

Bloomsbury Digital Student Tracker Report 2017

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Executive Summary

A consortium of five University of London member institutions, based in Bloomsbury, jointly participated in the Jisc Digital Student Tracker research in March 2017. The Tracker, delivered as an online survey, was advertised to all students at each institution and produced 330 responses in total. Compared to the national data collected by Jisc, the response rate cohort generally matches the responses made by the overall student population. This report collates the responses and makes a number of conclusions and recommendations, using the national data as a benchmark. A number of areas were raised including suggested improvements to Moodle and the use of learning technology made by teaching staff. Where the issues voiced by our students are not alarming, their responses can be used by e-learning, IT, academic and information services staff as evidence to support and enhance digital learning provisions. The authors recommend that the Tracker (or similar survey) be conducted at least every two years in order to produce longitudinal research data to provide evidence of improvements and identify emerging areas for development.

Introduction

“The UK will need 745,000 additional workers with digital skills to meet rising demand from employers between 2013 and 2017, and almost 90% of new jobs require digital skills to some degree, with 72% of employers stating that they are unwilling to interview candidates who do not have basic IT skills”

Digital Skills Crisis, House of Commons Science and Technology Committee, Second Report of Session 2016-2017

To research how digitally-ready our students are for the world of work in respect to the above quote, the Bloomsbury-based member institutions of the University of London jointly participated in the Jisc Digital Student Tracker survey; the participating institutions were Birkbeck¹, LSHTM², RVC³, SOAS⁴ and UCL⁵. The survey was designed and managed by Jisc on behalf of the UK education sector to provide a national benchmark for the 74 institutions who took part. Of these institutions, 40% were from Higher Education (HE), 49% were from Further Education (FE) and the remaining 11% were from 6th Form

¹ Birkbeck, University of London www.birkbeck.ac.uk

² London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine www.lshtm.ac.uk

³ Royal Veterinary College www.rvc.ac.uk

⁴ School of African & Oriental Studies www.soas.ac.uk

⁵ University College London www.ucl.ac.uk

Colleges, Adult and Community Learning and Skills providers. The Tracker, delivered via an online survey (see Appendix A), was based on a set of 18 questions covering issues related to digital learning.

Our aims for the survey were to engage our students with a consortium-wide initiative focused on Digital Capabilities, to develop recommendations, strategies and practices that could be shared across the participating institutions. Prior to this, our institutions had taken a variety of approaches to collecting information about the student digital experience, such as the free text responses from relevant questions in national survey data, and carrying out one-off consultations on specific issues. The Tracker was therefore an opportunity to undertake research systematically, and in a comparable, replicable way (Jisc 2017a).

Due to conflicting constraints within the individual institutions, created by competing priorities for institutional surveys (such as the National Student Survey) and resourcing, there was a limited opportunity of time to advertise and run the survey independently. It was realised that it would be more efficient to work as a consortium since we predicted our individual sample sizes would be too small to make generalisations. It was therefore apparent that working together would be a preferable approach, and it also fitted with an existing Bloomsbury enhancement project on the digital capabilities of staff and students.

The survey, which was treated by the consortium as a pilot, was open for the month of March 2017 and was advertised on each institution's Moodle landing page. In addition to this, there was some use of social media whereby the libraries and Student Unions were encouraged to tweet and post Facebook announcements about the survey. Promotion opportunities were limited as it was being run during examinations period; along with the other aforementioned constraints and general sensitivities around surveying students, this meant that we anticipated a low overall response.

Our survey elicited 330 responses, the percentage breakdown of which can be seen in Figure 1 below with actual numbers shown in Table 1. Although this is not a great number, it is much higher than expected, especially given the constraints under which we were working.

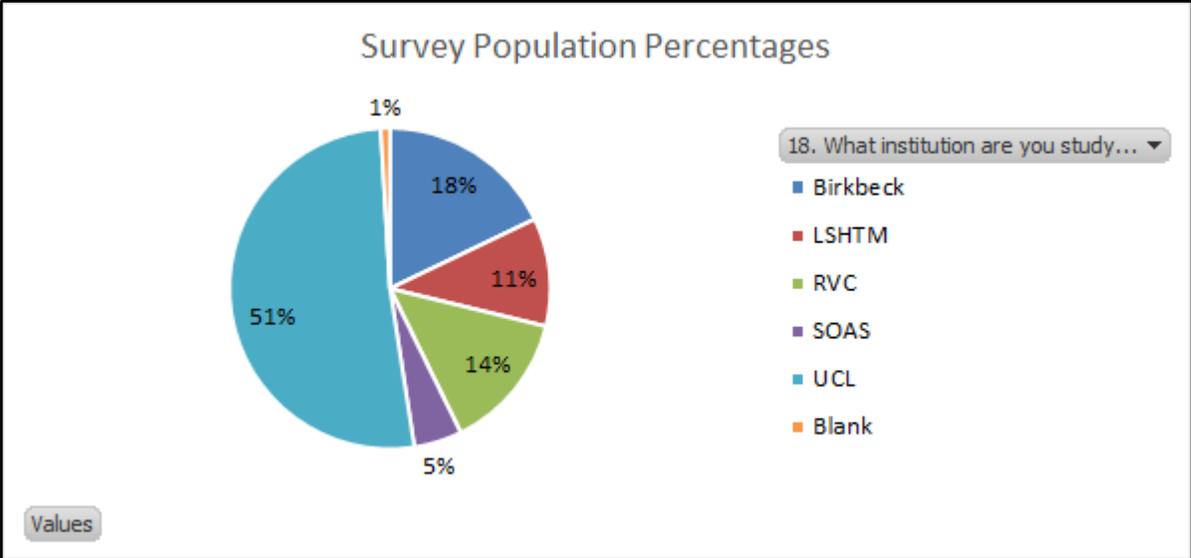


Figure 1: Pie chart for survey population percentages by institution.

Table 1: Number of respondents per institution.

