SURVEY SUPERHEROES

Digital Learning Experience Report

December 2025

EXETER STUDENTS' GUILD

Contents

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Referencing

If you wish to reference this report, please use 'Exeter Students' Guild' as the author/organisation.

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Introduction

Survey Superheroes gathers monthly feedback from 1000 student volunteers regarding their opinions on a variety of pre-planned and developing issues in exchange for financial compensation.

The Student's Guild Insight Team uses this feedback to influence decisions by the University, inform our projects and empower students to create change for their community.

One of our key topics for December was Digital Learning Experience. We wanted to find out:

1. **What digital tools are students using and where?**
2. **What support do students receive around digital learning?**
3. **How are students finding using ELE2?**
4. **Overall, what do students think about digital learning at the University of Exeter?**

This report will analyse the feedback given in relation to the above questions and provide recommendations for both the Student's Guild and the University of Exeter to action in order to improve students' digital learning experience.

All text in quotations marks are comments provided by students showing their individual thoughts and opinions; they have been included as they largely reflect the quotes within the same topic.

Summary

This survey aimed to find out what students think about digital learning at the University of Exeter, by investigating what tools students use, what support they receive and how they feel about ELE2 specifically.

The survey found the most common devices that students regularly use are: 97% of students using a laptop, with 45% using a smartphone, 43% using headphones and 29% using a tablet. Most students either bought this device themselves, or had it bought for them. 55% of students report using generative AI tools, and 47% of students use spellcheck/writing support with a further 37% using AI assistant tools. OneNote, Notion, AI tools, word and Goodnotes where the most popular tools/apps that students fine useful for learning. Most students use digital technology to learn/study the most at home, followed by on campus study spaces and lectures/seminars.

40% of students report not having received any guidance/support around the digital skills they need to excel on their course, with 30% saying yes and 30% that they're not sure. However, over 70% of students across all departments feel that they would benefit from support/guidance. 86% of students who had received Guidance felt that it was helpful.

Students find it easy to find learning materials, assignment briefs and submission points on ELE2, and finding feedback dates and marking criteria slightly less easy to find. Students generally feel that ELE2 is easy to use and well-organised but feel that it could be improved by having a more user-friendly interface, with a better layout and quicker/easier access to materials and deadlines.

71% of students agree that they get easily distracted when learning/studying online. 67% of students feel that they get enough face-to-face learning opportunities, whilst 485 of students feel that too much if their learning is done digitally. 35% of students feel that the amount of time they spend learning online negatively impacts their wellbeing, with 37% disagreeing.18% of students feel their digital learning experience at Exeter is excellent, with a further 62% finding it good and 18% finding it average. This is due to students having a generally positive experience, finding things accessible and gaining learning skills. To improve, the University or the Guild could offer more digital support, more study spaces, more digital course materials and digital-focused resources and tools.

Analysis

1. **What digital tools are students using and where?**

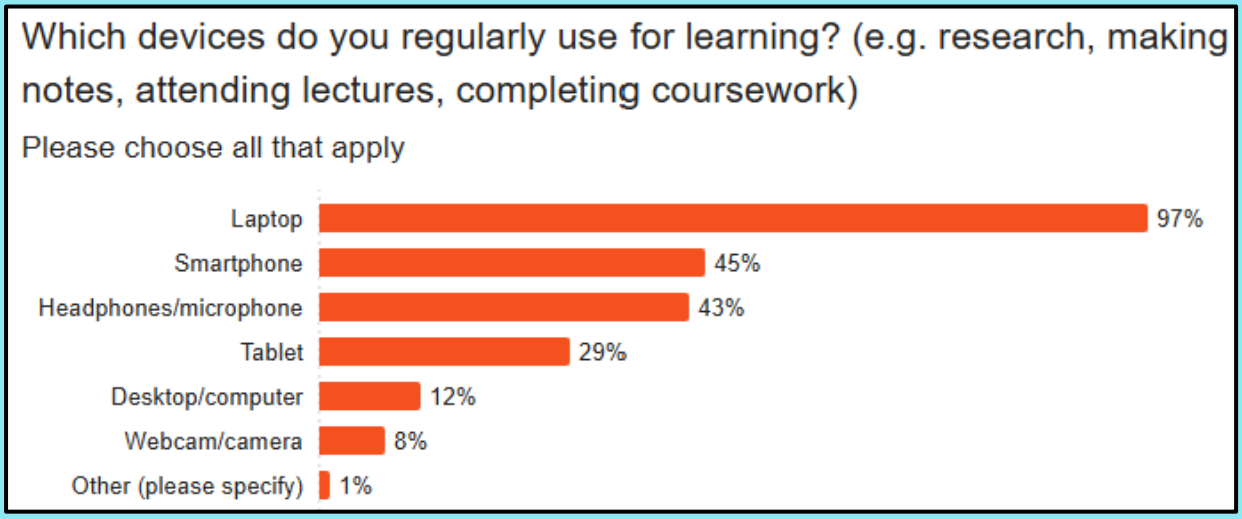

Figure 1 Question 1: Which devices do you regularly use for learning? (Please choose all that apply)

When asked which devices they use regularly for learning, 97% of students reported using a laptop, 45% a smartphone, and 43% headphones/microphone making these the most popular devices used by students. 29% reported using a tablet, 12% a desktop, and 8% a webcam/camera (Fig. 1).

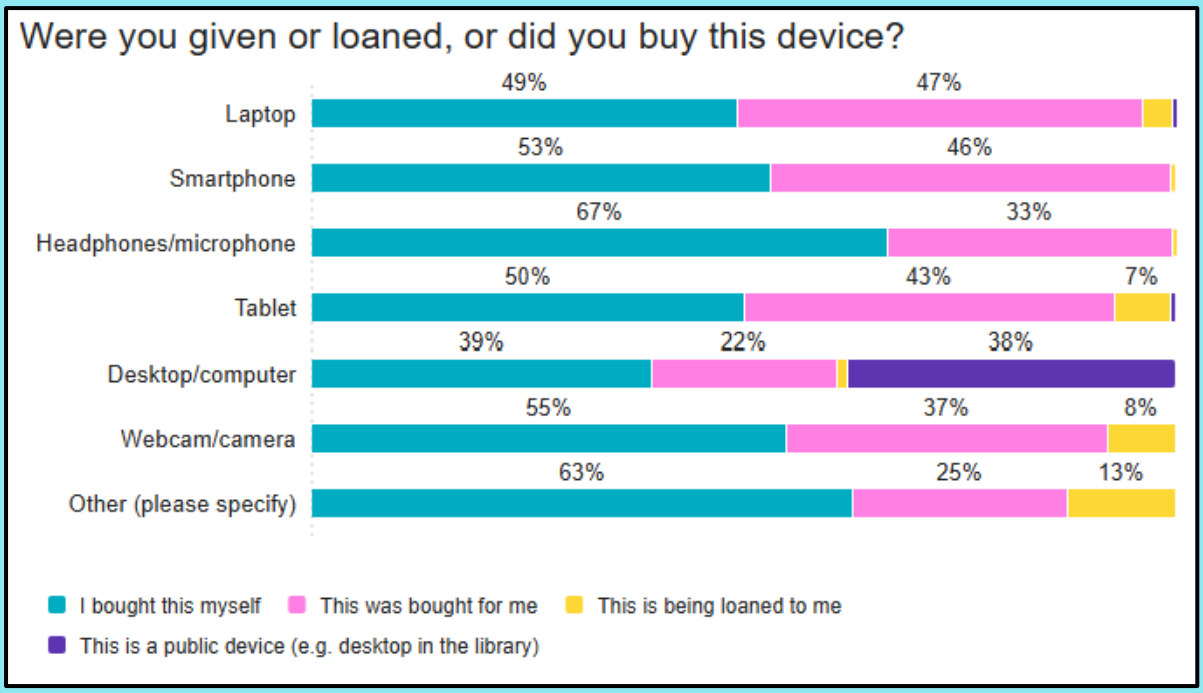

Figure 2 - Question 2: Were you given or loaned, or did you buy this device?

When asked if they were given, loaned, or bought the devices that they use, an average of 54% of students reported buying their devices themselves, 36% reported having had devices bought for them, 5% reported having devices on loan, and another 5% reported using public devices (Fig. 2).

When we break this down by device type, we can see that headphones/microphones are the devices most bought by students themselves at 67%, that laptops are the devices most bought for students at 47% (closely followed by smartphones at 46%), that other devices (such as Remarkable tablets and extra monitors) are those most being loaned at 13%, and that desktop/computers are the public devises most used by students at 38% (Fig. 2).

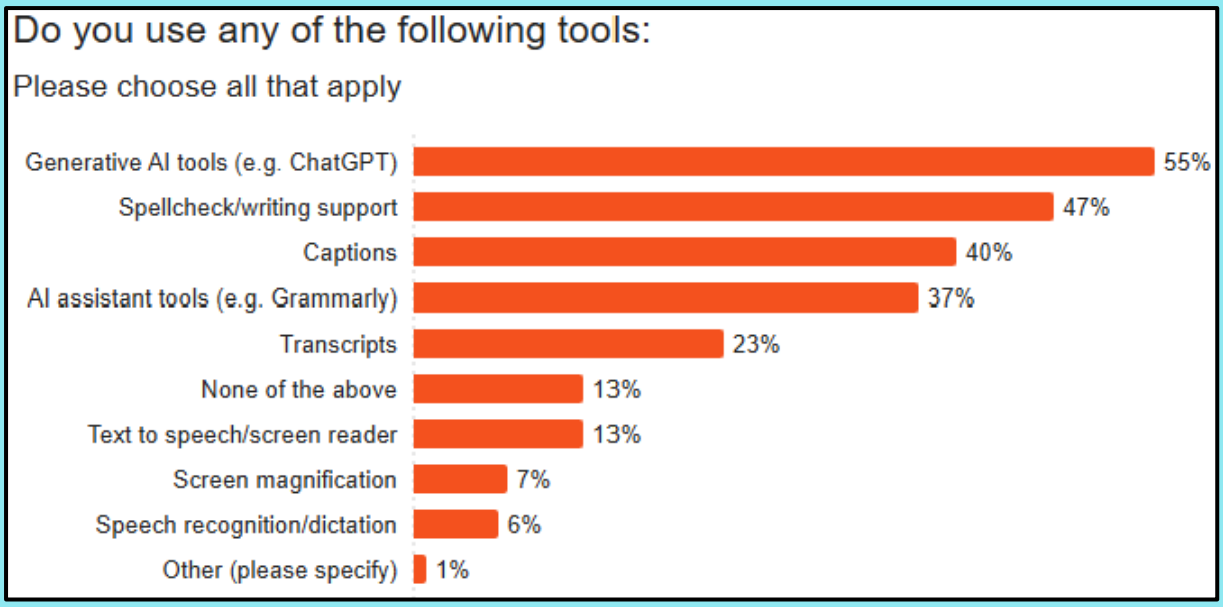

Figure 3 - Question 3: Do you use any of the following tools? (Please choose all that apply)

When asked which digital tools they use, 55% of students reported using a generative AI tool like ChatGPT to assist them with their work. This is lower than our "AI and Data Privacy" report found in March 2025, although it is worth noting that that report asked about general usage of AI rather than AI in a learning-focused remit. This suggests, then, that there is some disparity between students who use generative AI casually and students who use it academically, reflecting some of the concerns also reflected in our "AI and Data Privacy" report that students had around it's usage in academia (Fig. 3, "AI and Data Privacy, 2025").

47% of students reported using some form of spellcheck/writing support, with another 37% using AI assistant tools (like Grammarly) (Fig. 3).

40% of students reported using captions and 23% transcripts, highlighting an opportunity for expanding the use of these in lectures and lecture recordings due to their popularity (Fig. 3)

Smaller percentages of students reported not using any of the tools listed (13%), using a text to speech/screen reader (13%), screen magnification (7%), speech recognition/dictation (6%) (Fig. 3).

