Student Expectations Study

Key findings from online research and discussion evenings held in June 2007 for the Joint Information Systems Committee

July 2007

Contents

Background to survey

The Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) commissioned Ipsos MORI to undertake research among prospective university students to understand a number of issues:

- current levels of ICT provision at school/college
- expectations of ICT provision at university
- any difference between expectation of ICT provision and that which is provided by HE institutions

These objectives helped to explore the hypothesis that there is a mismatch between student expectations of what they will be able to do and what Higher Education (HE) institutions can and do offer in terms of ICT. This study will form part of an overarching piece of research being undertaken by JISC to examine this hypothesis and inform HE institutions of student expectations of ICT provision.

Methodology

In order to explore the research objectives fully, a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative research was undertaken. Firstly, this enabled us to understand the uptake and usage of technology in UK education. In addition, the research allowed us to delve into the finer points of ICT use and gain a deep understanding of both why this target group uses technology and the way it uses it – in both social and learning environments.

The target group for this research was those aged 16-18 who were intent on going to university. The research was conducted in two parts with this target respondent group.

Qualitative study

Three group discussions were carried out. Two were held in Surbiton on the 13th June and the third in Bristol on the 18th June. Recruitment questionnaires were used to identify young people who had different levels of expertise in ICT. This meant the three discussion groups were differentiated along the following lines:

Group 1 – Surbiton – Frequent users of ICT and early adopters of new technologies (8 respondents)

Group 2 – Bristol - Frequent users of ICT at school and home (9 respondents)

Group 3 – Surbiton - Infrequent users of ICT at school and home; attitudinally less interested in technology (10 respondents).

We included more 'leading' edge participants because it can often be difficult gathering perceptions of the future – early adopters tend to offer better predictions about future behaviour. We also felt that this group would be able to engage with the issues and give lively responses. Participants were screened into the relevant groups by their responses to certain questions in the recruitment questionnaire:

Group 1 participants were interested in and use technology outside of school/college for learning. They were at the forefront of technological advances, interested in new gadgets, and regularly add content to the internet.

Group 2 participants were interested in and use technology outside of school/college for learning. Their school/college provides some or a lot of Information Technology.

Group 3 participants were not really interested in technology and only occasionally use it outside school/college for learning. Their school/college provides less Information Technology.

Ipsos MORI recruited 10 students for each group, all face-to-face and in-street. In order to ensure some representation, quotas were set by gender, age and intended

subject of study. Additionally, in order to ensure a broad range of views and opinions, a mixture of school/sixth form and Further Education students were recruited.

Ipsos MORI worked hard to achieve quotas set during recruitment. The profile of those who actually attend a workshop is always subject to inevitable last-minute changes in people's commitments. However, there was good representation from each group. The total demographic profile of participants attending the three groups is below.

Demographic profile of participants	
Base: All respondents attending the discussion evening	*27*
Gender	
Male	14
Female	13
Age	
15	1
16	12
17	9
18	5

Source: Ipsos MORI

As a qualitative exercise, the main aim was to consider young people's views in some depth – and to understand attitudes rather than to measure them. For the first two thirds of the discussion we did not provide information about ICT provision at university. Instead, we asked for their views and perceptions of current technology and how they use it in everyday life. This helped to ensure an unadulterated response, as the participants were not told explicitly at recruitment what they would be discussing on the day. In the final part of the discussion, a series of scenarios was introduced which offered possible ways in which ICT might be used in various university environments.

The structure of the evening is set out in the discussion guide, also appended. In summary, it comprised of:

Introductions and objectives

Imagining life at university

The way that technology is used now (at school)

Expectations of ICT provision at university

Scenarios of specific instances of ICT use at university

Ipsos MORI researchers Sarah Castell and Jon Atkin moderated the groups and representatives of JISC attended in an observing, non-participatory basis (to hear participants' perceptions at first hand).

It should be pointed out that the groups were not intended to be nationally representative. They consisted of participants from two areas – and, though they were not all studying at the same institution, the answers and responses are still those of students local to the two areas we visited. This sampling, in addition to the attitudinal criteria on technical usage, provided a sample of participants who were best placed to give us rich and detailed responses, without the need for larger numbers of group discussions.