Institution	Birkbeck	LSHTM	RVC	SOAS	UCL	TOTAL
Number of responses	59	36	46	16	170	327 ⁶

In terms of methodology, the survey data for the individual institutions was extracted. A workshop for representatives from each of the institutions was held in July 2017 during which the results corresponding to the survey’s open questions were analysed in institutional groups. This event enabled interesting discussions over commonalities and potential implications. Participants agreed to meet again as a group in six months' time in order to see what might have changed and what new ideas were generated.

The survey comprises four broad areas: digital access, support, activity and learning. Most questions were quantitatively recorded, but there were four open questions, which produced qualitative data. We were also able to add two questions to the survey and we selected e-assessment, since that was the previous Bloomsbury enhancement project (see www.bloomsbury.ac.uk/assessment) and Moodle, the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) platform used by all members of the consortium. Three of the survey questions are *not* included in this report as they are demographic and could be used to identify individual students. These questions relate to disability, age and level of study. This data has been made available to the respective institutions (see Appendix C) and should still be treated as confidential. The Service Manager for the Bloomsbury Learning Environment (BLE) and UCL’s Digital Literacy Officer coordinated our version of the survey and authored this report.

⁶ Four respondents did not disclose at which institution they were studying

A disadvantage of the consortium approach was that we were not able to benchmark individual institutions against the overall survey population as resources would not allow for this. Whilst deep analysis is not possible with this dataset, the overall findings are very interesting and have strong implications for improvements to supporting digital capabilities of not only students (the primary focus) but also of staff. In the future, the participating institutions agreed to run the survey individually rather than as part of a collective; whether that repeat will be in 12 or 24 months remains to be decided at the time of writing.

This report therefore examines our collective responses to the survey in comparison with the national survey population (see dataset in Appendix B), and is structured question by question, offering indicative conclusions. The survey questions are contained in Appendix A, which serves as a helpful companion document whilst reading this report. We strongly recommend that individual institutions independently analyse their own results in more detail. For confidentiality, each institution has been provided presented with its own version of this document, which contains the relevant data for their institution only (see Appendix C) and not the complete Bloomsbury dataset. For the purpose of this report, we have not examined SOAS's individual data as the sample set was too small. However, the SOAS data is included in our overall results and conclusions.

Results

Question 1. At your University, do you have access to the following whenever you need them?

This first question required students to select which of the following provisions are available to them:

- Reliable WiFi.
- Online course materials.
- E-books and e-journals.
- Personal information online.
- File storage and backup.
- Mobile access to University services.
- Computers and printers.

Our students' responses to this first question in the survey align very closely to the wider survey population whereby the majority of respondents felt that the WiFi in their institution was reliable. We did wonder why 8% of our students did not know whether this service was reliable - perhaps because they were not using wireless enabled devices or because they were not using *wireless-dependent* devices (i.e. 3 or 4G). However in question 2.2, where students were asked what technologies they owned personally and used to support their learning, our results did not differ hugely from the overall survey population figures suggesting that they *are* making use of the wireless networks on campus. More research into student-owned and used technologies would therefore help to clarify this anomaly.

94% of respondents said that they accessed online course materials whenever they needed them. At the RVC, 100% of respondents confirmed they accessed online material. This is a pleasing result and again matched the overall survey population. Only 17 students overall responded that they did not access online materials; it might be useful to explore why this was the case, even though this result is small.

In terms of access to ebooks/ejournals, personal information online and file storage/backup, our results fall in line with the overall survey population of between 50-80% agreeing that they make use of these. However, a higher percentage of *our* students do not know if they have mobile access to University services in comparison to the overall population; where the margin of difference is not great, it is worth highlighting.

Similarly for the final item in this question regarding access to computers and printers, compared to the overall survey population, there appears to be a problem with students accessing hardware with 13% reporting that they don't have sufficient access at their institution (the national response being 8%). This is likely to be of concern to IT Services across the consortium's institutions. See Figure 2 below.

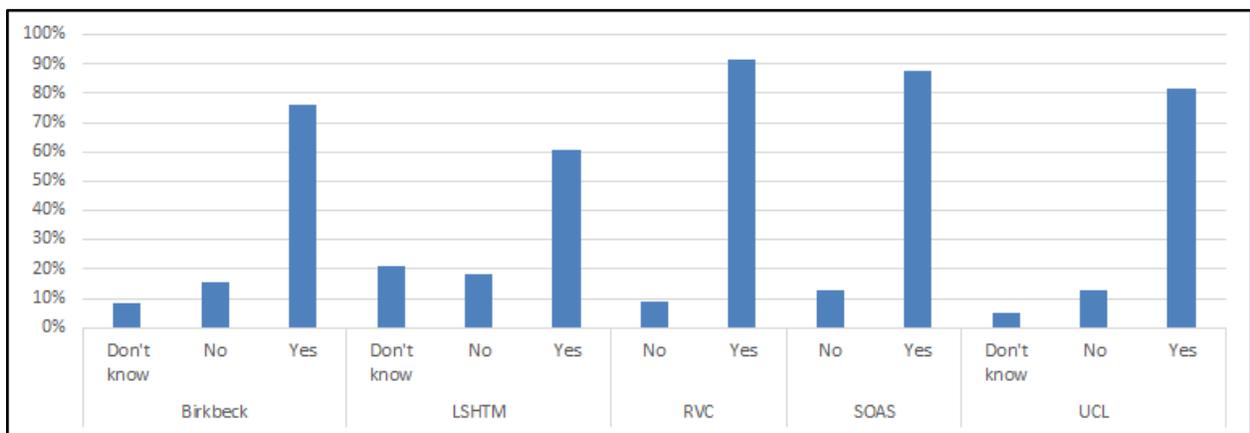


Figure 2: Bar chart. Question 1: At your university do you have access to computers and printers?

Question 2. Which of these personal or university-owned digital devices do you use to support your learning?

This question required students to indicate which, out of a selection of possible devices used to support learning, were university-owned and which they owned themselves:

- Desktop computer.
- Laptop computer.
- Tablet/iPad.
- Smartphone.
- Printer.