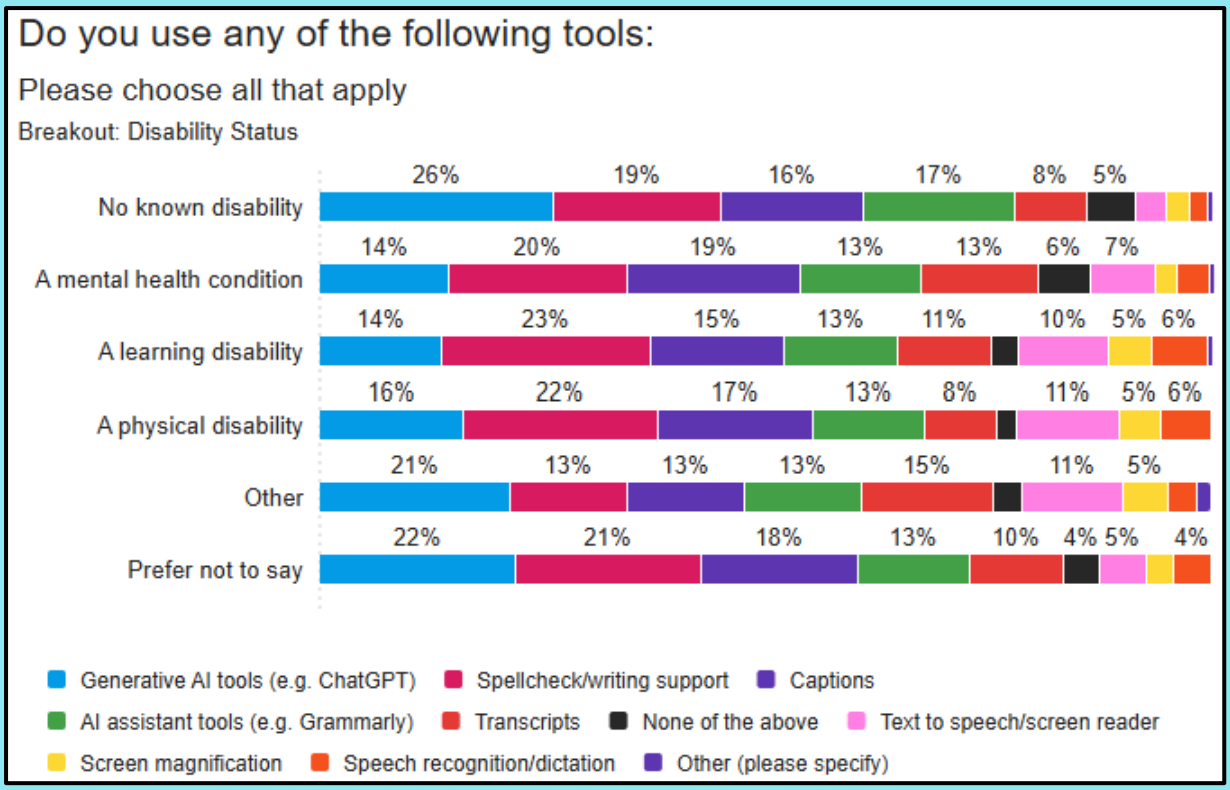

Figure 4 - Question 3: Do you use any of the following tools? (Please choose all that apply) (Breakout: Disability status)

When we look at this by disability, we can see that students with no known disability are using both generative AI and AI assistant tools more-so that students with a disability. Spellcheck/writing support is used more by students with learning disabilities whilst captions are used most by those with a mental health condition, perhaps a tool to help with clarity and focus (Fig. 4).

Students with a learning disability, physical disability, or other disability are using text to speech/screen readers, screen magnification, and speech recognition/dictation tools more than other students (Fig. 4).

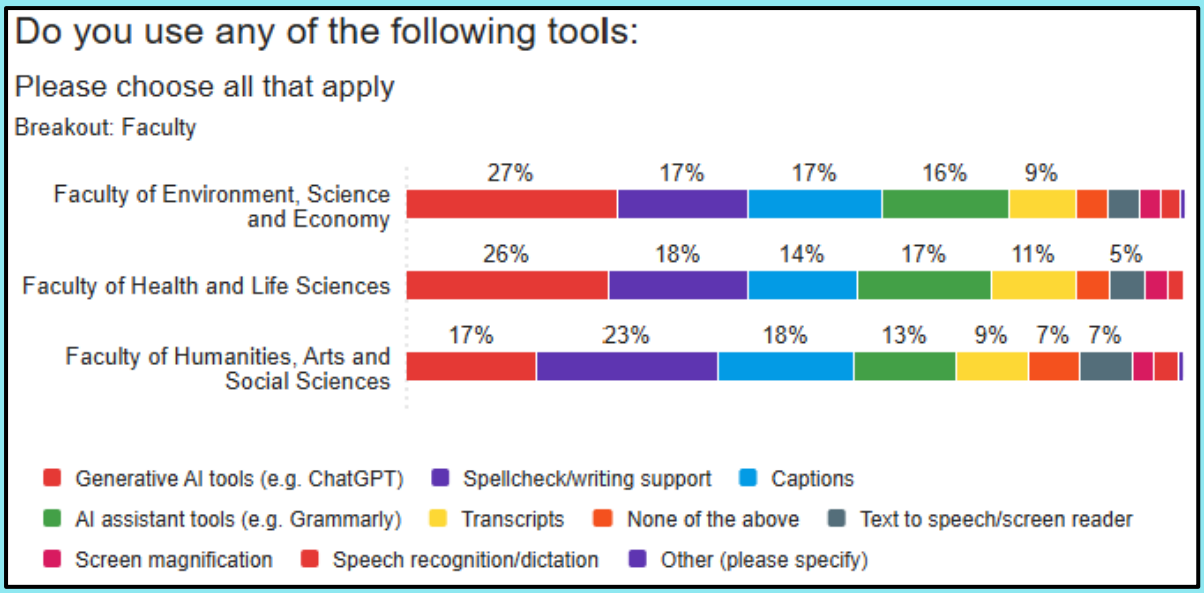

Figure 5 - Question 3: Do you use any of the following tools? (Please choose all that apply) (Breakout: Faculty)

When we look at this by faculty, we can see that ESE and HLS students are using both generative AI and AI assistant tools considerably more than HASS students; more HASS students are using spellcheck/writing tools than either ESE or HLS. All other digital tools are used fairly evenly across the faculties (Fig. 5).

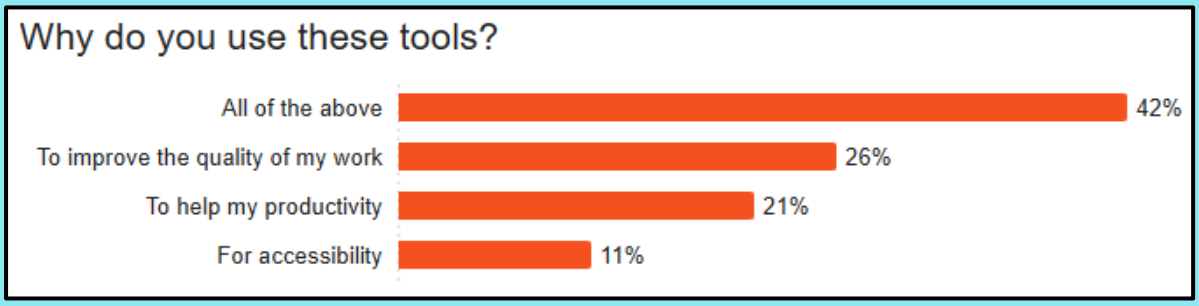

Figure 6 - Question 4: Why do you use these tools?

When asked why they use these digital tools, 26% said it was to improve the quality of their work, 21% to help their productivity, 11% for accessibility, and 42% all of the above (Fig. 6).

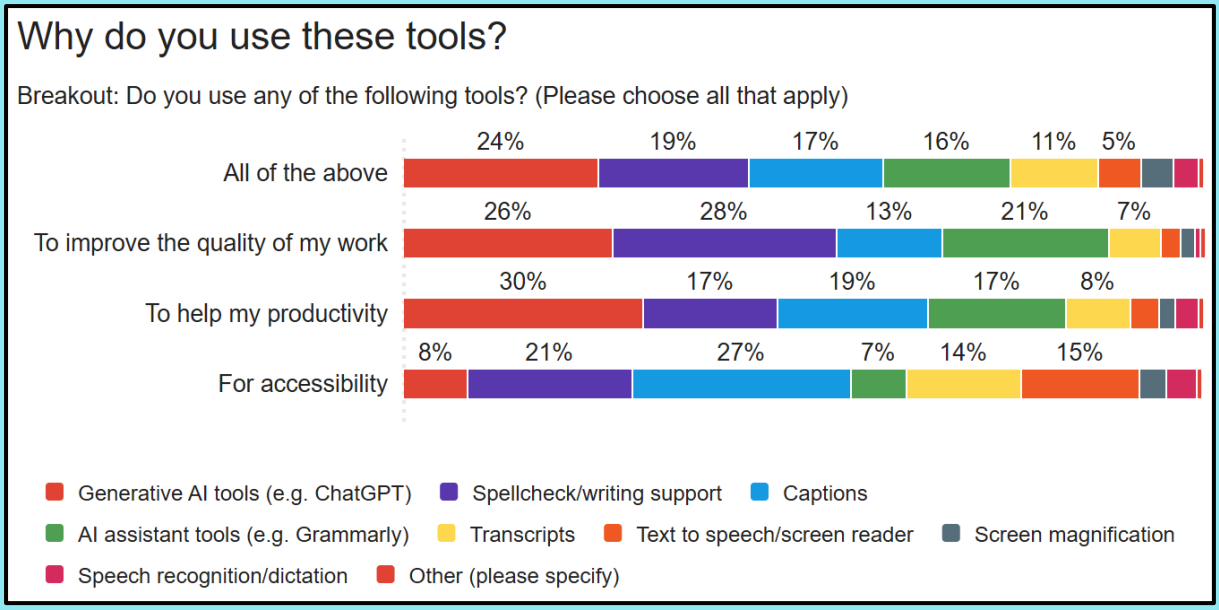

Figure 7 - Question 4: Why do you use these tools? (Breakout: Question 3: Do you use any of the following tools? (Please choose all that apply)

When we look at this broken down by the individual tools, we can see that 26% of students wanting to improve the quality of their work are using generative AI tools to do so, with another 21% using AI assistant tools; 28% are also using spellcheck/writing support tools. Interestingly, use of generative AI jumps to 30% for students aiming to improve their productivity whilst AI assistant tools fall to just 17% showing a clear difference in how students are using these different types of AI (Fig. 7).

Captions are also popular amongst students aiming to improve their productivity at 19%, but are most popular with those using them for accessibility purposes at 27%. This is followed by spellcheck/writing support tools at 21% and text to speech/screen readers at 15%. Only 8% of students who report using tools for accessibility say they use generative AI, with another 7% using AI assistant tools (Fig. 7).

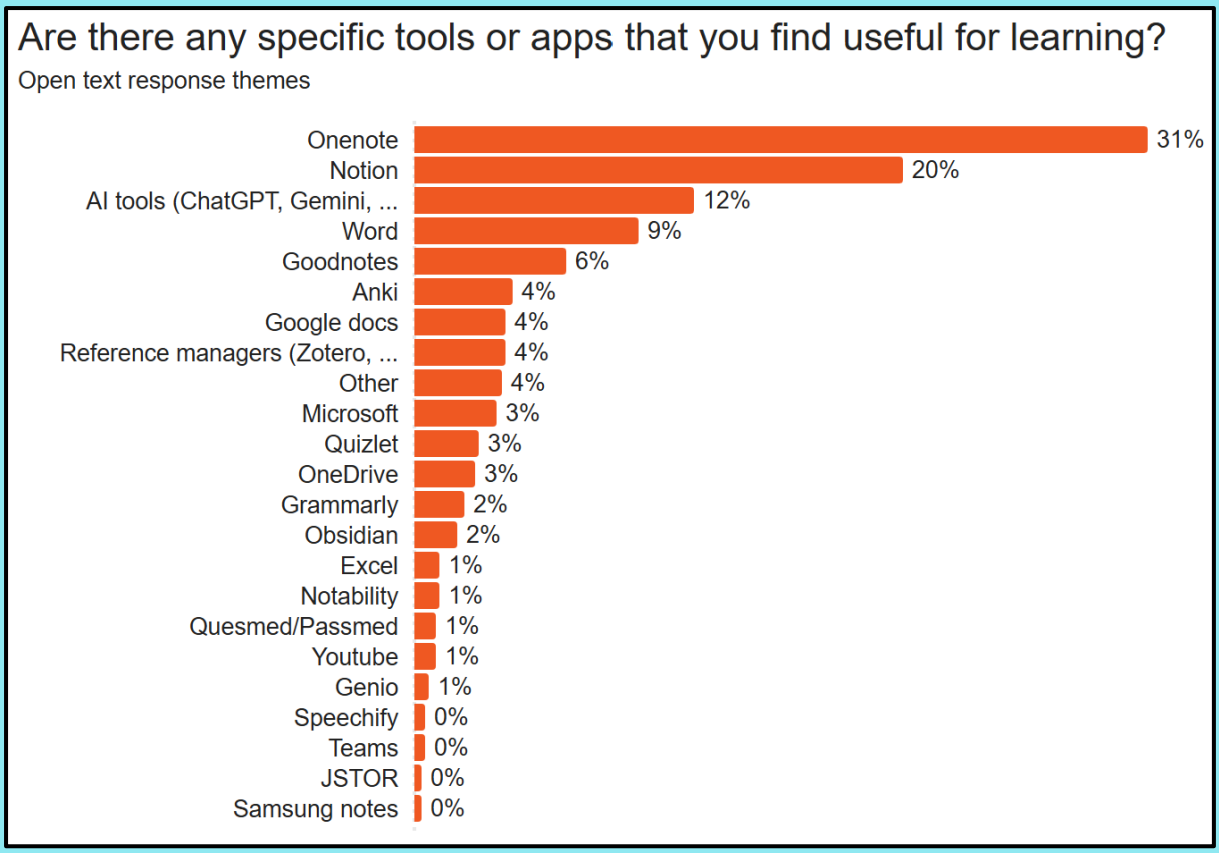

Figure 8 - Question 5: Are there any specific tools or apps that you find useful for learning?

We asked if there were any tools or apps that students found useful for learning; 31% reported using OneNote with another 9% saying Word, 4% Google Gocs, 3% Microsoft generally, and 3% OneDrive generally (Fig. 8).

20% reported using Notion, a planning/productivity tool. Others mentioned specific note taking apps such as Goodnotes (6%), Obsidian (2%) or Notabillity (1%) (Fig. 8).

Reference managers were also named by students (4%), as well as flashcard-type tools with 4% mentioning Anki and 3% Quizlet.