Originally the second Surbiton group was to consist of low users of technology. During recruitment, however, we found that our original interpretation of low users, i.e. students who were not interested in technology and were looking to go to university, was a much rarer phenomenon than we had thought, and so the second group consisted of students with average to low interest in these technologies.

Online study

The online survey was conducted between 15th - 21st June, and 501 surveys were completed across the UK. The respondents for the survey were recruited from Research Now's online panel. As the target audience was those who had at least a low to medium knowledge of ICT, it was felt appropriate to carry out the research with a group which is, by virtue of their being part of an online research panel, perhaps more open to, and adept with technology, than the profile of the general public. They were probably, but not necessarily, daily users of the internet, and it could be assumed (but not taken for granted) that their use of other technology was also higher than most.

However, another criterion for taking part in the survey was their intention to carry on to HE study, so this group is designed to be roughly representative of 16-18 year olds across the UK who intend to go to university, not of the age group as a whole. There were quotas set on the recruitment of the participants as are broken down in the next table. These quotas were designed to be geographically representative with a mixture of genders.

Demographic profile of participants	
Base: All online responses	*501*
Gender	
Male	253
Female	248
Age	
16	96
17	135
18	270
Location	
England	419
Scotland	44
Wales	25
Northern Ireland	13
Area of Study	
Arts	124
Sciences	350
Other/Don't know	27

Source: Ipsos MORI

The online survey was designed to gain some valuable quantitative data from the target group and covered these areas of interest:

Applying to university

Use of ICT – at home and socially

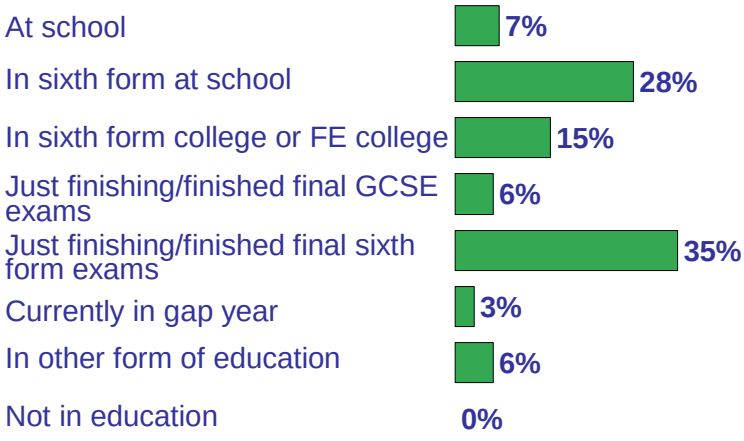
Using ICT at school or college

Expectations of IT use at university

Once the respondents had answered this series of questions they were taken on to a description of scenarios which mirrored those being used in the discussion groups. Respondents were taken into a more qualitative environment which had pictures depicting the different environments/scenarios which they had to select. They were then given a scenario to read and were prompted to write free text responses for each one. The responses from this part of the survey have been used in conjunction with the findings from the discussion groups in our overall analysis.

Our audience for this particular research was students who have not yet enrolled at university, and, as such, we were measuring *expectations about* rather than *experiences of* university life. The use of scenarios to describe different uses of technology sought to conquer the difficulty our students had with projecting an idea of how technology could be used in ways that are new to them.

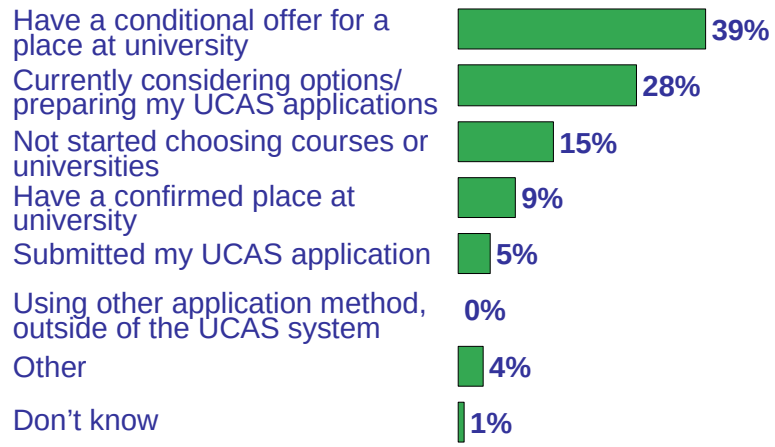
Q Which of these best describes your current situation?