Not really surprisingly, 89% of respondents use their own laptop for their studies compared to 62% who use their institutions' desktop computers. Moreover, 82% are using their own smartphones, which has

implications for curriculum design: are we designing our online courses for use with the devices that our students use? 67% of the respondents are dependent on their institutions' printers since only 38% have their own. Despite a big push for a paperless curriculum in some of the institutions, students are still making use of these facilities. In general for this question, the responses we collected align closely with the national data.

Question 3. Behaviour online

This question asked students to indicate if they are able to perform a number of activities and behaviours either on their own, with support or not at all:

- Behave safely and respectfully online.
- Create a positive online profile.
- Judge online content for its relevance and reliability.
- Change privacy settings and manage passwords.
- Modify standard settings to suit my needs.

The results indicate that our students believe they are behaving safely and respectfully online, which is in line with the overall survey population. 86% of the overall population claim to be able to create a positive online profile by themselves, however in contrast nearly 76% of *our* students made this claim. In addition, more of our students 'don't know' if they are creating a positive online profile than the rest of the population, which may indicate a lack of understanding about how to do this and thus offer an justification for training.

Question 4. Who best supports you to learn these kinds of skills?

Our responses indicated that our students are less likely to receive support from lecturers on their courses compared to the overall survey population. There are many possible reasons for this; is it because staff are unwilling, too busy, unskilled or unaware? There is no way to infer this without further research. Interestingly, they are *not* seeking support from their peers either compared to the overall survey population. Where they *do* seem to be receiving support (which at 52% is higher than the overall survey population of 36%), is by accessing online information, indicating a preference for self-support. See Figure 3 below. A disadvantage with this question is that we are unsure whether students are actively *asking* for help or whether they are passively *receiving* help. It would be interesting to find out whether they are intentionally *not* asking for help and if so, why this is.

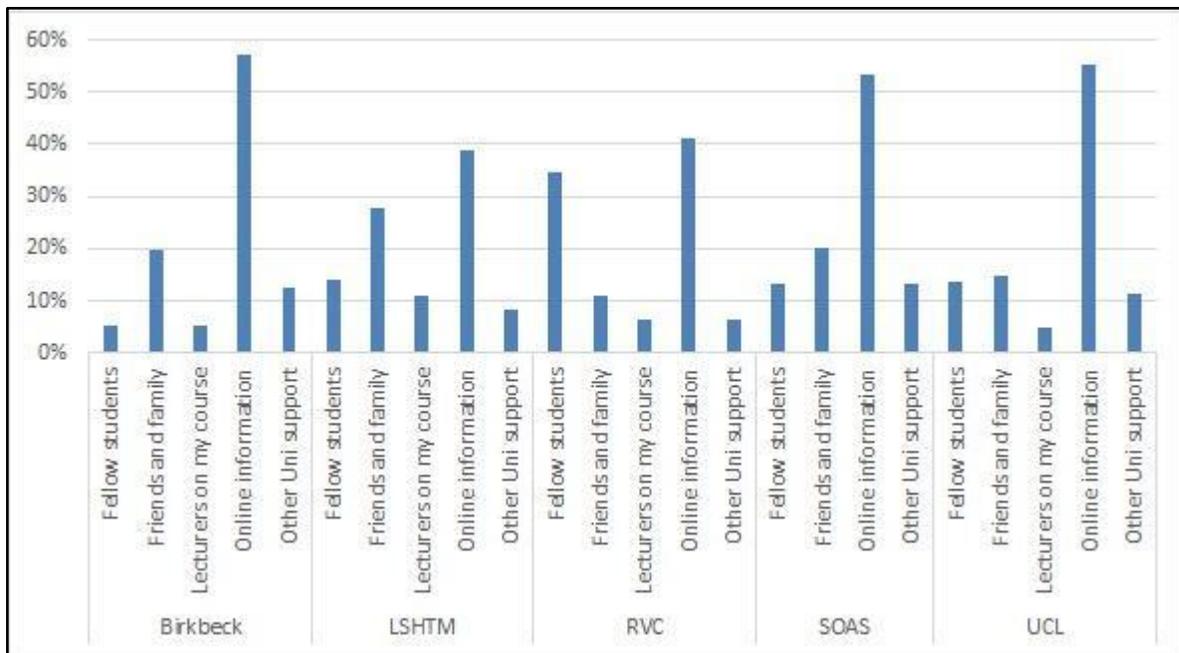


Figure 3: Bar chart. Question 4: Who best supports you to learn these kind of skills?

Question 5. Do you have a disability or health issue that affects how you study?

Due to the confidential nature of this question, we have not included details pertaining to this area here. However, the respective results for each institution have been made available in Appendix C.

Question 6. As part of your course how often do you do the following digital activities?

This question asked students to indicate how often (weekly or more; monthly or less or never) they perform a number of activities:

- Find information online.
- Work online with others.
- Produce work in a digital format.
- Create a formal record of your learning.
- Use an educational game simulation for learning.
- Use a polling device or online quiz to give answers in class.

In terms of finding information online, working online with others, producing work in a digital format and using educational games or simulation for learning, our responses indicate that students are independently performing all these activities, and this in line with the overall survey population. This is not to say, however, that we cannot improve our provision. When it comes to students creating a formal record of their learning, our students responded that they did so but at 5% less than the national responses. More notably, although there is some frequent use of polling devices and online quizzes in class, we were interested to note that the same proportion (45%) of respondents never use these tools versus use them on a monthly basis. This is likely to reflect variation in academics’ use of these

techniques in classes to elicit student engagement and participation in classes. This could be further explored by learning technologists and included in lesson planning and the design of learning outcomes.



The second part of this question required students to provide their own examples of a course digital activity they have found really useful (Q6a). Taking the UCL students as an example here, *their* most popular answer was online quizzes. Moodle and its forums were the second most popular responses with lecture recordings being third. Of the remaining responses, three respondents named software products (Storm, Aplia and Microsoft Project) as having been useful to them.

Other platforms (collaborative editing environments, MOOCs, and online library resources) were only highlighted by a tiny number of respondents. See Figure 4 below. **Image 1:** UCL Portico. Courtesy of @UCL Media Services



Figure 4: Word Cloud displaying UCL students' free text comments Question 6.a. Example of a course digital activity that you have found really useful. See Appendix D for your institution's full set of Word Clouds.