12% also said they found AI tools like ChatGPT or Google Gemini useful (Fig. 8).

"I use OneNote as a weekly diary to track my to dos, notes, progress etc., and my Outlook calendar to schedule what work I am doing when." ~ Other, HLS student

"Personally, I use Notion. I think it's easier to navigate my work from the separate modules and build the pages from scratch to suit my needs." ~ Year 2, HASS student

"I use notion to organise all of my work. I also use anki regularly to revise content." ~ Year 2, HLS student

"I use AI frequently for revision and for assisting me with research (asking it to reference the sources used)." ~ Year 1, ESE student

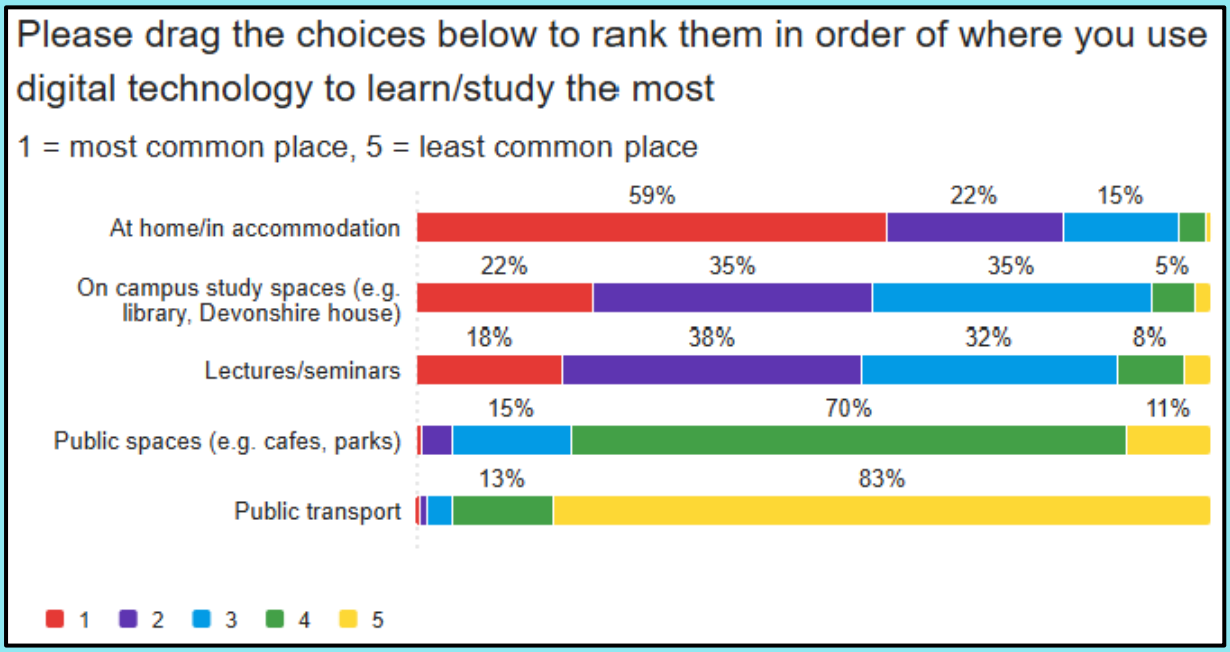

Figure 9 - Question 7: Please drag the choices below to rank them in order of where you use digital technology to learn/study the most (1=most common place, 5=least common place)

59% of students reported primarily using digital technology at home/in their accommodation to learn or study the most, followed by 22% at on campus study spaces, 18% in lectures/seminars, and less than 1% in public spaces or on public transport. In lectures/seminars was the most popular second choice at 38%, followed by at on campus study spaces at 35%; these were in reverse order for the third most popular choice with on campus study spaces at 35% and lectures/seminars at 32% (Fig. 9).

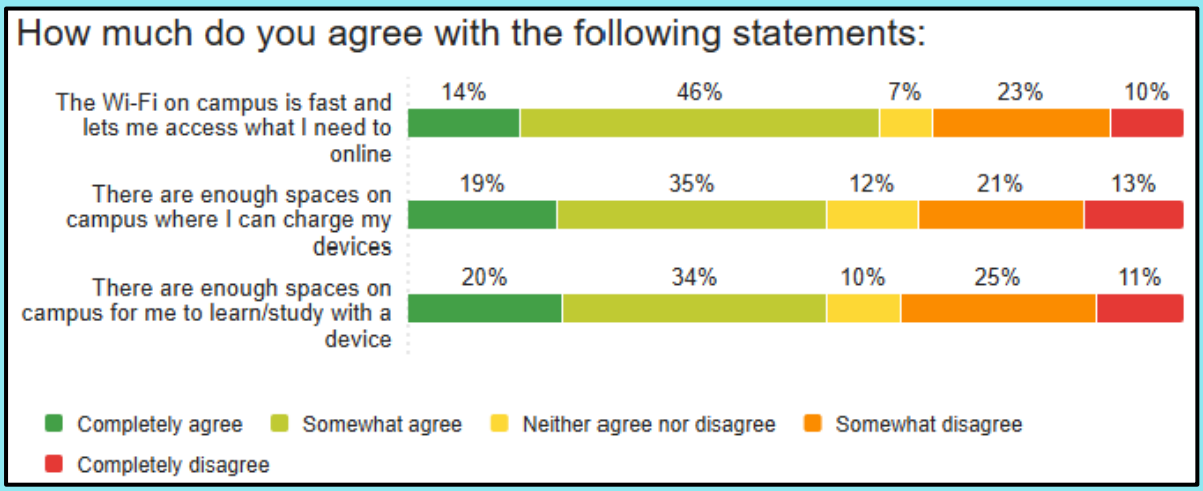

Figure 10 - Question 8: How much do you agree with the following statements?

60% of students agreed that the Wi-Fi on campus is fast and enables them to access what they need to online although 33% disagree with this representing a

considerable number of students. 54% of students agree that there are enough spaces on campus where they can charge their devices with 34% disagreeing. 54% of students agree that there are enough spaces on campus for them to learn/study with a device whilst 35% disagree (Fig. 10).

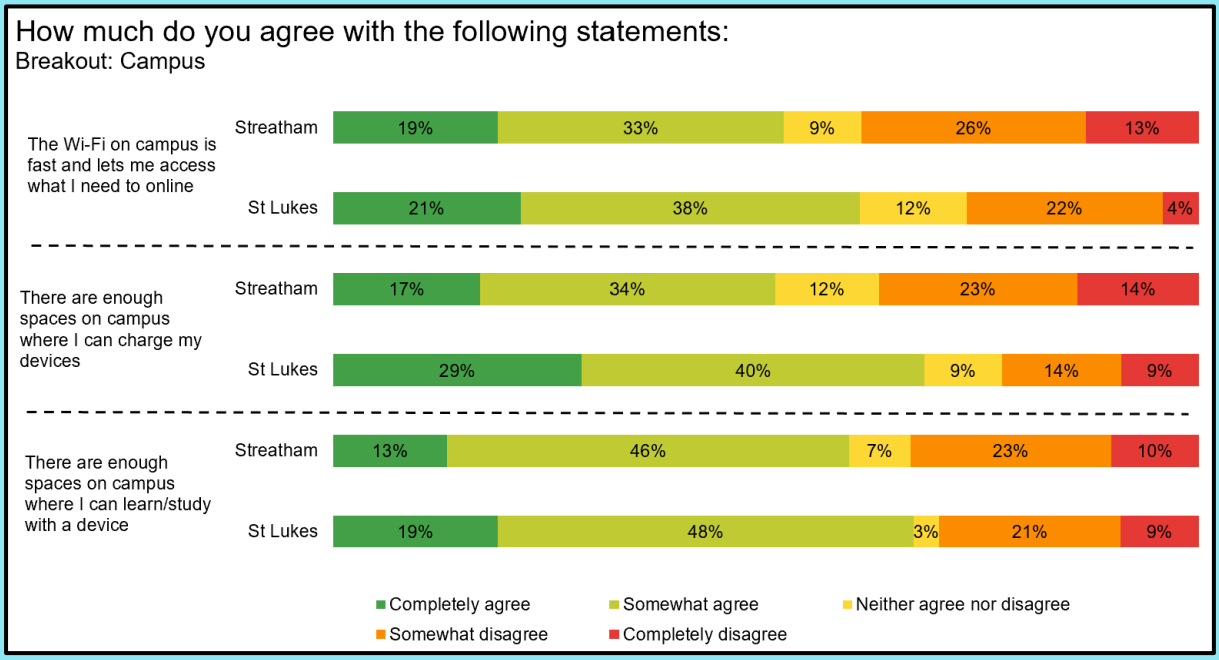

Figure 11 - Question 8: How much do you agree with the following statements? (Breakout: Campus)

When we look at this by campus, we can see that Streatham students agree less and disagree more with all of the statements when compared to St Luke's. We see the largest discrepancy in agreement around the availability of charging spaces with 51% of Streatham students agreeing that there are enough and 37% disagreeing compare to 69% of St Luke's students agreeing and 23% disagreeing (Fig. 11).

2. What support do students receive around digital learning?

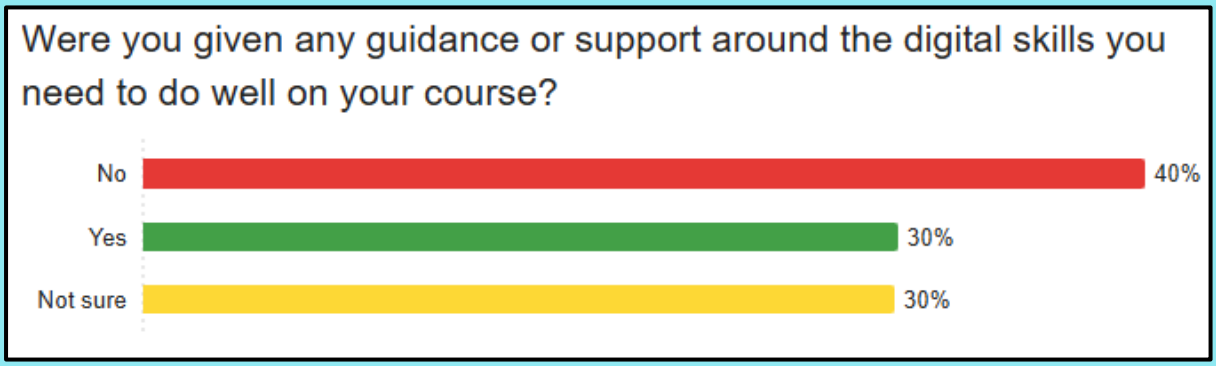

Figure 12 - Question 6: Were you given any guidance or support around the digital skills you need to do well on your course?

When we asked students if they were given any guidance or support around the digital skills they need to do well on their course, the response was largely split. 40% of students said they had not received any support, 30% said they had, and the reaming 30% said they weren't sure (Fig. 12).

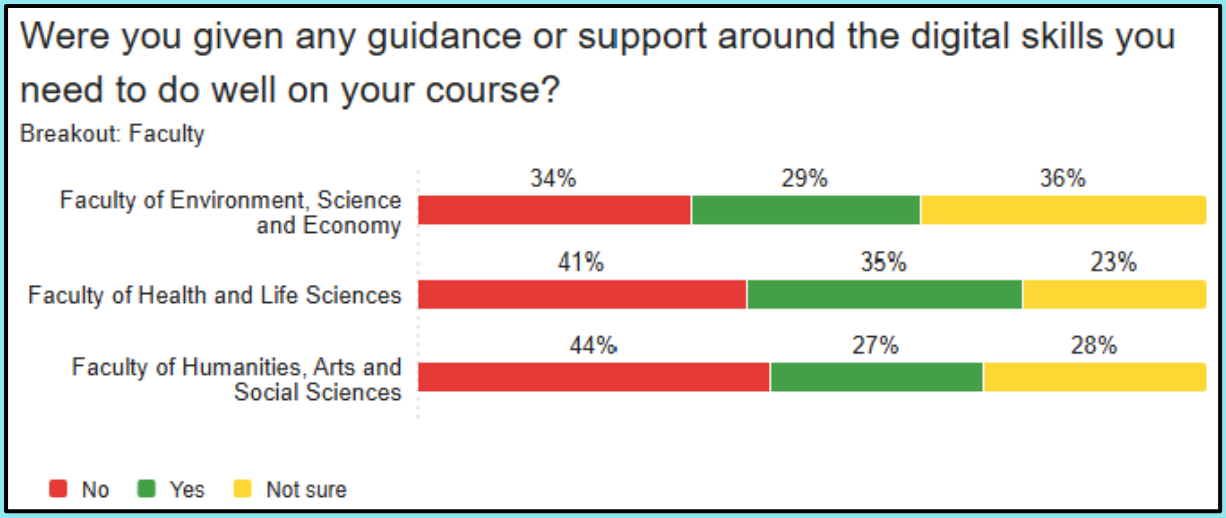

Figure 13 - Question 6: Were you given any guidance or support around the digital skills you need to do well on your course? (Breakout: Faculty)

This split continues when we compare response by faculty, with HLS reporting the highest support at 35% agreement, HASS the lowest at 44% disagreement, and ESE the highest level of unsurety at 36%. It is also worth noting that all faculties have higher levels of disagreement than agreement meaning more students are certain that they have not received support around their digital skills than that they have (Fig. 13).

