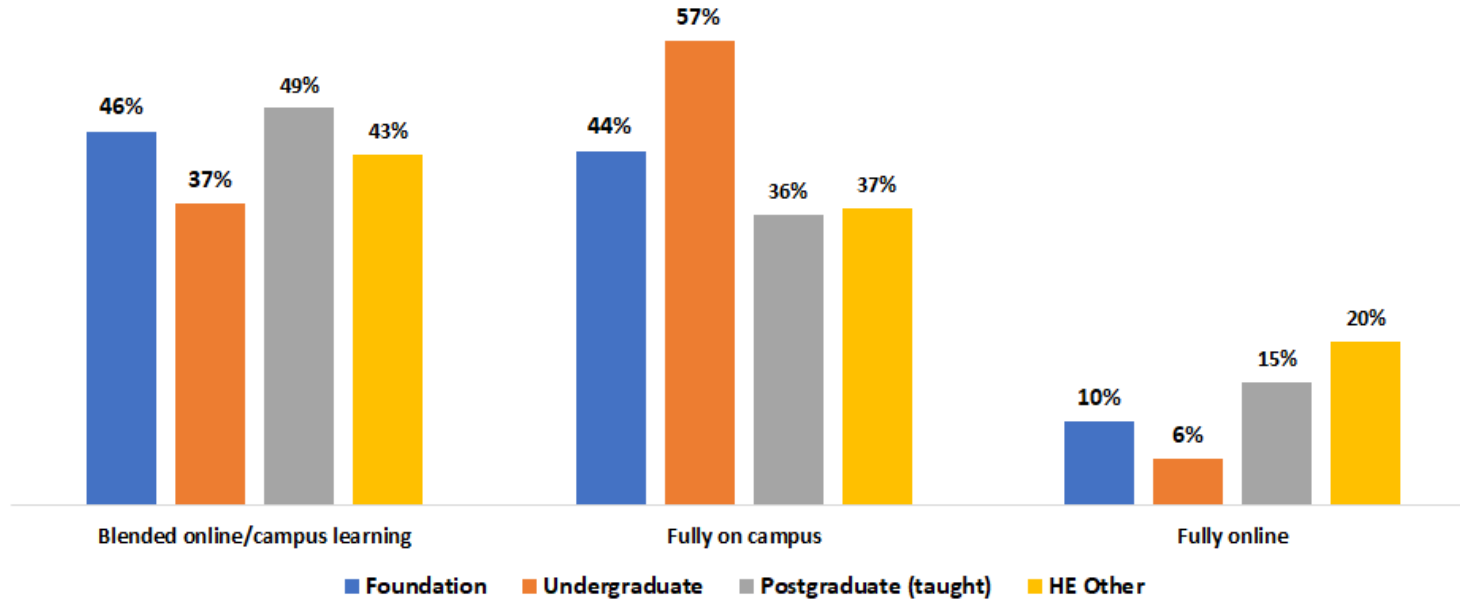
Theme one - When you've been learning online, have any of the following been a problem? - HE students

Q1 (In the last two weeks, how have you mainly been learning?) by (Q4) (When you've been learning online, have any of the following been a problem?) - HE students



Theme one - Undergraduates proportionally the most likely to expect their course to be fully on campus when signed up

Q6 (What level is the course you're studying?) by (Q7) (When you signed up to your course, did you expect it to be:) - HE students



Theme two: digital platforms and services at your organisation

The percentages of HE students who agreed with various statements about their learning environment were:

- **48%** – reliable (38% neutral, 14% disagreed)
- **42%** – well designed (43% neutral, 16% disagreed)
- **45%** – easy to navigate (36% neutral, 19% disagreed)
- **70%** – safe and secure (27% neutral, 3% disagreed)



Theme two: digital platforms and services at your organisation

Involving learners in decisions about online learning

- **50% of FE learners** agreed they were given the chance to be involved in decisions about online learning (39% neutral, 11% disagreed)
- **36% of HE students** agreed they were given the chance to be involved in decisions about online learning (36% neutral, 29% disagreed)



Theme three: technology in your learning

Overall quality of online and digital learning :

- **FE learners** were positive about the quality of online and digital learning on their course overall. **68%** of all respondents and **70%** of new learners rated it as being either 'best imaginable', 'excellent' or 'good'
- **HE students** were also positive about the quality of online and digital learning on their course overall. **68%** of all respondents and **71%** of new students rated it as being either 'best imaginable', 'excellent' or 'good'



Theme three: technology in your learning

Range of learning activities – percentage of **HE students** who said they had carried out the following online learning activities in the **last two weeks** prior to taking part in the survey were:



- **86%** – live lecture/teaching session
- **84%** – accessed recorded lecture/teaching session
- **81%** – accessed other course materials eg notes, assignments
- **64%** – submitted coursework
- **52%** – online discussion with lecturer
- **49%** – got feedback on their work
- **45%** – interacted with quizzes/games/tests
- **39%** – worked on a group project eg shared report
- **37%** – online research tasks
- **18%** – virtual lab, practical or field work