Question 7. In your own learning time, how often do you use digital tools or apps?

This question asked students to indicate how often (weekly or more; monthly or less or never) they use a selection of online tool and applications:

- Manage links and references.
- Organise your study time.
- Make notes or recordings.
- Look for additional resources not recommended by your lecturer.
- Access lecture notes or recorded lectures.
- Access learning on the move.
- Watch or listen to learning materials.
- Discuss your learning informally on social media.

The results relating to all but the last item above positively correlate with the overall survey population. However, our students are discussing their learning informally on social media less frequently in comparison, and 38% are not using it at all. It would be worth exploring this and examining how our institutions are encouraging or supporting the way in which tools like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, WhatsApp and other online services can enable the sharing of personal information and media as well as supporting and discussing their learning.



In the second part of this question, students were asked to provide free text examples of a digital tool or app they found really useful for learning (Q7a). As an example, the most popular answer reported by students at LSHTM was Moodle - with no specifics about the actual activity they were describing. Google and Facebook both received the same number of mentions and were the second most popular response. Laptops were also referred to with the same frequency, which may be explained with a better understanding of the institutional context i.e. perhaps LSHTM students consider laptops digital tools. The Word Cloud below illustrates the most popular responses to this question provided by UCL students, and serves as a further example. **Image 2: LSHTM by Chris Sampson (CC BY 2.0).**



Figure 5: Word Cloud displaying UCL students' free text comments Question 7.a. Example of a digital tool or app you find really useful for learning. See Appendix D for your institution's full set of Word Clouds.

Question 8. When digital technology is used on my course...

This question asked students to indicate if they agreed with, were neutral about, disagreed with or didn't know about the following statements regarding the impact of digital technology on their course:

- I understand things better.
- I am more independent in my learning.
- I feel more connected with my lecturers.
- I can fit learning into my life more easily.

The students who responded to our survey do not appear to place great importance on technology to help with their understanding or independence in their learning. Proportionately, fewer of them feel connected with their lecturer using technology and more of them *disagree* that they feel connected than the overall survey population sample. It is therefore important for academics to understand that their students would feel better supported if they made greater use of technology within their courses on the VLE. Similarly, our respondents are suggesting the same is true with their peers. The good news is that nearly three quarters of our respondents indicated they can fit learning into their lives more easily

as a result of technology being used in their course. Therefore, from our sample, it appears that technology-enabled communication needs greater attention. See Figure 6 below.

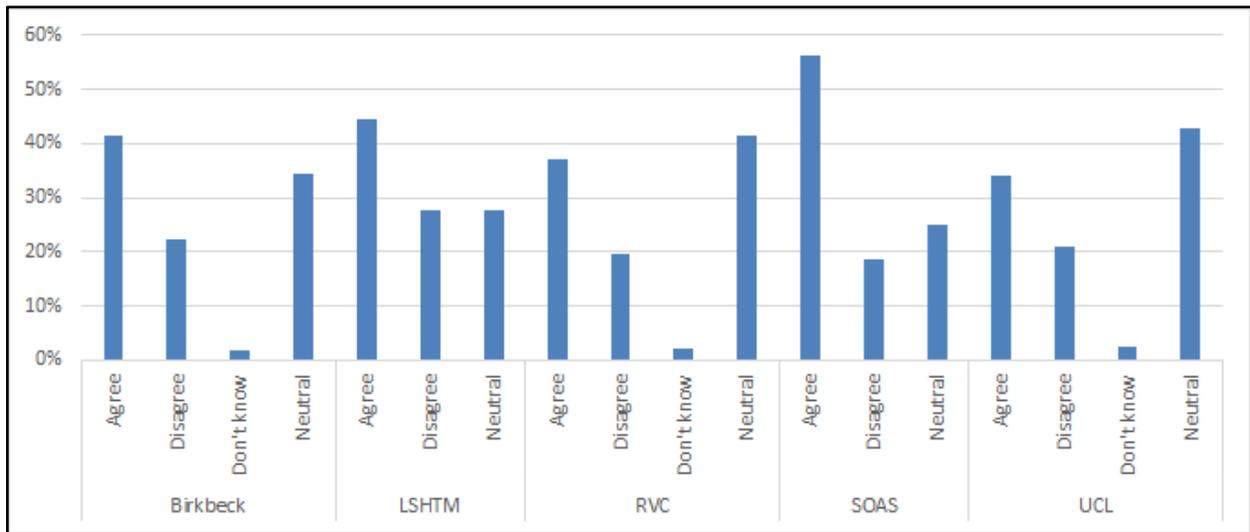


Figure 6: Bar chart for Question 8.3.a. When digital technology is used on my course I....feel more connected to my lecturers.

Question 9. When digital technology is used on my course...

This question required students to indicate if they agreed with, were neutral about, disagreed with or didn't know about an additional set of statements regarding how digital technology might negatively impact on their learning on their course:

- I am more easily distracted.
- I find it harder to manage all the information.
- I feel more isolated.
- I find it harder to motivate myself.
- I am less likely to attend class.

Again, our results in this section fall well within the data collected from the overall population. It is somewhat reassuring to know that 43% of our respondents *disagreed* that using digital technology on their course made them more easily distracted. 56% also disagreed that they found it hard to manage all the information; and over 50% disagreed that technology made them feel isolated and less likely to attend class. However, the results for this section indicate that more needs to be done to support the *other* 50% of students to improve their experiences of technology in their courses.

Question 10. How much do you agree with the following statements?

This question asked students to indicate if they agreed with, were neutral about, disagreed with or didn't know about the following statements:

- Digital skills are important in my chosen career.

- My course prepares me for the digital workplace.
- Online assessments are delivered and managed well.
- I am told how my personal data is stored and used.
- Learners are given the chance to be involved in decisions about digital services.

