



UNIVERSITY OF
LINCOLN

INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE

JISC REPORT SUMMARY

International student digital experience (ISDX)

Digital pervades the student journey in UKHE, from application processes through to teaching, learning and assessment. At the same time, UKHE is experiencing higher numbers of international students coming to the UK to study (17% full-time UG and 67% full-time PGT).

Understanding the cultural and digital expectations and experiences of international students is key to providing effective support for their transition into UK HE teaching and learning.



JISC are currently engaged in a four-phase research project into ISDX. Phase 1 resulted in the publication of [this](#) report in April 2023 which explores the existing academic and sector literature in relation to the digital experience of international students. Phase 2 involves working directly with international students at 10 HEIs (including University of Lincoln) to better understand their experiences.

A short summary of this report has been produced for colleagues working with international students, to inform and guide efforts to support international students make a successful transition to UoL.

What do we mean by the term 'student digital experience'?

JISC defines this as *"the experience of digitally mediated teaching and learning provided to students during their studies, as well as the digital environment that students experience throughout the student journey from pre-enrolment through induction, into study and alumni status"*(p. 33).

Report Findings – Key Challenges

International students are not a homogeneous group, and their digital experience is influenced by a variety of factors. JISC research indicates that international students may experience digital technologies differently from domestic students (p.9), encountering challenges which may significantly impact student well-being and academic performance, alongside limiting existing university approaches to support student teaching and learning.

For example, some international students may:

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| <p>Experience ‘Digital shock’</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in the transition to a new higher education context where digital technology may be used differently for educational purposes. Digital shock is defined in the literature as a period “during which the new digital environment triggers curiosity and excitement, as well as disorientation and frustration” (Qi, Shen and Dai, 2022). • find aspects of digital learning/online assessment challenging as a result. (For more information on student insecurity and digital behaviours, see p.53) |
| <p>Have very different experiences of digital access and online pedagogies</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital access and experiences differ between countries. The Network Readiness Index benchmarks countries’ digital readiness and may be one indicator of the likely digital experiences international students will have had both inside and outside education - with the caveat that individual experiences will differ (see p35). • At UoL, the largest international student populations are drawn from India, Nigeria and Pakistan – ranked 61st, 109th, 89th respectively in 2022. The UK is ranked at position 12. |
| <p>Arrive with different or unsupported hardware</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laptop poverty is emerging as a key aspect of some international students’ digital experience, whereby some students arrive at university without personal access to technology to support their studies and are reliant on university loaned equipment. Survey results also indicate that some international students may be using mobile devices to access digital learning tools - with associated mobile data costs constituting an additional barrier to learning for some. (See p.52) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ To help address this, two additional LapSafe Self Service laptop loan units will be available to support students experiencing digital poverty. These will be located on the 1st floor of Minerva and ground floor of the David Chiddick Building. ⇒ Measures to alleviate mobile data costs are also under consideration. |

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| <p><u>Have different understandings of academic offences</u></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JISC survey data suggest that a lower proportion of international students than domestic students had previously received support or guidance in relation to academic offences (see p.34) and feel a need for further training in this area (See p.43. And for more information on student insecurity and digital behaviours see p.53) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Introductory sessions on academic regulations and academic integrity are now included in the UoL International Student Welcome – and should be complemented by programme level guidance. |
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Recommendations

Based on this research and the report, the following recommendations are made for those teaching and working with our international students:

- Provide clearly stated expectations for international students about the use of digital technologies on programmes before the start of teaching and learning.
- Engage students pre-emptively – provision of early guidance/expectations around the use of digital technology and academic integrity helps integrate students more successfully into an institution. (See p.68)
- Make use of text-based resources and text-based interactions as valuable complements to voice based/in person interactions with students to help enhance the understanding of content. (See p.43)
- Create and support expat communities to help guide and support incoming international students on how to use and adapt to university systems. (See p.46)
- Embed internationalisation into curricula – defined as *“The inclusion of international, intercultural and global knowledge, skills and dispositions in HE policies, programmes, curriculum and pedagogy. At the level of teaching and learning, it involves both internationalisation of the curriculum (IoC) and internationalisation at home (I@H)”* (Ryan, 2020). (See p.46)
- Increase awareness of both academic and professional services colleagues about the digital journey undertaken by international students – i.e. digital shock and key challenges identified above.
- Recognise that some international students may need support to make the digital border crossing into UKHE, that UK HE teaching and learning processes and attitudes are a reflection of UK (rather than universal) cultural expectations. (See p.67)

Further information

Comparing Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) in China and Nigeria (See p.36-37) Voices from the sector (See p. 59-63)

Questions to facilitate discussions between staff and students, and so help identify potential ‘digital shocks’ (See Table 4, p. 73)

Further reading (See p.75-82)