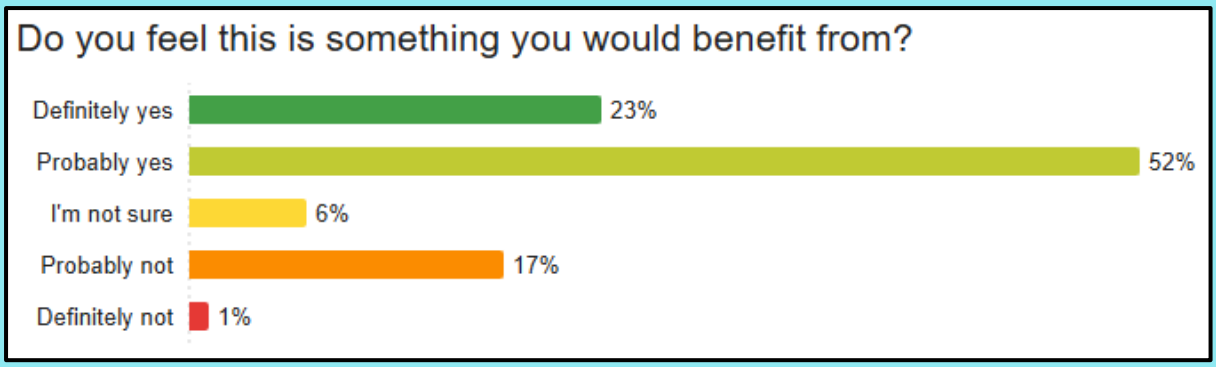

Figure 14 - Question 6a: Do you feel this is something you would benefit from?

We asked all students who had not said that they received support if they felt support with digital skills would be something they would benefit from; 75% agreed, with 23% completely agreeing and 52% somewhat agreeing. 18% said they didn't think they would benefit with 17% somewhat disagreeing and 1% completely disagreeing (Fig. 14).

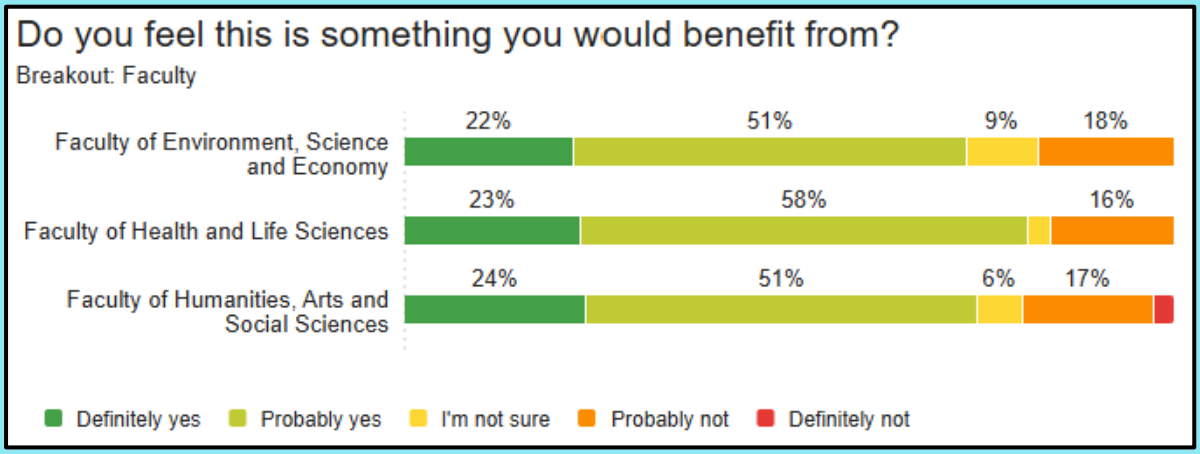

Figure 15 - Question 6a: Do you feel this is something you would benefit from? (Breakout: Faculty)

Compared across faculties, 81% of HLS students said that they would benefit from this support, with 23% completely agreeing and 58% somewhat agreeing; 16% disagreed making this the faculty with highest agreement and lowest disagreement overall (Fig. 15).

Both ESE and HASS students showed similar levels of want for digital skills support, with 73% of ESE students agreeing that they'd like support and 18% disagreeing, and 75% of HASS students agreeing and 19% disagreeing. HASS is also the only faculty where students completely disagreed that they would benefit from support with their digital skills (Fig. 15).

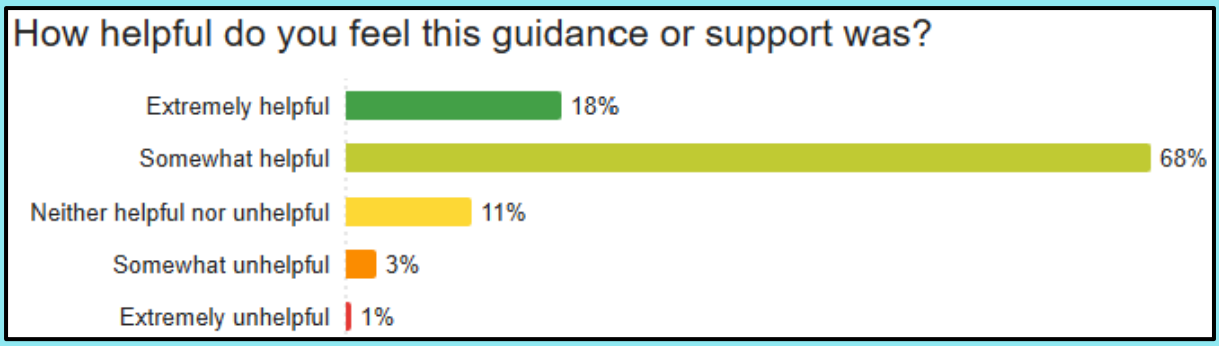

Figure 16 - How helpful do you feel this guidance or support was?

When we asked those who did have support or guidance how helpful they felt it was, 86% of students said it was helpful, with 18% saying extremely helpful and 68% somewhat helpful. Only 4% of students found the support they received to be unhelpful (Fig. 16).

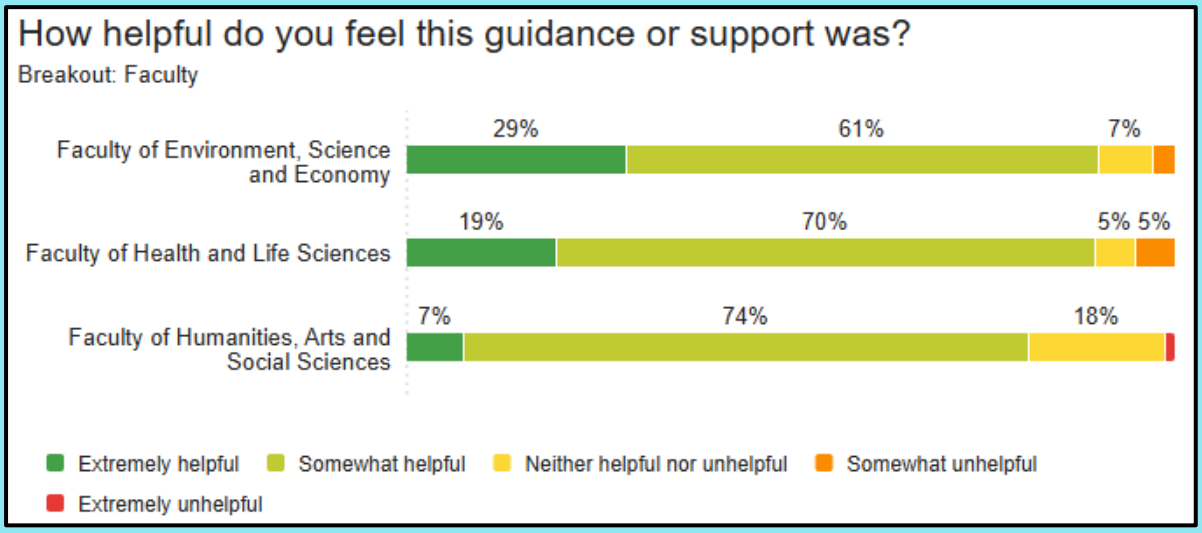

Figure 17 - How helpful do you feel this guidance or support was? (Breakout: Faculty)

Compared across faculties, we can see that ESE has the highest overall satisfaction with the support they received; 90% of students in this faculty found it helpful, with 29% saying it was extremely helpful and 61% somewhat helpful. Only slightly behind is this HLS at 89% with 19% finding it extremely helpful and 70% somewhat helpful. HASS had the lowest overall positive feeling towards the support but still had 81% of students agreeing that it was helpful, with 7% saying extremely helpful and 74% somewhat helpful (Fig. 17).

It is clear then, that majority of students are unsure or do not feel as though they have been given support around the digital skills they need to succeed on their course, and that many of those students feel they would benefit from having more support in this area. Those students who did receive support and guidance around digital skills have a largely positive view of the support they received. This carries across all faculties, with both the highest level of support and highest desire for support coming from HLS.

3. How are students finding using ELE2?

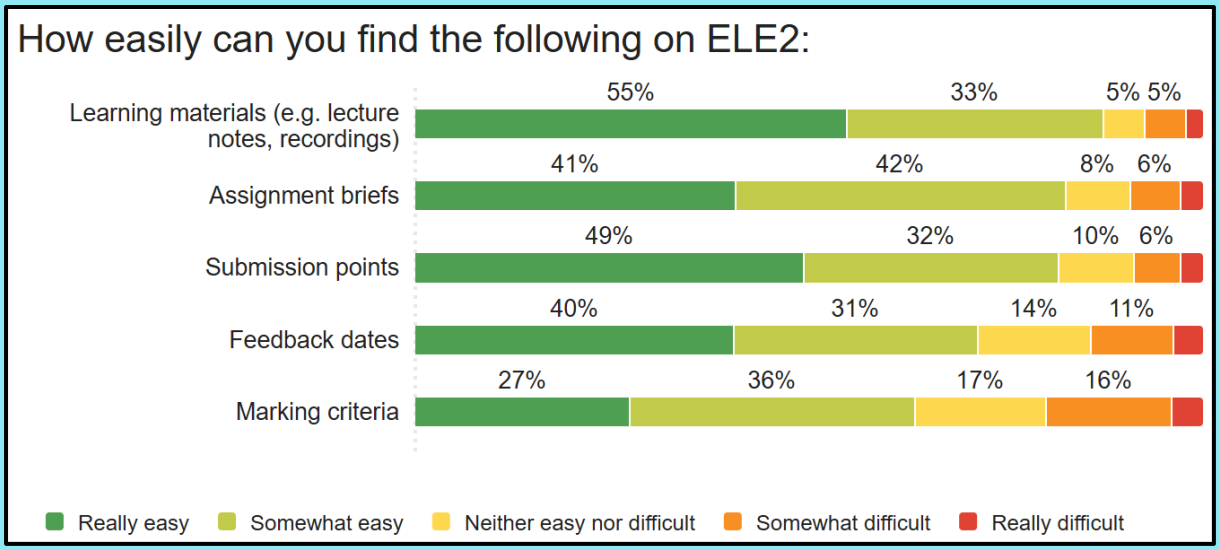

Figure 18 - Question 9: How easily can you find the following on ELE2?

When asked about how easily they could find important information on ELE, 88% of students expressed that they could easily find learning materials, such as notes and recordings, with the majority of students, 55%, finding it was really easy and 33% finding it somewhat easy. This was the category that students felt most confident in accessing on ELE2, followed by 83% and 81% finding assignment briefs and submission points easily, including 49% finding submission points really easy to find on ELE2. (Fig. 18)

There were less students that responded with finding it easy to access feedback dates and marking criteria, with 71% and 63% finding it at least somewhat easy, respectively. These categories had the highest numbers of students expressing some difficulty in finding the relevant information, with 15% and 20%, respectively, suggesting that students find it harder to access information about how their assignments are marked and when they can access information regarding their assignments. (Fig. 18)

Whereas, only 7% encounter some level of difficulty in accessing learning materials, and 9% having difficulty finding assignment briefs and submission points, showing that students generally feel able to access information about their course and submitting assignments, but struggle more on accessing feedback and materials to help improve the quality of their assignments. (Fig. 18)