The first two statements above both relate to employability, and our results differed from the wider population. Firstly, more of our students agreed that digital skills are important in their chosen career and slightly more were neutral about this. Perhaps surprisingly, fewer of our students agreed that their course prepared them for the digital workplace. This is possibly the most concerning feedback we received from this survey - it could imply that students appreciate the importance of digital skills but that their institutions are failing to prepare them adequately. This highlights the obligation we have as learning providers to fully support the digital skills agenda, and the result is pertinent to the work of careers advisers in our institutions. It would be of value to explore these questions in greater detail with student focus groups or an event on learning in the future; see Figures 7 and 8 for further details.

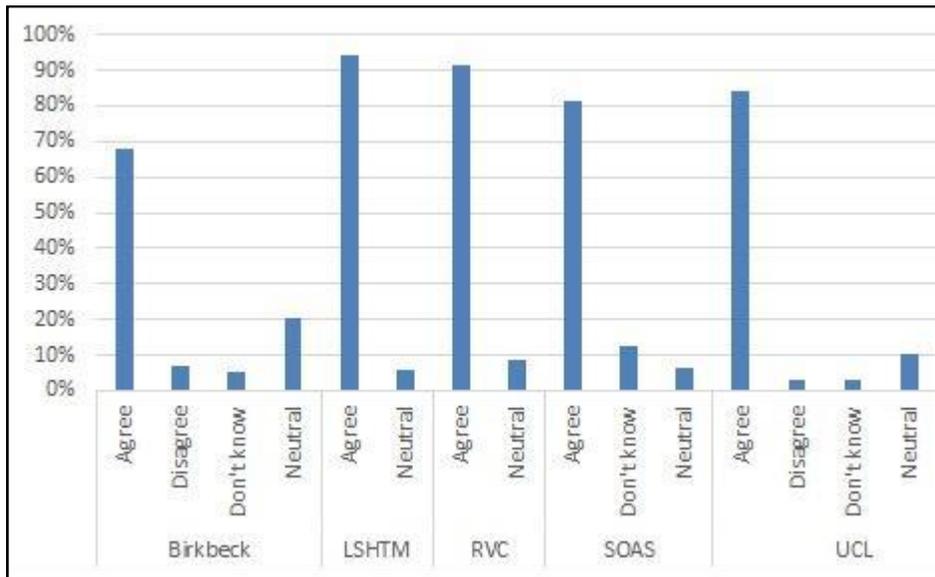


Figure 7: Bar chart for Question 10. 1.a. Digital skills are important for my career.

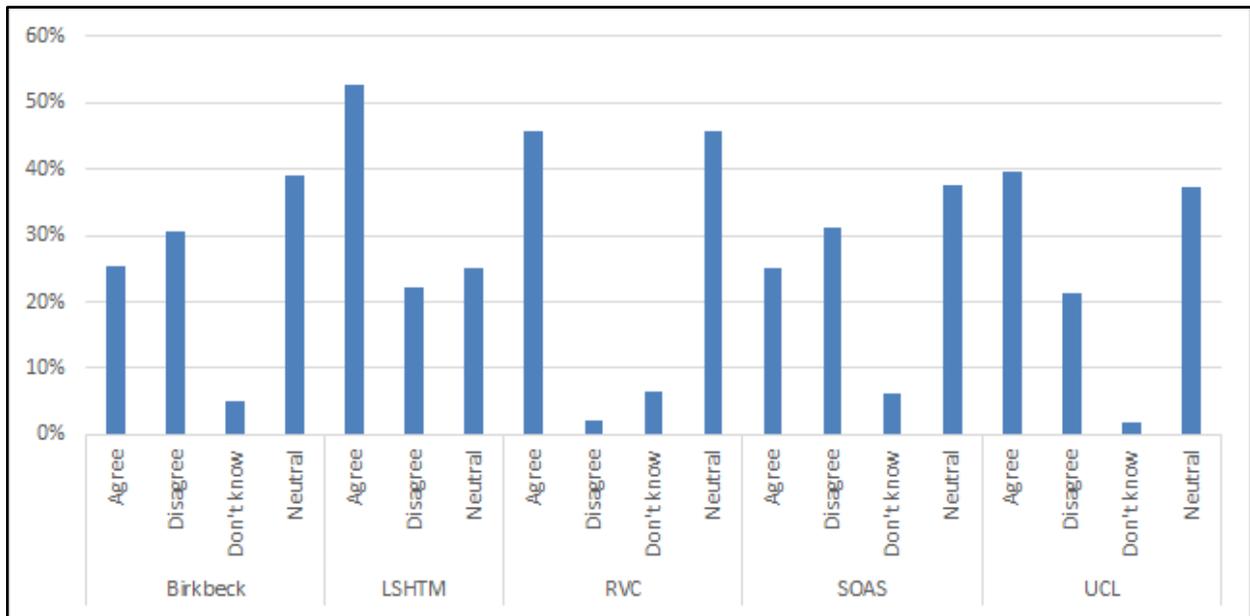


Figure 8: Bar chart for Question 10.2.a. *My course prepares me for the digital workplace.*

Although nearly 50% of our respondents agreed that online assessment is delivered and managed well, this was 10% less than the overall survey population. In addition, 15% of our cohort compared to 9% overall disagreed with the statement. These outcomes align with research conducted by the BLE in 2014-2016 (Sherman & Havemann 2017) and the recommendations of that report would improve these results.

When asked to consider how their personal data is stored and used, only 24% of respondents agreed that they understood how this worked and 35% disagreed. These figures are similar to how they felt about being involved in decisions about digital services. This seems to imply that more work needs to be done to inform and provide opportunity for students to contribute to institutional decisions about digital services.

Question 11. To improve your experience of digital teaching and learning, what one thing should we do?



This open question required students to provide longer and more considered responses relating to their satisfaction, which can be used as an indicative measure of how they would like to see change in their institution’s digital provision. Here, we invite the individual institutions to examine their respective responses (see Appendix D) in close detail. As an example, the majority of responses to this question at the RVC referred to improvements with Moodle (known in the institution as ‘Learn’): RVC students

would like improved organisation, navigation and sign-posting of content, more interactive activities and more resources. See Figure 9 below. These answers will have specific implications for teaching/curriculum staff and e-learning teams in the institution. **Image 3: RVC Hawkshead campus.** Courtesy of the RVC.