Theme three: technology in your learning

Quality of online learning materials

The percentages of **HE students** who agreed with statements about the quality of online learning materials were:

- **55% – well designed** (35% neutral, 10% disagreed)
- **36% – engaging and motivating** (41% neutral, 23% disagreed)
- **45% – at the right level and pace** (38% neutral, 18% disagreed)



Theme 4 – your digital skills

Overall support for online learning

- **FE learners** were positive overall about the support they received for online learning on their course overall and the mean average score was 'good'. **71%** of all respondents and **73%** of new learners rated it as being either 'best imaginable', 'excellent' or 'good'.
- **HE students** were positive overall about the support they received for online learning on their course overall. **62%** of all respondents and **68%** of new students rated it as being either 'best imaginable', 'excellent' or 'good'



Theme 4 – your digital skills

Confidence in aspects of learning online

The percentages of **HE students** who agreed with questions set specifically in the context of the current pandemic situation were:

- **45%** – the learning expectations placed on students had been reasonable (31% neutral, 24% disagreed)
- **51%** – could access all the university support services they needed online (34% neutral, 15% disagreed)
- **34%** – the concerns of students and their representatives were being heard (43% neutral, 23% disagreed)



Theme 4 – your digital skills

Support and guidance

The percentages of **HE students** who agreed they had received support for learning online and digital skills development were:

- **52%** – support for learning online/away from campus (36% neutral, 12% disagreed)
- **42%** – guidance about the digital skills needed for their course (39% neutral, 18% disagreed)
- **25%** – an assessment of their digital skills and training needs (41% neutral, 34% disagreed)



Theme 4 – your digital skills

Where do HE students go for help with online learning?

- **67%** – other students on your course
- **61%** – lecturers/tutors
- **46%** – online videos and resources
- **33%** – friends and family
- **16%** – IT/e-learning staff
- **10%** – don't need help
- **7%** – library staff



Qualitative themes

In their own words – what FE learners and HE students are experiencing



Positive aspects of online learning

What HE students were saying...

- **Lecture recordings make a big difference to students in terms of:**
 - **Understanding** – ability to watch/revisit as many times as they would like
 - Being able to vary **pace** (slow down and speed up)
 - **Stop/pause** to facilitate and improve the quality of their **note-taking**
 - **Catch up** if unable to attend live session for any reason
 - Helpful to students for whom **English is not first language**
 - It can be easier to **hear** than in large lecture halls/theatres with less distraction surrounding sound

Positive aspects of online learning

- **Live sessions are naturally more interactive and engaging than pre-records because they more easily allow opportunities to ask questions and receive timely responses**
- **Online learning is perceived as better by some students**
- The **flexibility** and **convenience** of online learning enables students to schedule their studies around their **other commitments** (work, family, care) in a less rigid way
- **Learning with and from peers is important to students** - small group activities work better than larger groups
- **Appreciation of effort that has gone into curriculum redesign, communication and support** - students acknowledge the **efforts** of both **academic** and **professional services staff** in **adapting** and **supporting** students in their online learning

Negative aspects of online learning

- **Students are experiencing difficulties in accessing lectures and online resources**
- **Timeliness, scheduling and timetabling**
- **Online learning is hard and difficult** and can be **overwhelming** – students report receiving **too much work**, expectation of **larger volume of independent work than usual** but **without the benefit of timely support**
- **Difficult to concentrate/focus** - **too much screen time**, some lectures **too long**, **insufficient breaks**, intenseness of delivery mode – causes **fatigue** and **mental health concerns**
- **Communication is an issue** - **interactions** in live sessions can be difficult if **class size** is large, if **don't know other students**
- **Isolation and loneliness**

Enhancing current and future provision

- Immediate actions - what individuals can do to enhance their practice
 - Lesson design, length of sessions (bite size), easier navigation of materials in the VLE, signpost to other digital support, clear and timely communication, support for wellbeing
- Mid-term actions – at a departmental level
 - Course design to be more engaging and easier navigation around VLE/Teams sites, with content accessible across all devices
- Longer term planning - institutional strategy
 - Investment in kit for staff and students, training for staff to develop their digital capability, redesign of curriculum to take the benefits of digital into on campus provision

Next steps

Data collection and analysis is continuing...

- Full question by question analysis and briefings summarising these findings are available from <https://digitalinsights.jisc.ac.uk/reports-and-briefings/our-reports/>
- Next tranche of student data will be reviewed and analysed in May
- Currently reviewing teaching staff and professional services staff responses
- Collect your own data and run the surveys from Oct 2021 onwards <https://digitalinsights.jisc.ac.uk/subscribe/find-out-more/>

Get in touch...

Digital experience insights

Ruth Drysdale

Ruth.drysdale@jisc.ac.uk

<https://digitalinsights.jisc.ac.uk>

[#digitalstudent](#)



Except where otherwise noted,
this work is licensed under CC-BY