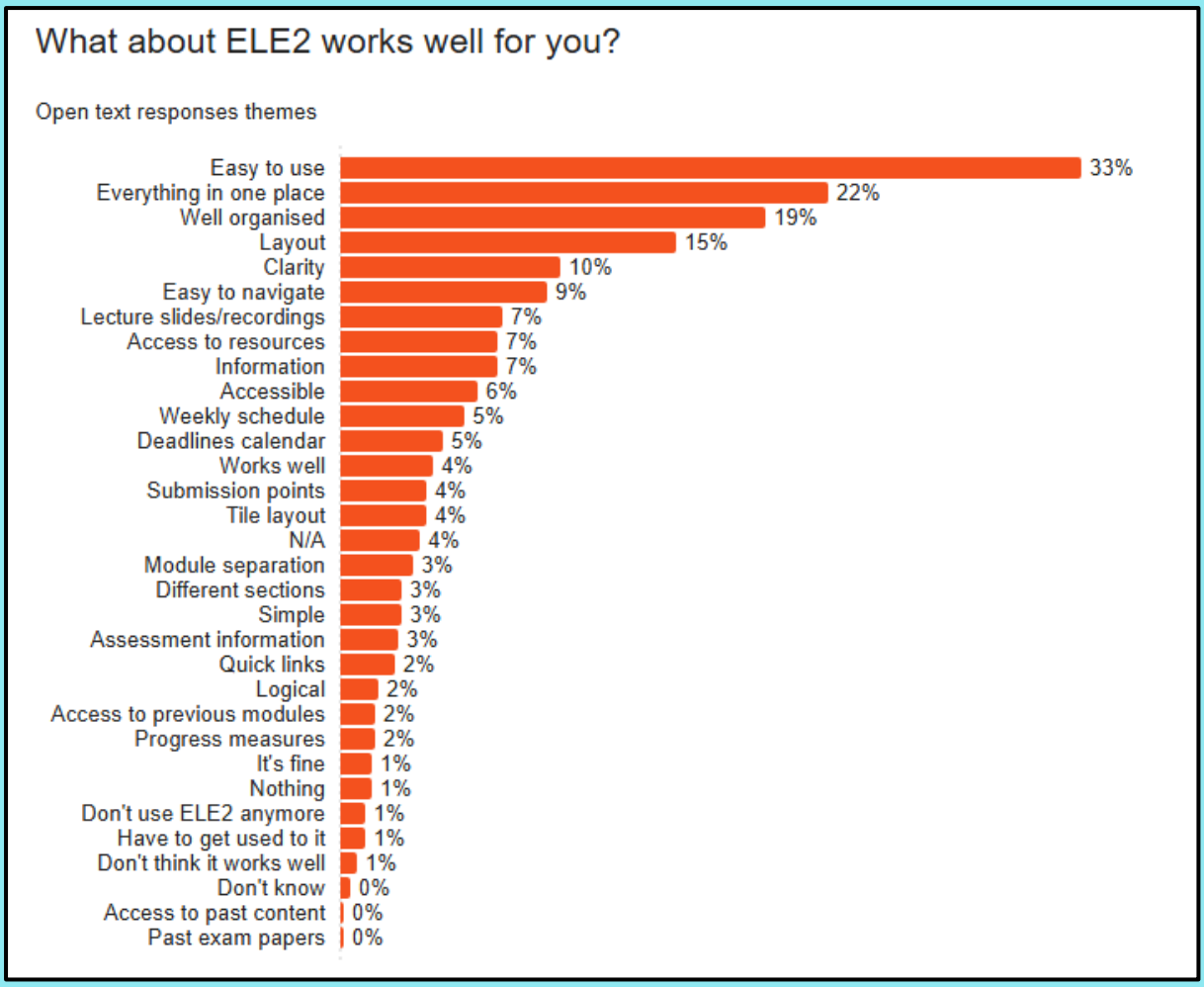

Figure 19 – Question 10: What about ELE2 works well for you?

When students were asked what about ELE2 they feel works well, students generally felt it was easy to use and navigate. 33% of students thought it is easy to use, and 22% liked how everything is in one place, with 19% mentioning it is well organised. 15% of students mentioned it's layout, with 4% specifying the tile layout, 3% the module separation, and 3% the different sections. Students find it is easy to navigate (9%), it gives them clarity (10%), and that it is simple (3%), logical (2%) ad works well (4%). (Fig. 19)

"I was used to the original ELE so the new one is a lot faster and I like how it is organised into tiles and I can easily view each module week by week! And how assignment info is all together!" ~ Masters, HASS

"Its laid out really well and makes it easier to find what I need to do, I struggle to keep up with all the content so having everything easily laid out for me makes it easier to catch up and hugely less stressful." ~ Year 1, HASS

"It's very convenient and it can be very neat and easy to navigate but this depends on the module leader and how they choose to release course content. So far, all the module leaders I've had has a very neat layout." ~ Year 3, ESE

6% of students mentioned finding it accessible, having plenty of information (7%) and providing access to resources (7%), such as: lecture slides/recordings (7%), assessment information (3%), quick links 2%), and past papers (>1%). Some students specifically mentioned being able to access previous modules (2%) and past content (>1%). Students also found that the weekly schedule (5%), deadline calendar (5%) and progress measures (2%) helps them to stay organised. (Fig. 19)

> "Accessing my modules with their respective lecture slides and reading material. Submissions are also the first thing to load which is handy." ~ Year 1, HLS
>
> "Better improve user interface compared to ELE1 - easy to view all submission deadlines all in one place." ~ Other, ESE
>
> "The tiny calendar which shows your deadline days circled (I wish it showed the next month too so you can see if there's anything due first week of the month). The separate tiles for each subject & showing your previous modules." ~ Year 3, HASS

Few students failed to find something that worked well for them in ELE2, only 1% or less for each theme stating they either do not use it, do not know, have to get used to it, it is simply fine or feel that it is not working. Across all the themes, students generally feel that ELE is organised and easy to use, with its different sections, easy access to information including previous modules. (Fig. 19)

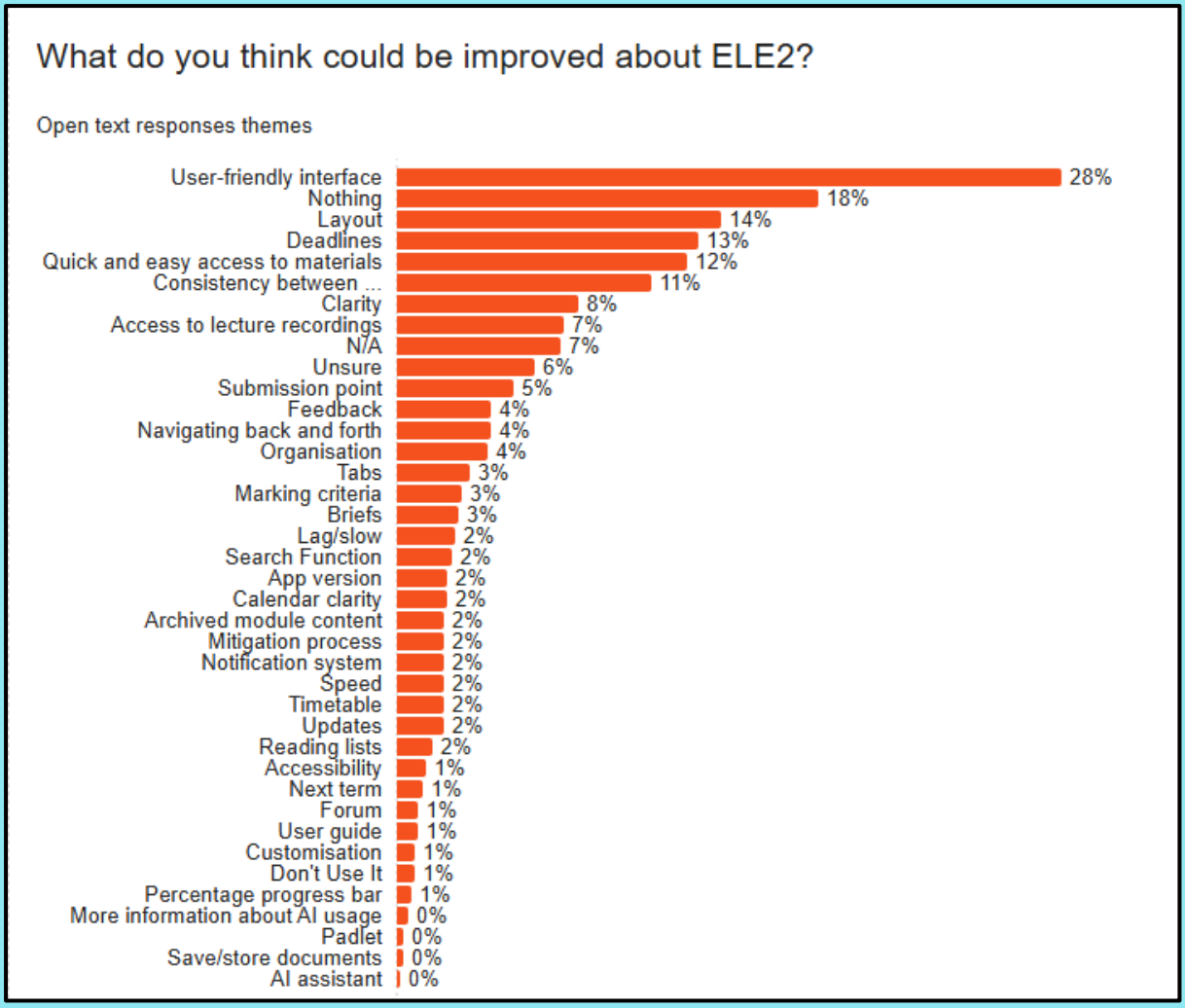

Figure 20 – Question 11: What do you think could be improved about ELE2?

When students were asked what they felt could be improved about ELE2, the most common response, 28%, suggested a more user-friendly interface. Some went into more detail, mentioning the layout (14%), quick and easy access to materials (12%), navigation (4%) and organisation (4%), including tabs (3%) and requesting a search function (2%).

"It's not as easy to navigate or find things as the google sites we used to use, it's not very clear on where to find certain things, and aren't in the place you would expect it to be." ~ Year 3, HLS

"It has a somewhat confusing lay out, it looks a bit outdated, makes it boring. Somethings are easy to find and others take time or some sort of authorization. And plus some links in the library on ele require school wifi." ~ Year 2, ESE

"Making it more coherent, and easier to access everything and for it to have more of a flow. maybe a search feature that could search everything up woul be good- e.g. the specific powerpoint I want." ~ Year 2, HLS

Others mentioned help organising deadlines (13%), clarity (8%), calendar clarity (2%), and timetables (2%) (Fig. 20).

"Not all my module deadlines show up in the same place (eg my ELE2 dashboard) which can make it difficult to compare deadline dates across modules." ~ Year 4, HAS student

"I would find it useful to have a calendar within each module which suggests work for that week. This would help me to manage my time and ensure I have completed the necessary work in time to attend a seminar on a particular subject. I would also have liked access well in advance of my course starting to allow me to familiarise myself before needing to use it." ~ Masters, HLS student

Some students mentioned that an app version (2%) which is customisable (1%) with a notification system (2%) and updates (2%), would be helpful, as well as increasing the speed (2%) and decreasing the lag (2%). (Fig. 20)

11% asked for more consistency between modules and 7% needing access to lecture recordings. Students also mentioned submission points (5%), feedback (4%), marking criteria (3%), briefs (3%), reading lists (2%), as well as an easier mitigation process (2%).

"It's likely not an issue with ELE itself, but rather with how individual module convenors organise their content. In some modules, essential resources such as the assignment brief, module descriptor, or marking criteria are difficult to locate. If materials were consistently categorised into sections like Course Material, Assignments, and General Information, it would make it much easier for everyone to find what they need." ~ Masters, ELE

"Quite often the feedback date passes and we only get feedback 2 weeks or so after. Which is very annoying as I am expecting it to be released on that date and then keep on checking every couple of hours. If the marks and feedback will not be ready I would prefer if i knew about it instead of constantly checking - so if the feedback release date could be changed to be accurate that would be great!" ~ Year 3, HASS

"I wish all of our lectures were uploaded either the same day or the next day so that we could look up whatever we missed immediately. Our stats professor uploads lecture recordings after the entire term is over." ~ Masters, HLS

"Should be easier to find the mitigation option. Need to keep reminding myself how to do it." ~ Year 2, HASS

Students also expressed a desire to view archived module content (2%), and information about next term (1%). A few students also mentioned AI, in the context of an AI assistant as well as more information about AI usage and university policy towards it. (Fig. 20)

However, 18% felt that nothing needed to be improved, with 7% N/A and 6% unsure. Generally, students seem to feel that ELE2 could be made easier to navigate so that it is easier to access important information surrounding their modules and assignments. (Fig. 20)

4. Overall, what do students think about their digital learning experience?

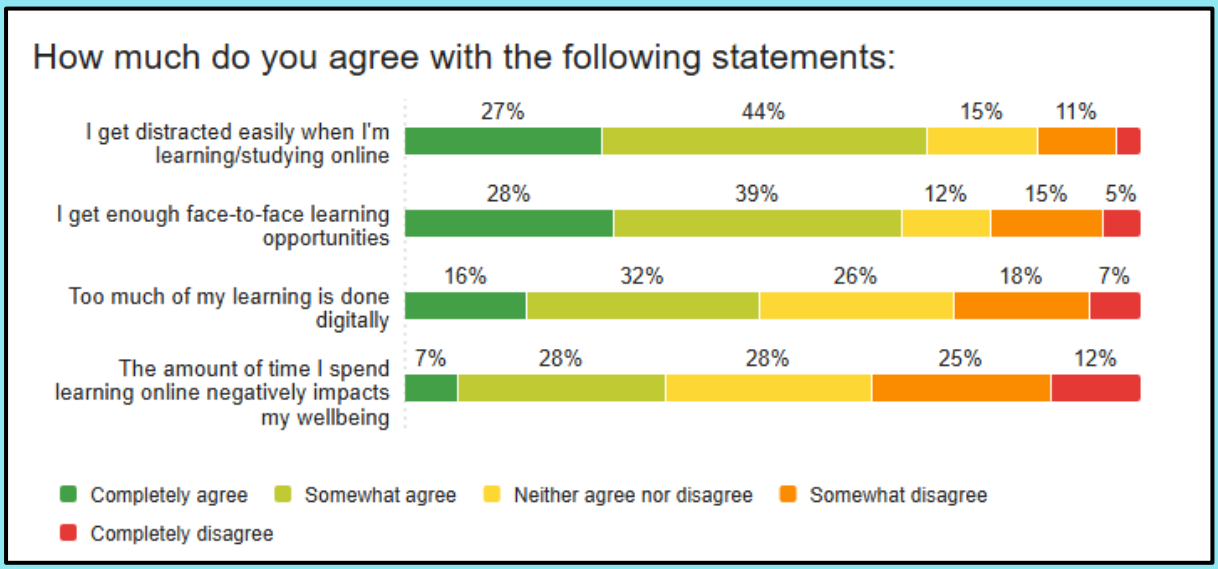

Figure 21 – Question 12: How much do you agree with the following statements?