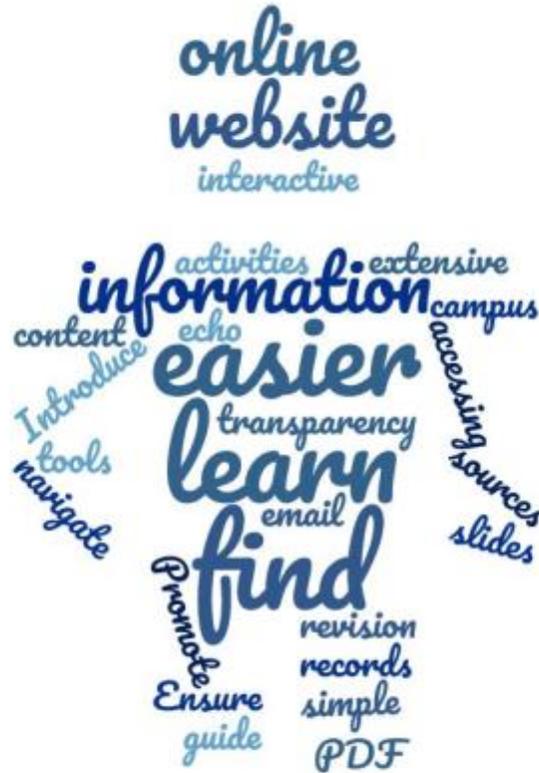


Figure 9: Word Cloud displaying the RVC students' free text comments for Question 11. See Appendix D for your institution's full set of Word Clouds.

Question 12. To improve your experience of digital teaching and learning, what one thing should we not do?



As with Question 11, this free text, open question required students to describe what they would *not* want their institutions to do. At first glance, this was quite a challenging question to both consider and also to interpret the findings, but it did yield some interesting views, which again, should be examined closely by each institution (see Appendix D). As an example, students at Birkbeck stated that many assumptions should not be made concerning students' access to resources and access to/understanding of technology. There were also points about the institution's reliance on the digital and a concern about

Building on the questions about how well online assessments are delivered and managed in Question 10, the penultimate item in the survey, related in more detail to e-assessment. We chose this topic as it was very relevant to the work the consortium had previously conducted. 90% of our respondents compared to the overall result of 57% agreed that they found it more convenient to submit assignments electronically. This is a significantly better result and reflects well on the electronic management of assessment (EMA) practice undertaken by our institutions. See Figure 11 below.

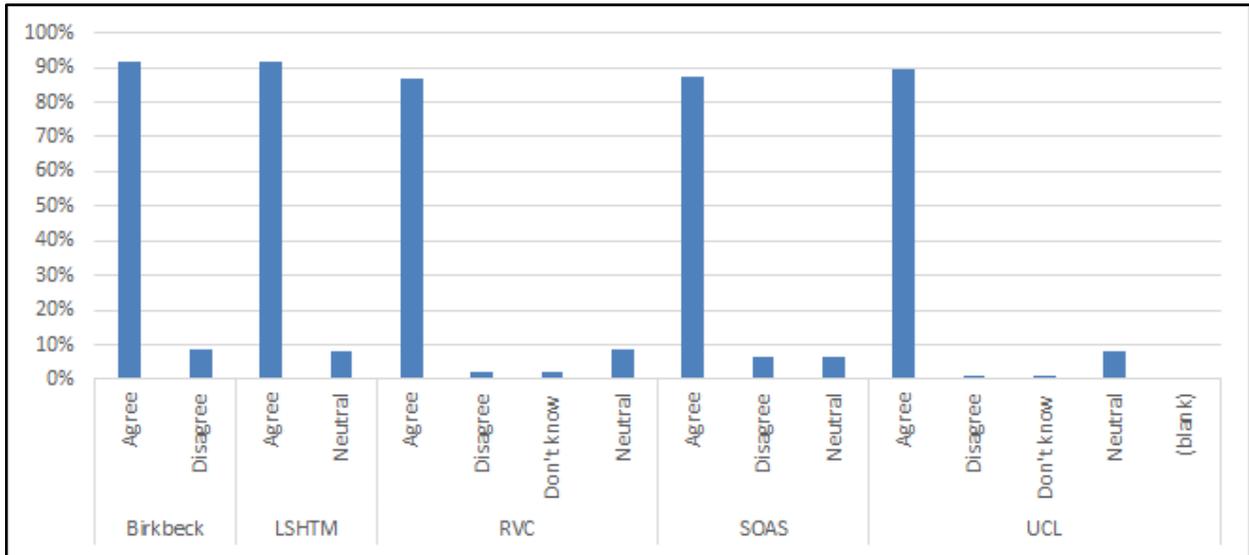


Figure 11: Bar chart for Question 13.a. I find it more convenient to submit assignments electronically.

62% of our students agreed that they enjoy using online quizzes to test their knowledge and just under 50% agreed that they made better use of feedback if it is delivered digitally. These results confirm that submitting assessments electronically, providing digital feedback and offering online quizzes are important for improving student satisfaction. See Figure 12 and 13 below.

