Academy Forum 2: How are students using Technology at Aberystwyth University?

## Dr Jim Woolley (lteu@aber.ac.uk)

## Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit, October 2022

## PSF Mapping: A1, A2, A4, K3, K4, V1, V2

This Academy Forum was based on the JISCs Digital Insights Survey findings for 2021-22. Every year, the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit runs the survey for all students to take.

The data from the survey informs:

* [**Learning Analytics**](https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/about-us/corporate-information/information-governance/data-protection/learning-analytics/)
* [**Digital Strategy**](https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/is/about/digital-strategy/)
* [**Learning and Teaching Strategy**](https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/academic/lt-strategy-2019-2022/apex-strategy/)

Running the survey means that we can benchmark what we offer against other Higher Education providers. Further information, including a summary of all data, can be found in [***Student digital experience insights survey 2021/22.***](https://repository.jisc.ac.uk/8850/1/2022-07%20%28iDFltdP024.11%29%20DEI%20HE%20%26%20FE%20Reports%202022%20%28HE%29%20v1-05.pdf)

It allows us in LTEU to look at trends and identify areas for improvement and training to offer staff.

The survey and analysis for 2021-22 was run by Lauren Harvey. Joseph Wiggins, a Theatre, Film and Television Studies student assisted with the analysis. You can view Joseph’s summary in this[**blogpost.**](https://wordpress.aber.ac.uk/e-learning/2022/08/31/student-digital-insights-survey-results-2021-2022/)

The academy forum began with a Vevox poll asking attendees about the technologies they were using in their teaching, summarised below:



## What challenges do you think students currently face in using technology?

* Blackboard isn’t user friendly to people, especially for those who might not have used it before.
* Students using phone or mobile devices to access online activities – mobile devices don’t always render / display correctly.
* Some students might not have access to technology, including mobile devices.
* Over the past couple of years, we could see that students are reluctant to use technology
* Some students might not have the skills to undertake these activities – they might need more support. We also make assumptions that students might know how to use these technologies.
* Use of technology also eats into learner time, so it needs to be well designed and relevant.
* From an educator’s perspective creating meaningful and well-designed learning activities can take more time.
* We need to factor in the extra support required for helping students with engaging with the task.
* Need to ensure that the activities are accessible for all students.
* When we’re using technology to create learning activities, it’s not always clear what the students will see as we’re accessing through an editor interface.
* It can be more difficult to measure student engagement when teaching online.

## What currently works well with technology?

* Accessibility – it's a lot easier for students to tailor learning activities to their needs, with additional functionality including colour contrast, size, screen readers, and captions.
* The increase of technology allowed more options for engagement and for students to find what they’re comfortable with and to choose their approach to learning.
* Large lectures can benefit from Vevox and other polling software to help with engaging large groups.
* Outputs from activities can be saved and shared with students afterwards.
* Discussion forums have been useful and it was found that there was more interaction if they were answered anonymously.
* Tests and quizzes in Panopto worked well.

## What surprised you about the data from Digital Insights survey?

* The results from the survey might be problematic with neutral or middling responses. The qualitative comments will allow to drill down.
* The survey results show that digital reward for skills was below the benchmark – a discussion was had over how we can reward students.
* Badging and gamification was discussed, as well as skills certificate.
* Creating a quick reference of acquired digital skills will also help with CV writing and job applications
* More focus on how we can make online learning more engaging.

## What do you want to change as a result of the findings?

* Consider recognition to help CV building
* Using quizzes more to provide revision materials for students
* Reflect on what technology is being used and what works best for students
* Explore reward mechanisms and gamification
* Mini surveys using online anonymous tools
* Discuss skills and employability, and point students towards digital skills page
* Use quizzes for engagement with Panopto recordings