The majority of students, 71%, agree that they get easily distracted when learning/studying online, with only 14% feeling they do not get distracted. 67% of students feel that they get enough face-to-face learning opportunities, with 20% disagreeing. 48% of students feel that too much of their learning is done digitally, with only 35% disagreeing. 35% of students feel that their wellbeing is negatively impacted by how much time they spend learning online, but 37% feel that this does not negatively impact their wellbeing. (Fig. 21)

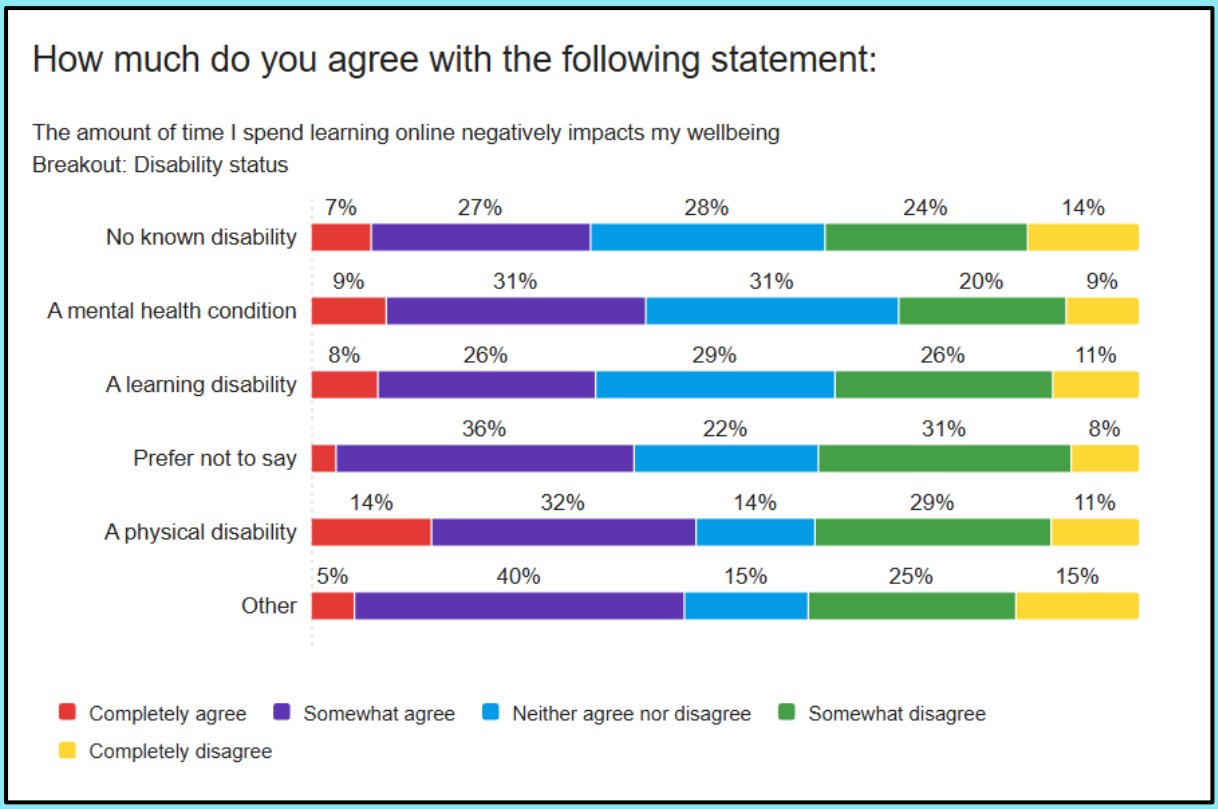

Figure 22 – Question 12: How much do you agree with the following statement: The amount of time I spend learning online negatively impacts my wellbeing? (Breakout: Disability status)

When we look at this by disability, those with a physical disability and those classed under other have the highest percentage of responses agreeing, at least somewhat, that the amount of time they spend learning online negatively impacts their wellbeing, with 46% and 45% agreeing, respectively. Within this, 14% of students with a physical disability who responded completely agree with this statement, which is higher than any other demographic, whereas students under other have a higher percentage of students who somewhat agree, with 40% which is higher than all other statuses. (Fig. 22)

Interestingly, these were also the demographics with the highest percentage of students disagreeing with the statement, both with 40%; presenting a split in these groups and the lowest number of students who neither agree nor disagree with the statement. Students who preferred not to say had an even split between those who agreed and disagreed with the statement, with both sides having 39% of the total responses. (Fig. 22)

40% of students who have a mental health condition agreed with this statement, compared to 29% who disagreed. This was also the category with the most students who neither agreed nor disagreed, with 31% feeling neutral. Students who have a mental health condition had the lowest percentage of responses that at least somewhat disagreed with this statement, suggested that they are more likely to be negatively impacted by learning online and experiencing less face-to-face interaction. (Fig. 22)

Students with a learning disability and those with no known disability had very similar results, both having slightly more students disagreeing with the statement that agreeing, although both had a large percentage of students who delt ambivalent, 28% of students with no known disability, and 29% of students with a learning disability neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. 34% of students from both demographics agreed with the statement, with this being the lowest percentage of students agreeing across all the disability statuses, suggesting that these students are slightly less negatively impacted by online learning than other disability statuses. Students with no known disability had a marginally higher percentage of students who disagreed with 38%, compared to 37% of students with a learning disability. (Fig. 22)

Generally, results were quite similar across all the demographic groups, with an almost balanced split between students agreeing and disagreeing with the statement for all groups, and lot of students neither agreeing nor disagreeing. (Fig. 22)

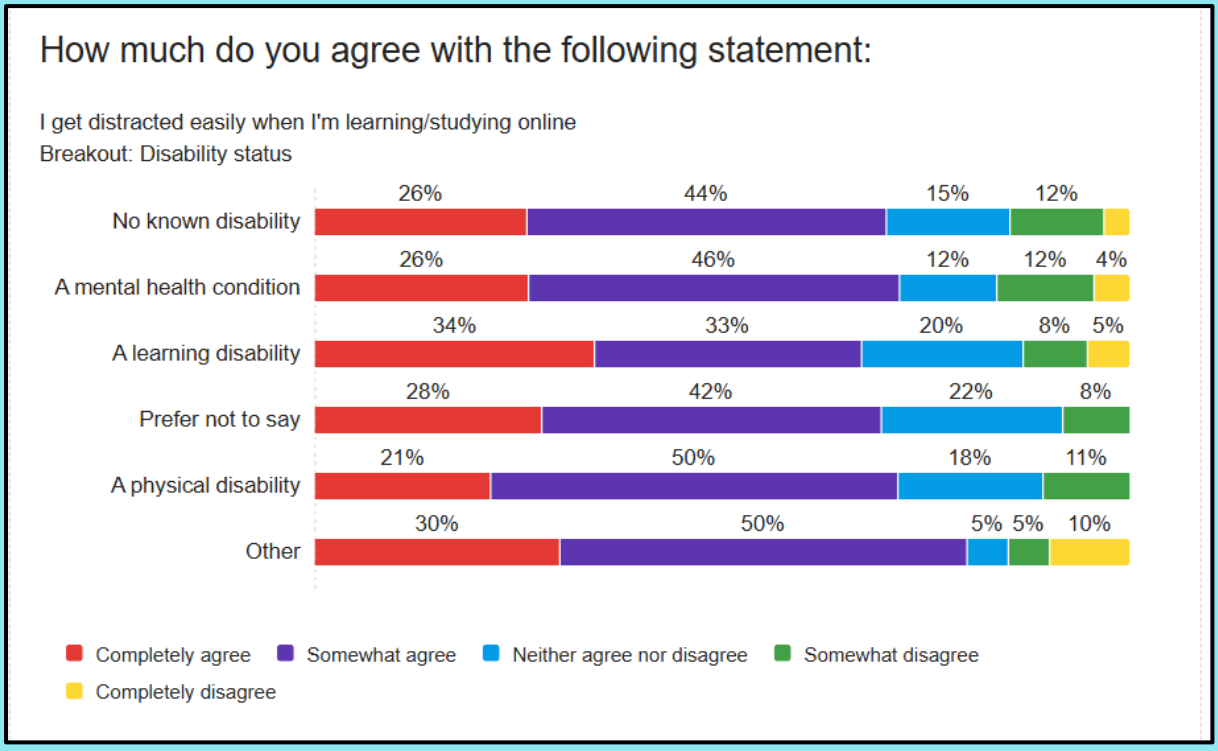

Figure 23 – Question 12: How much do you agree with the following statement: I get distracted easily when I'm learning/studying online? (Breakout: Disability status)

When we instead look at the statement 'I get distracted easily when I'm learning/studying' across disability, it can be in each group very few students disagreed with the statement. For students who prefer not to say, and those with a physical disability, no students completely disagreed with this statement, this rises to only 3% for those with no known disability, 4% for those with a mental health condition and 5% for those with a learning disability. The highest percentage of students who completely disagreed was those under other, with

10%. This was also one of the categories with the highest percentage of students that at least somewhat disagreed with 15%, along with those with no known disability also at 15%, and students with a mental health condition with 16%. This falls to 13%, 11% and 8% for students with a learning disability, a physical disability, and those who prefer not to say, respectively. (Fig. 23)

Generally, all demographics had a similar percentage of students who at least somewhat agreed with the statement. 70% of students with no known disability, and students who prefer not to say, 71% of students with a physical disability, and 72% of students with a mental health condition agree with the statement. The percentage of students who agree with the statement fluctuates slightly with those classing under other, with 80%, who also have the lowest number of students that neither agree nor disagree with only 5%. 67% of students with a mental health condition agreed with the statement, which is the lowest across all demographics, but this includes 34% who completely agree which is the highest across all. (Fig. 23)

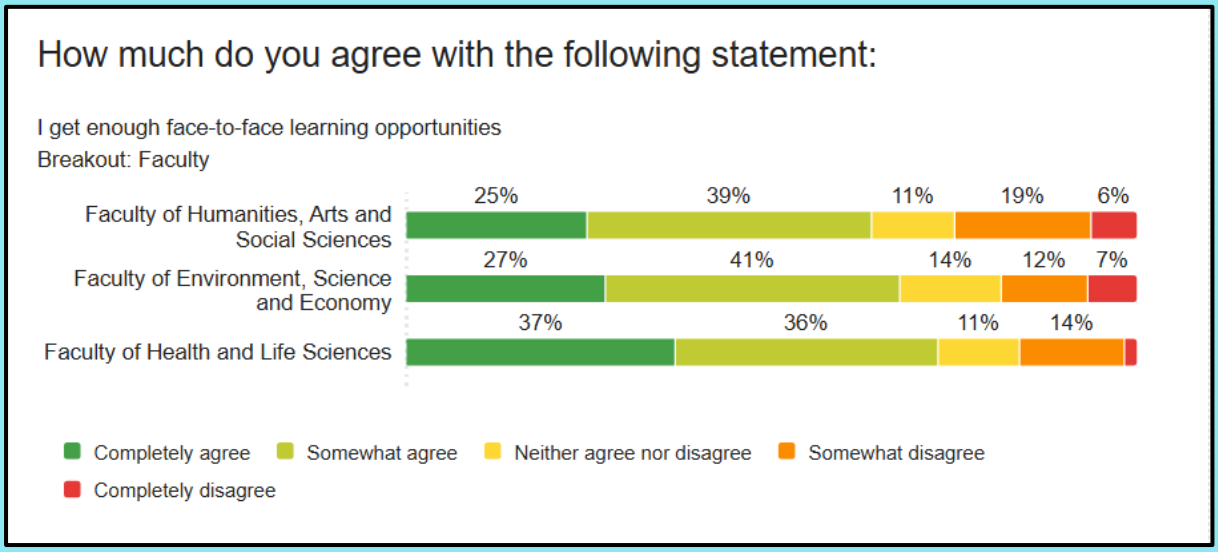

Figure 24 – Question 12: How much do you agree with the following statement: I get enough face-to-face learning opportunities? (Breakout: Faculty)

Comparing how much students agree with whether they get enough face-to-face learning opportunities across faculties, it can be seen that HLS has the highest satisfaction with the amount of face-to-face learning opportunities they have. 73% of HLS students at least somewhat agree with the statement, including 37% who completely agree. This is higher than HASS, where 64% of students (including 25% who completely agree) agree with the statement, and ESC with 68% (including 27% who completely agree) agreeing with the statement. (Fig. 23)