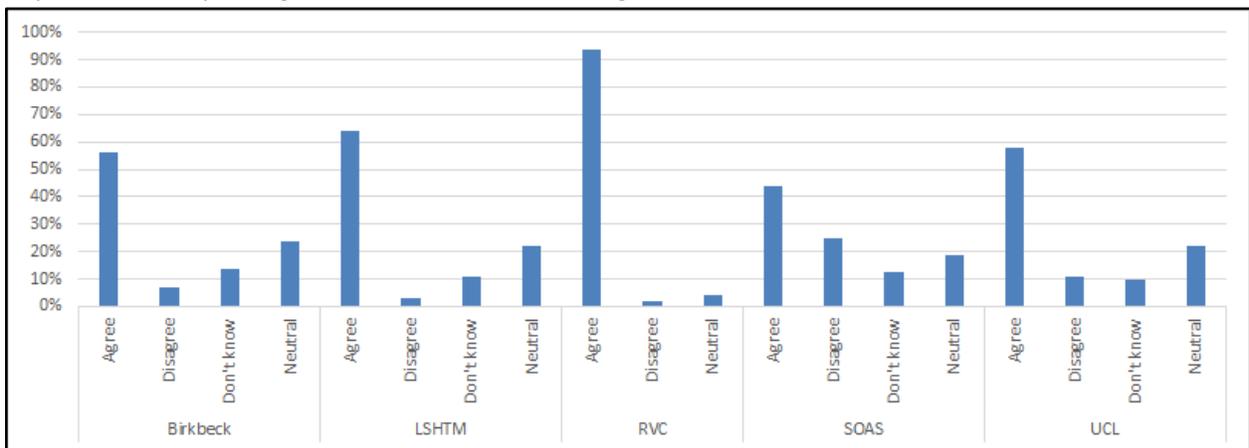


Figure 12: Bar chart for Question 13.2.a. I enjoy using online quizzes to test my knowledge.

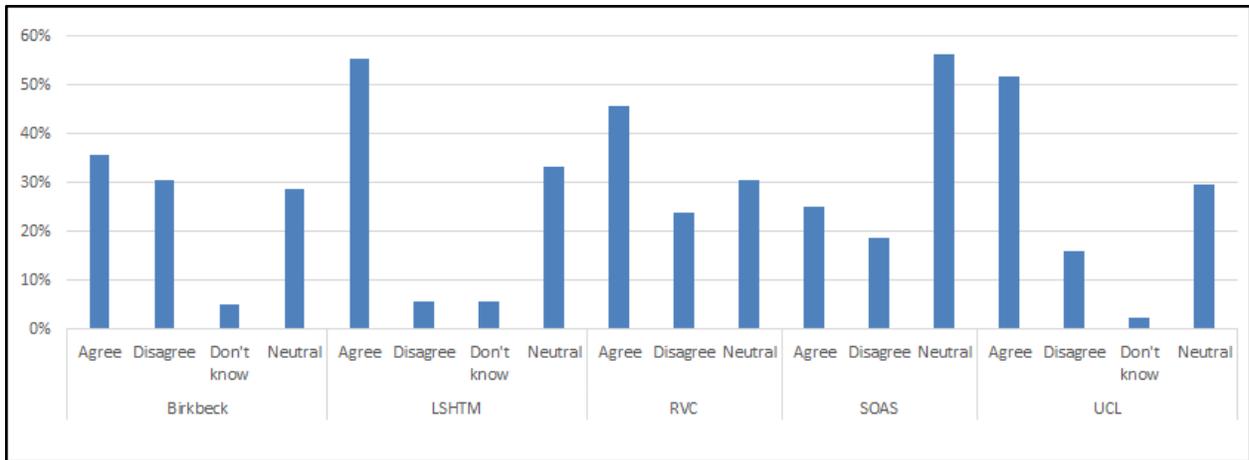


Figure 13: Bar chart for Question 13.3a. I make better use of feedback if it is delivered digitally.

In terms of the institutions' systems helping students to avoid plagiarism, the results are very interesting. 87% of RVC students and 72% of UCL students agreed that their respective institutions supported them however, only 41% of student at Birkbeck and 44% of those at LSHTM agreed. This indicates that the RVC and UCL offer more effective anti-plagiarism systems than Birkbeck and LSHTM, who would benefit from further investigation of this. See Figure 14 below.

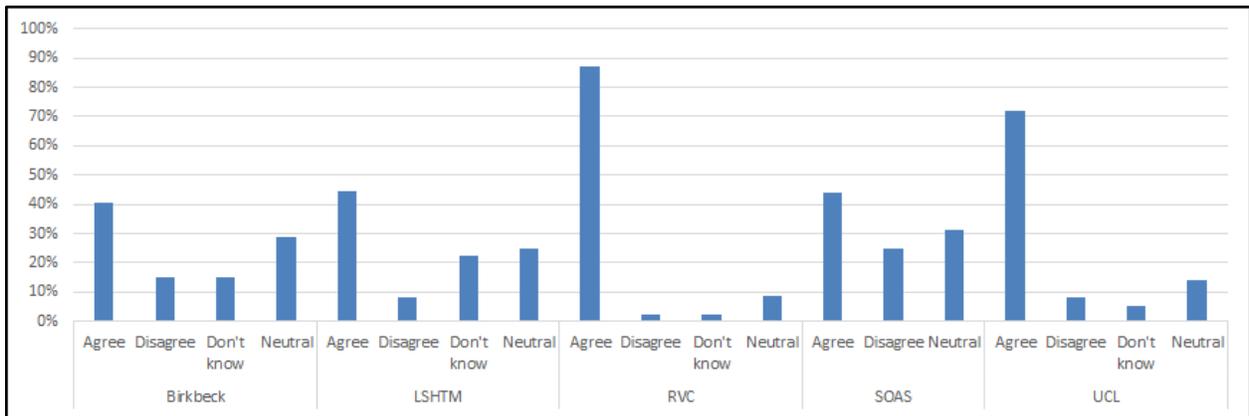


Figure 14: Bar chart for Question 13.4.a. University systems help me avoid plagiarism.

Question 14. The Use of Moodle: how much do you agree with the following statements:

This question asked students to indicate if they agreed with, were neutral about, disagreed with or didn't know about the following statements relating to Moodle:

- I rely on it to do my coursework.
- I regularly access it on a mobile device.
- I enjoy using the collaborative features.
- I would like it to be used more by my tutors.

As all the institutions taking part in our version of the Digital Student Tracker Survey use Moodle as their VLE, it provided a good opportunity to investigate further how students feel about the platform. 79%

agreed that they rely on Moodle to do their coursework and 63% regularly access it on a mobile device; both of these results are comparatively higher than the overall survey population (72% and 57%). Interestingly, only 46% of our respondents indicated in Question 2 that they use their own mobile and tablets to support their learning; this discrepancy may benefit from closer investigation.

