Findings from 2023 Digital Needs Internship – Executive Summary

Meet the team

- A group of six interns working with the Oxford Centre for Teaching and Learning and the Digital Transformation initiative

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Key areas of focus:

What are taught students' current experiences using digital tools and developing the digital skills they need to support their learning?

How do students want to use digital tools and digital skills to learn, collaborate and participate in a digitally transformed university and beyond?

What do students need to bridge the gap between their current and ideal experiences?

What benchmarks (grounded in these experiences) should DTP and the CTL use to **evaluate** the success of the University's digital transformation for students?

Overview

- 331 valid survey responses

- Completed 14 interviews and 2 focus groups

- Survey data analysed with:

  - Summary charts
  - Chi-squared tests to test for relationships in the data

- Analysed the interview/focus group data using **thematic analysis**

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Introduction to the project

Introduction

- The CTL employed six interns to investigate taught students' digital experiences at Oxford and their visions for a Digitally Transformed University

- This slide-deck documents the main findings of the Digital Needs CTL Interns with regards to the digital experience and needs of taught students at Oxford

Areas of interest:

- Students' experiences transitioning into the University's digital environments and support structures

- The digital tools that students use and/or want to use

- The digital skills that students have and/or want to develop

- Any digital inequalities that students have faced

- What students need out of the University's digital transformation in order to thrive in their learning and broader student experiences.

Key findings and
recommendations

Digital Transition – Findings

- Students had a diverse range of experiences when coming to Oxford from previous study

- It is not necessarily true that the transitioning period constitutes the major digital pain points for students

- **9 out of 13** students interviewed suggested that they **did not struggle** with the transition to Oxford in terms of digital skills or knowledge of digital tools
- 4 students from this sample **(30%)** did **struggle** with a number of key parts of their course teaching.

Digital Transition - Recommendations

- It is recommended that Departments create and regularly circulate course-specific guides on how to use digital tools and develop skills for their course

Digital Tools – Findings

- Many of the students we interviewed preferred to use pen and paper over digital devices to perform a variety of tasks

- Students were often not aware whether there was support available for upgrading their devices when they needed to do so

- Students have varied experiences of using Canvas, partly depending on how their course has organised/made use of Canvas

- Students find it useful to have lecture recordings on Panopto. However, they have not found the quality of recording, efficiency with uploading and the number of recordings satisfactory

- Most students have found SOLO very useful (46% found it extremely helpful and 30% felt that it helped a lot)

Digital Tools - Findings continued

- Students are **dissatisfied with the number of platforms they must move between** and have familiarity with
- Microsoft Word, Google Doc and Grammarly are the most popular tools for reading and writing
- Zotero and Mendeley are the most popular reference managers
- WhatsApp, Facebook, Google Drive and Zoom are the most commonly used tools for communication and collaboration
- Google Drive, Notion, SharePoint and Dropbox are the most commonly used tools for organisation and storage

Digital Tools Findings - continued

- The majority of (67.7%) students surveyed do not use AI tools. Among those who do, ChatGPT is the most popular

- Some students outlined that they required software for checking for plagiarism, their subject, or had a number of accessibility concerns which they felt could be alleviated with certain software

- Some students purchased Oxford-supported software (such as subscriptions to Microsoft Word) because **they were not aware this was provided to them.**

Digital Tools – Recommendation

It is recommended that:

a) Departments and Colleges designate a person to help with students' needs with upgrading digital devices

b) Departments and Colleges clearly advertise the resources/support available for students to purchase/upgrade their digital devices

c) IT Services call attention to ways that students can use two-factor-authentication without their mobile phones

Digital Tools – Recommendations continued

d) Departments use the university wide examples (from particular courses) of how best Canvas can be laid out and used

e) IT Services creates a guide for students on how to navigate Panopto

f) College and Department Libraries hold sessions on using SOLO effectively at the beginning of a students' degree.

Digital Skills – Findings

- Students are **least confident** in digitally managing their time and maintaining digital wellbeing
- Instead of support from the university or tutors, **self-learning and learning from peers are the main ways** through which students learn to use digital tools
- **Students from all divisions find support on coding inadequate** and would like to see more coding support provided by their departments and the wider University

Digital Skills – Findings continued

- Students are not always aware of the University-provided resources available, partly because they are difficult to locate online

- Students feel that training in basic digital skills, like using Excel and backing up to a cloud, is lacking.

Digital Skills – Recommendations

It is recommended that:

a) Colleges and Departments **integrate digital skills support into the compulsory teaching** that all students receive

b) **A coding section** be included in an academic skills hub, created by the Central University, which is accessible to all students

Digital Inequalities – Findings

- Financial limitations were a barrier to students' learning due to their inability to access suitable devices for their studies.

Digital inequalities -Recommendations

It is recommended that departments and colleges establish digital inclusion scholarships specifically designed to provide eligible students with better access to suitable devices

Digital Transformation – Findings

- The majority of students wished that their tutors would use digital tools **in a more consistent and homogenous way**

- Students **do not want full digitisation of tutorials,** lectures and generally Oxford experience - they want a hybrid

- Students want to know how to **ethically use ChatGPT**, and other AI technologies, to support their studies

- Students want to be i**nvolved in and notified about recent changes** via a centralised platform

- Students **do not want a 'digital bureaucratic Oxford',** where the processes of accessing and acquiring services and resources are unnecessarily tedious

Digital Transformations – Recommendations

It is recommended that:

a) The University provides all teaching staff with access to online tutorials that they can **reference at their own pace** to improve their own digital skills.

  i. These digital skills support materials should **highlight students' digital needs** and tailor the professional training program to match these specific needs.

  ii. These resources should also **be freely and regularly accessible**.

Digital Transformation – Recommendations continued

b) The Central University, Divisions and Departments **encourage teaching staff to use self-evaluation toolkits**, to assess current proficiency levels in certain digital tools and **identify specific areas where additional training is needed.**

c) The University consider **centralising all available resources** scattered across colleges, departments and the central university on a single, streamlined platform or digital hub.

d) Both students and staff be **trained on how to use AI** as an assistive and not a destructive tool.

For further information:

- For further information please contact the Center for Teaching and Learning at contact@ctl.ox.ac.uk

- The collection of slide decks of detailed findings and recommendations can be accessed **here**

Thank You

contact@ctl.ox.ac.uk