Very few HLS students (2%) completely disagree with the statement, contributing to only 16% of HLS students who at least somewhat disagree. This rises to 19% for ESC, which included the largest percentage of students who completely disagree at 7%. HASS has the highest percentage of student that disagreed with the

statement, with 25% at least somewhat disagreeing suggesting that HASS students feel they receive less face-to-face learning and require more. 100% of INTO students somewhat agreed with the statement, showing that those who responded are satisfied with the amount of face-to-face learning they receive. (Fig. 23)

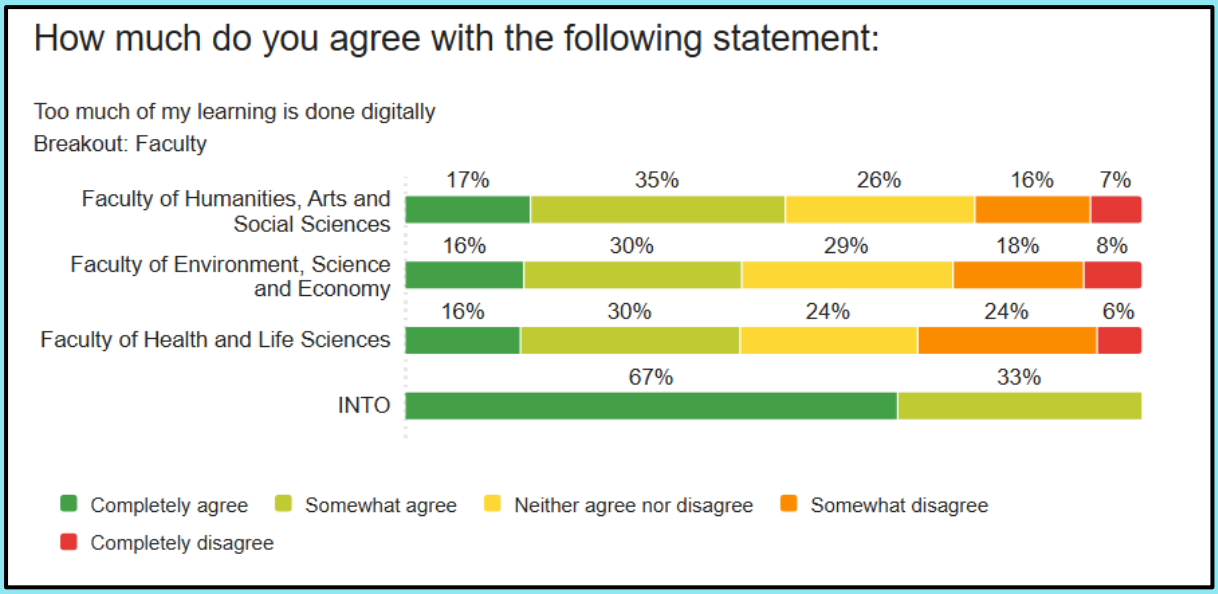

Figure 25 – Question 12: How much do you agree with the following statement: Too much of my learning is done digitally? (Breakout: Faculty)

When we compare across faculties how much students agree that too much of their learning is done digitally, it can be seen that HLS students disagree the most. 30% of HLS students at least somewhat disagree that too much of their learning is digital, compared to 26% for ESC and 23% for HASS, no INTO students disagreed with this statement. HASS, ESC and HLS had very similar percentages of students who completely agreed, with 17% for HASS and 16% for the other two. Slightly more HASS students somewhat agreed compared to ESC and HLS, with 35% compared to 30% for both of the other two. (Fig. 25)

Across all demographics more students agree with the statement than disagree. 67% of INTO students completely agree with the statement, with a further 33% somewhat agreeing. This suggests that overall, students feel that too much of their learning is done online, but this is less prominent for HLS students than for other faculties. (Fig. 25)

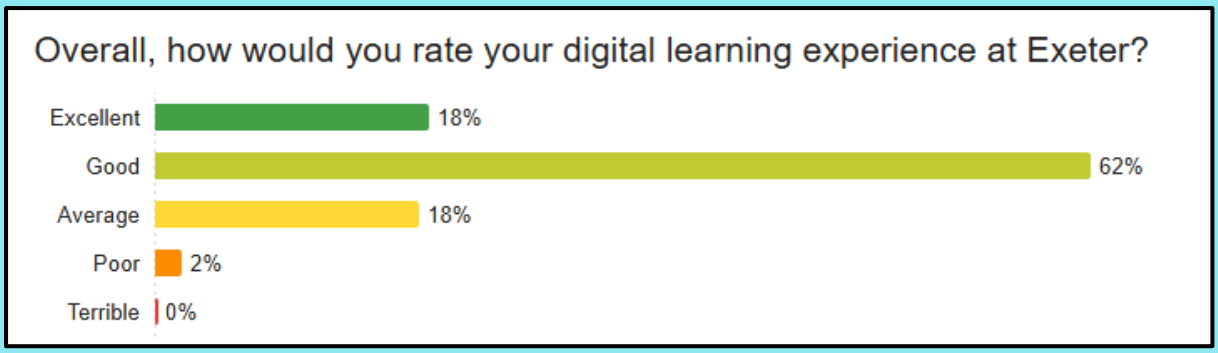

Figure 26 – Question 13: Overall, how would you rate your digital learning experience at Exeter?

Most students felt they have a positive digital learning experience, with 18% rating it as excellent, and a further 62% saying it is good. 18% of students felt it was average, but only 2% expressed that it was poor. Suggesting that overall, students are satisfied with their digital learning experience at Exeter. (Fig. 26)

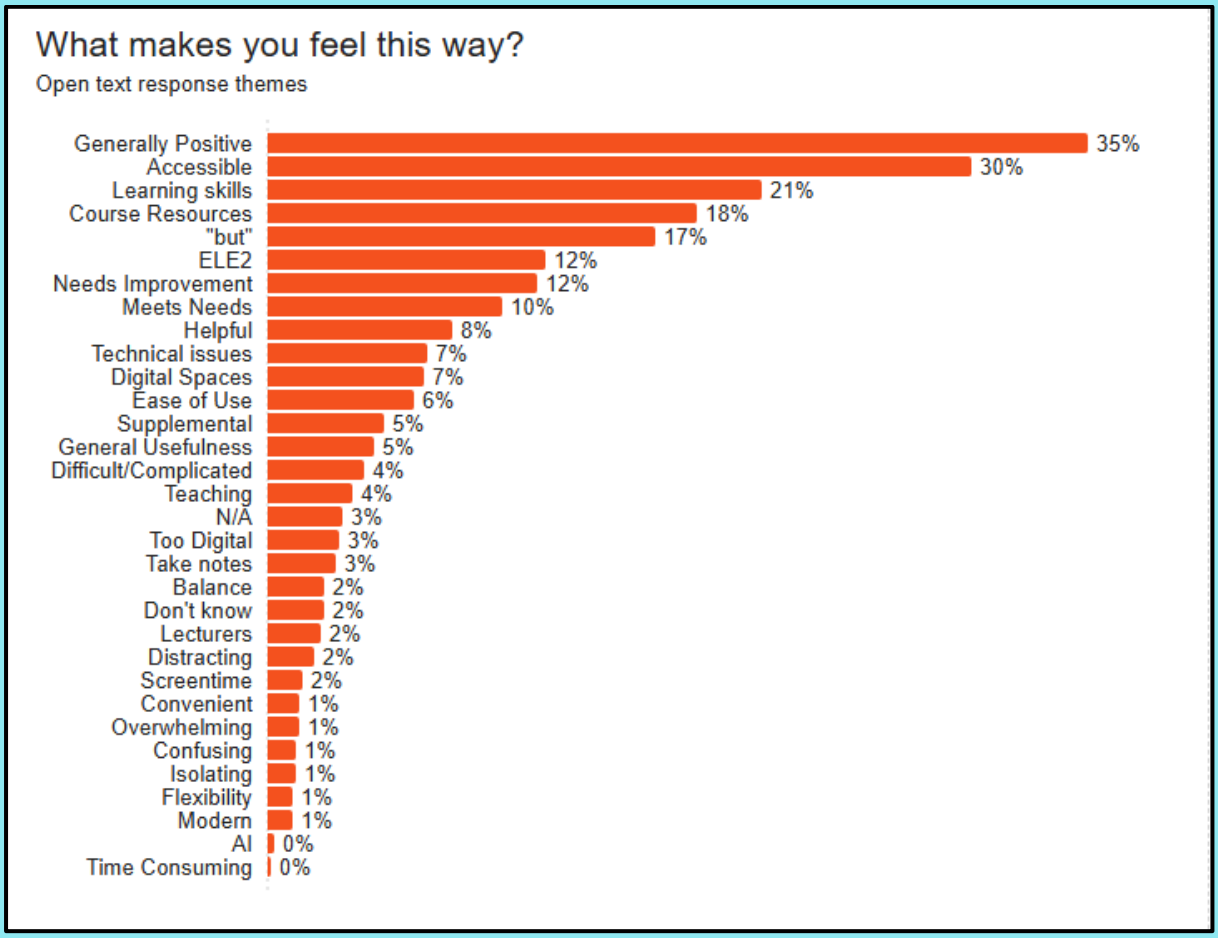

Figure 27 – Question 14: What makes you feel this way?

When students were asked what makes them feel this way regarding how they rated their digital learning experience at Exeter, 35% of students expressed that their experience has been generally positive. 30% felt that it has been accessible, which made them feel satisfied. (Fig. 27)

21% mentioned acquiring or improving learning skills as a result of their digital learning experience. 17% felt the course resources had an impact on how they view their digital learning experience. Others mentioned the ease of use (6%), that it was helpful (8%) and their needs are met (10%), that it is generally useful (5%), convenient, flexible and modern (1% for each). (Fig. 27)

"Since I arrived, I have learnt valuable skills that I did not have before. My classes have also helped me a lot to make this experience a positive one." ~ Masters, HASS

"Having access to recordings after lectures is helpful for reviewing. Having all course materials in one place helps me know I am on top of work and what I can do more of if I feel I don't fully understand something." ~ Year 2, ESE

"Everything has been easy to access, whether it's ELE, the digital library or the software's that we use on campus, it's all been accessible and easy to use." ~ Masters, HLS

However, 17% included a "but" statement, which might make up some of the students who rated as average, since they do not feel that their experience is bad but there are things that need to change. (Fig. 27)

"I don't think online learning is the best for me, I'm less responsive and I don't think the information is processed as well. But it is modern times with AI and Electronic devices so need to develop new skills." ~ Year 1, HLS

"My experience is good enough, but I would like to be less reliant on screen time to get my work done." ~ Masters, HASS

"Lectures are generally well recorded and accessible, most but not all module leads are good at providing adequate information to access the online resources." ~ Year 4, ESE

"I think online learning is useful and allows you to go at your own pace, the previous google sites were really helpful, but I don't think moving to ELE2 has been a good idea and I think a lot of my colleagues agree." ~ Year 3, HLS

12% of students also mentioned that Exeter's digital learning experience needs improvement. Some students mentioned that it is difficult/complicated (4%) and too digital (3%), or overwhelming, confusing and isolating (1% for each). 7% mentioned that technical issues were a problem. 12% of answers mentioned that ELE2 had an impact on their outlook regarding their digital learning experience at Exeter. (Fig. 27)

"I feel like campus is not an ideal place for studying with a laptop e.g. lots of the plugs don't work and Eduroam is so bad that there are memes about it. However, ELE2 is a good platform overall." ~ Year 3, HASS

"It's good to have the flexibility but it can feel somewhat isolating and i am also easily distracted at home, and sometimes don't have the motivation to go to campus." ~ Masters, HASS

"It's good but sometimes digital learning gets too overwhelming. Also the faculty is highly focused on teaching from PDFs which limit interaction and understanding. The content of pdfs are also too much and overwhelming." ~ Masters, ESE

"I appreciate accessing lectures online, however there are often technical issues, or communication issues - for example, guest lecturers not being connected to online." ~ Other, HLS

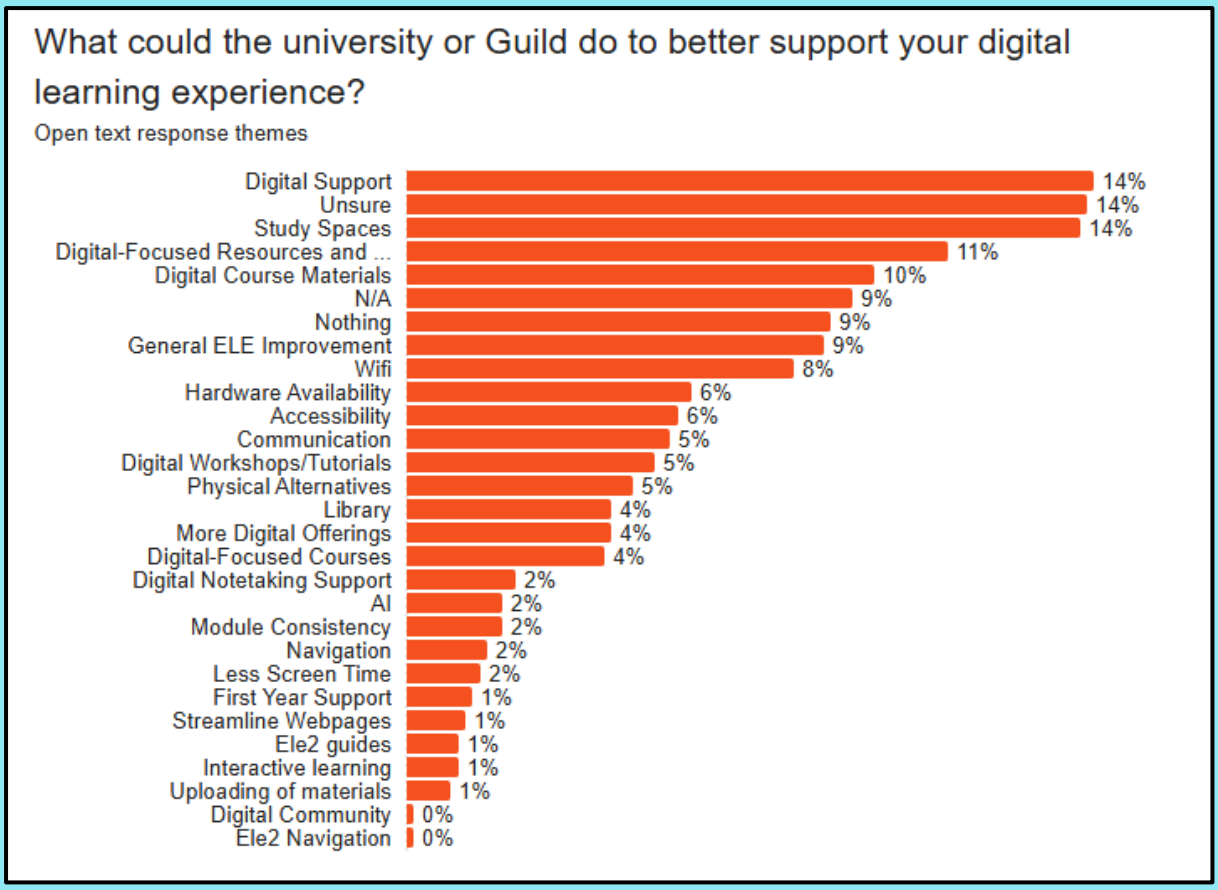

Figure 28 – Question 15: What could the University or the Guild do to better support your digital learning experience?