Only 35% of our respondents enjoy using the collaborative features in Moodle, which is less than the rest of the surveyed population (48%). This seems to correlate with Question 7 regarding the use of social media to discuss learning informally, which was also lower comparatively to the overall population. Furthermore on this, 23% disagreed that they enjoyed the collaborative features (versus 14% nationally). These results could imply that our students are *either* not keen to collaborate online with each other (which we question as our impression is to the contrary) *or* that they are not required or encouraged to do so and therefore do not have a chance to 'enjoy' this activity. Further research should be conducted to explore this.

Finally, only 47% of our respondents agreed that they would like their tutors to make greater use of the VLE, which again is less than the wider survey population (57%). The number of respondents who felt neutral about this was higher in our dataset than nationally (38% vs 26%). We were surprised by this result as we would expect students to disagree rather than feel neutral about this statement, but perhaps the students are not bothered either way.

Conclusions and recommendations

For the most part, our collective responses in Bloomsbury tended to fall within the margins set by the national survey population, which means we are at a similar stage in our students' digital capability and development with the rest of the country. What we have also managed to deduce from our own data offers additional evidence to the institutions to improve our *staff's* digital skills. From a selection of the comments provided in the free text in Question 11, one student requests that we "train lecturers in using digital media in class as some are lacking in skills". Another reported "Ensure all lecturers are trained in the use and importance of Moodle". Another stronger voice stated "don't assume that academics have the skills and can communicate them to us: they don't and they can't". It is interesting that for a survey focused on student's digital usage, their feedback implies that development of our staff's digital skills needs attention.

While it is hard to extract specifically positive responses from the free text questions (Q6a, 7a, 11 and 12) since the survey is asking students to make *suggestions* for improvements, we did observe some pleasing comments, which included: "Continue with digital teaching as it is" and "Do not remove Echo360!". The majority of the responses to these open questions however were more critical, as expected. For example, students indicated that we must not make sweeping assumptions about their

- access to technology and IT literacy
- knowledge and familiarity about available resources
- ability to download apps or access information on the move.

Students also told us that they we should not

- rely on solely online facilities
- rely too heavily on digital teaching and learning
- shift everything into digital format.

Interestingly, there were some conflicting comments around a wholly digital experience (e.g. “Encourage digital teaching to be adopted all across [the institution]”), blended teaching (e.g. “Make everyone (students AND staff) aware that it is an option” or not at all (e.g. “allow handwritten essays to be submitted”). Either way, there appears to be a dependence on access to institution-owned desktop computers and printers, which is likely to be of interest to IT Services across our institutions.

In their analysis of the data produced nationally, Jisc (2017b) concluded that “Providers must strike a balance between supporting access to institutional systems with personal devices and providing institutional devices with established connectivity”. This conclusion fits with the data we collected in Bloomsbury. The national data regarding digital safety and wellbeing indicated that there may be “a historically lower level of expectations for responsibility when it comes to digital safety issues among HE institutions”. This is something we can look out for when the Tracker exercise is repeated. In terms of where students receive support for these kinds of skills, Jisc concluded that it is “possible that learners do not consider the support they receive from, for example, library staff, careers staff, learning support staff and research developers as ‘digital’ even when it includes digital skills. This is an issue that could be explored further with interviews or focus groups”.

In terms of the frequency of digital activity in courses, Jisc observed from the national data that there was “low use of interactive digital media such as games and simulations which provide rapid intrinsic feedback, and polling which provides in situ feedback to make live learning more engaging and responsive. Neither appears on this evidence to be fully mainstream yet”. The results collected in Bloomsbury produced a similar conclusion whereby when polling devices and online quizzes were in use, students appreciated them (as denoted in the free text questions) but that perhaps not *enough* use is made of them.

Similarly, with respect to the digital tools and apps students use, the national data indicates “that the social and communicative aspects of digital networks are being less routinely used than the informational. Of course it is also possible that students see this practice as illegitimate or ‘not proper learning’ and so it has been under-reported”. Our students are making even less use of social media than the national average, which is certainly worth exploring. Jisc recommends that “focus groups, interviews and learner journeys could be used to investigate the intersection of formal with informal digital spaces in learners’ lives”. Evidence collected in Bloomsbury indicated that students would feel better connected with their tutors if greater use was made of technology and the VLE, which has an implication for e-learning teams in terms of awareness raising and training of the tools.

The national survey data indicates that “between a third and a half of learners in HE do not feel their courses of study are preparing them well for the digital future”, which correlates with our findings in

Bloomsbury. Jisc warns that since “we know that around 90% of all new jobs do require good digital skills there must be a question mark over the workplace awareness of these learners and perhaps of their teachers”. This finding has great implications for our in-house careers services.

The national attitudes relating to e-assessment indicate that approximately 80% of HE learners say they find it more convenient to submit assignments electronically and that less than half of learners agreed that they make better use of feedback if it is delivered online. Jisc concludes that “learners are upbeat about the use of digital technology to support their learning”, which resonates with the findings in Bloomsbury. However, there was an indication that support for plagiarism detection was better in some institutions than others. We recommend that colleagues examine this area more closely.

Jisc reported that out of all the education sectors that took part in the Tracker, it was the respondents from HE who were most likely to rely on the VLE, wherein “80% rely on it to do coursework and 67 % regularly access it via a mobile device”. The Bloomsbury results fit well with this finding and given the high dependence and the comments around complicated structures, difficulty finding content, inconsistencies between staff usage, etc, there is strong evidence indicating much improvement of the VLE is required.

In conclusion, although the sample size collected by the Bloomsbury institutions was small and therefore not statistically viable, there is much we can extract and learn from this exercise. It is strongly recommended that the relevant staff at the participating institutions invest time to examine their own data more closely as it was not practical to do this for each institution individually in this report. Whether we repeat the exercise in the future either as a consortium or participate individually, we should aim for a higher response rate, from which we can make more in-depth conclusions. The authors recommend that the survey *is* repeated but due to the time taken to promote, conduct and analyse, annually may be too often as there would not be enough time to do this *and* effect any suggested improvements.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Qs

Appendix B: BOS results - Bloomsbury data against the total national survey dataset

Appendix C: Institution's raw results

Appendix D: Institution's free text responses for all open questions and associated Word Clouds