Base: All respondents (501), fieldwork dates: 15th – 21st June 2007

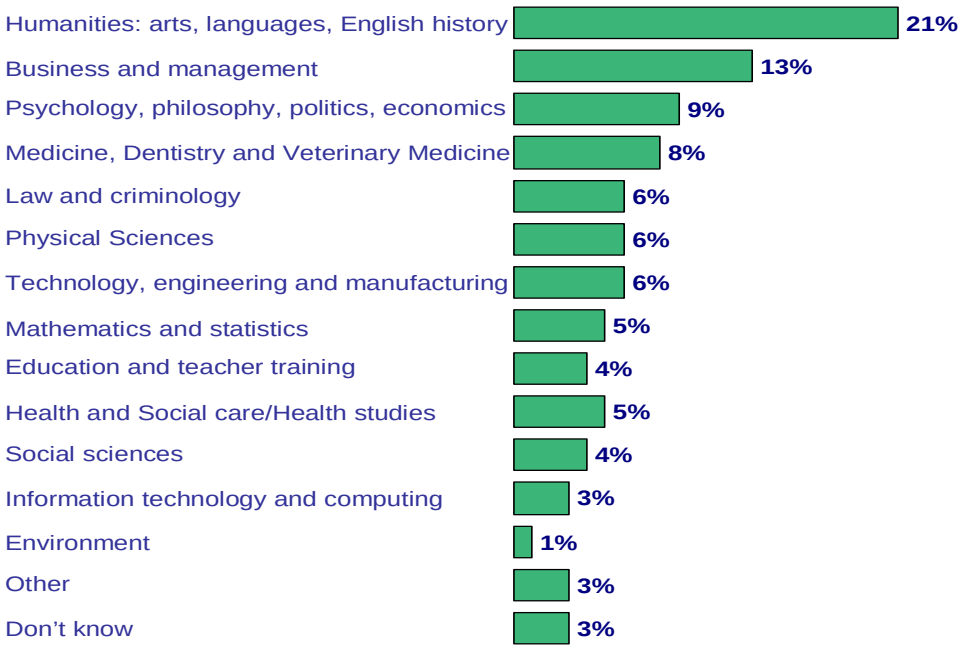
As can be seen, most (78%) of our online respondents are in the sixth form or finishing exams at this level. We conducted the research during the exam season, which may have impacted on the numbers who took part who were at that stage in their education.

Q What stage of the university application process are you in?



Base: All respondents (501), fieldwork dates: 15th – 21st June 2007

Q What area of study do you hope to follow when you go to university?



Base: All respondents (501), fieldwork dates: 15th – 21st June 2007

Acknowledgements

Ipsos MORI would like to thank Charles Hutchings and Malcolm Batchelor from JISC for all their help and assistance in developing this project. We also pass our grateful thanks to all the participants.

Publication of the Results

As JISC has engaged Ipsos MORI to undertake an objective programme of research, it is important to protect their interests by ensuring that it is accurately reflected in any press release or publication of the findings. As part of our standard terms and conditions, the publication of the findings of this report is therefore subject to the advance approval of Ipsos MORI. Such approval will only be refused on the grounds of inaccuracy or misrepresentation.

Jerry Latter

Checked & Approved:

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Jon Atkin

Checked & Approved:

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Sarah Castell

ICT use

Generally the students in the discussion were technologically adept and had integrated ICT into their lives. The majority were regular computer users, and had mp3 players and mobile phones. In this sense, they were the norm – we found that young people in this age bracket who are intent on university are virtually all at least medium users of technology.