When asked what students felt could be improved, by either the Guild or the university, to better support their digital learning experience, two of the most common responses were more/better digital support (14%), and more study spaces (14%) to access their digital learning from, as well as 4% mentioning the library facilities. (Fig. 28)

"Provide more support for students struggling with spending so much time sat with a laptop. It's draining reading so much info on a screen." ~ Year 2, HASS

"More guidance on how it can be used to learn/study during self-directed learning. For the BMBS course, this is obviously a huge part of my study and using digital tools makes a huge difference in studying and lessens the stress/anxiety I feel with the copious amount of content there is to learn so quickly." ~ Year 1, HLS

"More spaces on campus with computers, there's also lots of charging stations but the sockets rarely work, and charging stations in lecture theatres would be helpful as sometimes, especially in longer lectures my laptop will die and I don't have anywhere to charge it." ~ Masters, HASS

Following this there was an overall sentiment that student's digital experiences could be improved through more help and instruction for using digital learning tools. 11% of student responses mentioned more digital focused resources and tools, with other students mentioning help with ELE2 or general navigation (2%) or ELE2 guides (1%). Students also mentioned getting support for first year students (1%), as well as digital workshops/tutorials (5%). 9% of student responses requested general improvement to ELE2, as well as 1% requesting more streamlined webpages. (Fig. 28)

"I think a handbook / list of all the digital learning platforms that we have access to / a discount for and how to access them would be really beneficial. Only now in final year am I figuring out how to access articles that are behind a paywall for example." ~ Year 4, HASS

"Honestly i'm not too sure what would help me, maybe things being easier to find? Like the other day I needed to find articles in the digital library and it was all just super confusing like links would take me somewhere etc and i just didn't know what to do and this happened again when i was trying to find information on other things." ~ Year 1, HLS

"More tutorials for first years especially on how to navigate the online platforms such as ELE2 and how to improve on the digital learning experience." ~ Year 3, HASS

Another overarching topic was courses;10% discussed digital course materials with another 4% specifying digital-focused courses and 2% needing more module consistency. Others mentioned interactive learning (1%), uploading of materials (1%) and some even mentioned wanting less screentime (2%). Another theme was accessibility (6%), with students also requesting better access to better Wi-Fi (9%), and 6% mentioning hardware availability. (Fig. 28)

"They could try and ensure all readings, including optional readings from reading lists are available digitally via the library." ~ Year 2, HASS

"The university wifi is sometimes quite slow/lagging, that would be the only improvement I could think of to better support students work." ~ Masters, HLS

"Provide more support for students struggling with spending so much time sat with a laptop. It's draining reading so much info on a screen." ~ Year 2, HASS

"Support people more with technology - last year, I had a technology issue with my laptop, leaving me without a fully functioning device for the last portion of the year which was difficult. I contacted tech but they couldn't help me." ~ Year 2, HLS

5% of student responses requested physical alternatives for those who dislike digital learning, and 4% requested more digital offers to make accessing digital learning tools more affordable. 2% of students mentioned digital notetaking support and the use of AI. However, one of the most common responses was 14% of students feeling unsure what improvements should be made, with 9% N/A, and 9% finding nothing that needs improvement. (Fig. 28)

Conclusion

1. **What digital tools are students using and where?**

The majority of students (97%), regularly use a laptop for learning, followed by 45% that use a smartphone, 43% using headphones/microphone, and 29% using a tablet, with only 12% using a desktop/computer and 8% using a webcam/camera (Fig. 1). Most students either bought this device themselves, or had it bought for them (Fig. 2). 55% of students report using generative AI tools, and 47% of students use spellcheck/writing support with a further 37% using AI assistant tools (Fig. 3). Students with no known disability use generative AI and AI assistant tools more than students with a disability. Students with a learning disability use spellcheck/writing support more, and those with a mental health condition use captions more than others (Fig.4).

HASS students have a lower percentage of responses for using generative AI tools, and a higher response for sing spellcheck/writing support (Fig. 5). When asked why students use these tools, 42% of students responded that it was a combination of: improving the quality if their work, helping their productivity and for accessibility (Fig. 6). This remained the biggest reason across all types of tools (Fig. 7). OneNote, Notion, AI tools, word and Goodnotes where the most popular tools/apps that students fine useful for learning (Fig. 8).

Most students use digital technology to learn/study the most at home, followed by on campus study spaces and lectures/seminars (Fig. 9). 60% of students agree that the Wi-Fi on campus is fast enough and lets them access what they need to online (Fig. 10). 54% of students agree that there are enough spaces on campus where they can charge their devices, and that there are enough study spaces on campus to learn/study with a device (Fig. 10). When looking at this across campuses, Streatham students agree less and disagree more with all three of these statements when compared to St Luke's, especially regarding the availability of charging spaces (Fig. 11).

2. What support do students receive around digital learning?

40% of students report not having received any guidance/support around the digital skills they need to excel on their course, with 30% saying yes and 30% that they're not sure (Fig. 12). Across all departments, more students reported receiving no guidance/support, however there was a rather even split of responses between no, yes, and students being unsure across all departments, with HLS reporting the most yeses, and HASS the least (Fig.13). However, over 70% of students across all departments feel that they would benefit from support/guidance (Fig. 14). These results are very similar across all departments, HLS being slightly higher (Fig. 15). 86% of students who had received Guidance felt that it was helpful (Fig. 16), with HLS students having the highest percentage across departments at 89%, and HASS having the lowest at 81% (Fig. 17).

3. How are students finding using ELE2?

88% of students expressed that they could easily find learning materials on ELE, with the majority of students also finding it easy to find assignment briefs and submission points on ELE2. Students were slightly less confident in finding feedback dates and marking criteria on ELE2 (Fig. 18). Students generally feel that ELE2 is easy to use and well-organised, with everything in one place (Fig. 19). When asked about how ELE2 could be improves, students most commonly responded with making it a more user-friendly interface, with a better layout, and quicker/easier access to materials and deadlines (Fig. 20).

4. Overall, what do students think about digital learning at the University of Exeter?

71% of students agree that they get easily distracted when learning/studying online (Fig. 21). 67% of students feel that they get enough face-to-face learning opportunities, whilst 48% of students feel that too much if their learning is done digitally (Fig. 21). 35% of students feel that the amount of time they spend learning online negatively impacts their wellbeing, with 37% disagreeing (Fig. 21). Students with a physical disability, and those under other, have a higher percentage of students that feel that their wellbeing is negatively impacted by how much time they spend learning online, whilst also having the most that disagreed as most other demographics had a large amount of students who felt neutral (Fig. 22).

The majority of students across all disability statuses agreed that they get distracted easily when studying/learning online, with results being very similar for all (Fig. 23). HLS is the department with the highest percentage of students that are satisfied with the amount of face-to-face learning opportunities they have at 73%, with HASS having the lowest at 64% (Fig. 24). HLS students disagree the most that too much of their learning is done digitally at 30%, but all

departments had a similar percentage of students who agreed, with 35% for HASS, and 30% for ESC and HLS (Fig. 25).

18% of students feel their digital learning experience at Exeter is excellent, with a further 62% finding it good and 18% finding it average (Fig. 26). When asked why they feel this way, the most common responses were that they have had a generally positive experience, finding things accessible and gaining learning skills, also mentioning course resources and ELE2 (Fig. 27). Students feel that to improve, the University or the Guild could offer more digital support, more study spaces, more digital course materials and digital-focused resources and tools, as the most common responses (Fig. 28).

Recommendations

- Provide more spaces on campus for charging devices, and for studying
    - Particularly for Streatham. If the University could implement more spaces for students to study on campus with charging ports, so that more students can work on campus more easily.

- Offer more support surrounding digital tools and learning
    - Provide workshops/in lecture guidance on how to use course specific digital learning tools, especially in first year as an introduction to learning digitally at University.
    - Provide a handbook/list if all the digital learning platforms available and how to use them that students can refer back to by themselves.

- Improve ELE2 navigation and layout
    - Arrange ELE2 layout to be more intuitive and easier to navigate.
    - Add a search feature to ELE2 to make it easier to find specific materials.
    - Have a clear deadline tracker that compares deadlines across all modules.
    - Introduce a calendar within each module to help track schedules and projects.
    - Regulate ELE2 course pages across lecturers so that materials and feedback dates are consistent and accessible across all modules.
    - Have a clear and easy link to mitigation.

External Resources

If you want to read some more around this topic, you could start with the following articles:

- 2024/25 UK higher education students digital experience insights survey findings, JSIC
- Capability for change – preparing for digital learning futures, WONKHE

If you are a current University of Exeter student, please find some resources below to help you with your digital learning:

- Digital Learning Hub, University of Exeter
- Digital Learning Support, University of Exeter
- Digital productivity and collaboration, University of Exeter Library

Demographics

Our panel of 1000 students is demographically representative of the University of Exeter's student population but, due to varying response rate on a month-to-month basis, the demographics of this data change survey-to-survey.

The demographics of this report's respondents are illustrated below.

*PNS = Prefer not to Say

Category	Panel Total	Response Total
Faculty		
ESE	363	240 (66%)
HAS	379	261 (69%)
HLS	248	162 (65%)
INTO	10	3 (30%)
Campus		
Streatham	831	559 (67%)
St Luke's	142	91 (64%)
Distance	27	16 (59%)
Domicile		
UK	739	523 (71%)
International (EU)	47	25 (53%)
International (Rest of World)	214	118 (55%)
Mode of Study		
Full-Time	951	636 (67%)
Part-Time	49	30 (61%)

Category	Panel Total	Response Total
Gender		
Female	721	499 (69%)
Male	236	136 (58%)
Non-Binary/ Genderfluid	31	23 (74%)
PNS*	12	8 (67%)
Identification with Gender Assigned at Birth		
Yes	946	629 (66%)
Sometimes	22	15 (68%)
No	23	15 (65%)
PNS*	9	7 (78%)
Ethnicity		
White	625	443 (71%)
Latin	13	10 (77%)
Black	36	21 (58%)
Asian	240	138 (58%)
Arab	12	8 (67%)
Mixed	51	32 (63%)

Study Level		
1st Year	250	148 (60%)
2nd Year	228	166 (73%)
3rd Year	172	130 (76%)
4th Year	54	41 (77%)
5th Year	13	10 (77%)
Masters	220	130 (60%)
Other	63	41 (65%)

Age Bracket		
Under 20	553	375 (68%)
21-30	396	257 (65%)
31-40	35	22 (63%)
41-50	15	12 (80%)
51+	1	0 (0%)

Widening Participation		
Parent	17	10 (59%)
Carer	21	16 (76%)
Care experienced or care leaver	4	3 (75%)
Estranged from family	12	9 (75%)
Refugee or asylum seeker	1	1 (100%)
None of the above	945	627 (66%)
Other	11	6 (55%)
PNS*	12	8 (67%)

Sexual Orientation		
Gay	18	11 (61%)
Lesbian	24	21 (88%)
Bisexual	142	102 (72%)
Pansexual	18	11 (61%)
Asexual	19	16 (84%)
Queer	30	17 (57%)
Heterosexual	636	413 (65%)
Other	2	2 (100%)
Unsure	23	17 (74%)
PNS*	88	56 (64%)

Disability Status		
No known disability	647	420 (65%)
Learning disability	110	76 (69%)
Physical disability	45	29 (65%)
Mental health condition	190	136 (72%)
Other	23	20 (87%)
PNS*	56	37 (66%)