Technology was used by the majority of those that we spoke to as an aid to their life – finding information, communicating with friends and family and organising events – although they were wary of using technology for the sake of it. There appears to be certain boundaries for its use which they, although they may not be able to express it, are aware of and these help to shape their uptake and interest in its use. This is an important point to bear in mind when analysing their use of ICT, both in the social and schooling spheres.

ICT in the social sphere

Data from the quantitative study help to frame the use of ICT in the social environment. Similarly, by understanding what is used and why it is being used, the data help to shed light on expectations for ICT provision at university.

The vast majority of the online respondents had internet access in their bedrooms – only 23% said that they never accessed the internet from there. This was echoed in the discussion groups where, if they did not have access from their bedrooms they would have access from somewhere within their homes, suggesting that access to the internet is something which is considered the norm for this target audience. Presently this is being paid for by their parents, who make the decision of whether they should have a computer in their rooms or not. At university, where they are paying for the facilities, it is a different story – they expect access at all times.

The respondents from the online survey were also very keen on ICT - 84% like to keep up to date with new technology and use it as much as possible, rising to 91% for leading edge users of technology (those who answered ‘regularly’ or ‘sometimes’ to how often they use different types of technology) and 90% for those with high expectations of ICT provision at university. However only around a third (36%) said they were the first person in their social group to get new technologies. These respondents were more likely to be 16 year olds (40%), male (47%), and those who had looked at IT provision at university (47%). This suggests that the research audience were very pragmatic about which new advances they took up – or that at their particular life stage they simply cannot afford to keep on top of all the new gadgets and technologies available.

However, one relatively recent phenomenon was embraced by virtually every respondent we surveyed – both qualitatively and quantitatively – social networking. Only 5% of the online sample claimed never to use this and 65% said that they used it regularly – with females more likely to use it regularly than males (71% against 59% respectively). Three-fifths (62%) use wikis, blogs or online networks, which can also be used as a tool of social networking.

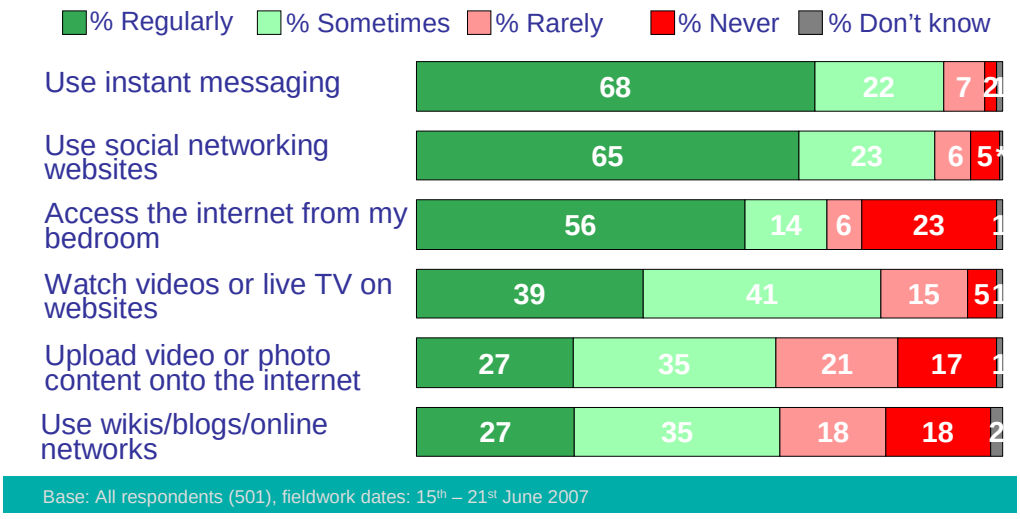
Indeed, all participants from the discussion groups, even those who were recruited as low to medium users, were able to express opinions about social networking websites. They were not only able to talk about the benefits and disadvantages of particular sites, but able to compare, through experience, one to another.

The most popular two sites were Facebook and MySpace. Most of the participants had a Facebook profile, and many had recently 'graduated' from a MySpace profile to Facebook. Some saw Facebook as a more mature site – and, by the nature of its layout and features, more appropriate for university applicants. MySpace was seen as a means of expression, rather than networking and communication. It was seen as more spontaneous, and, whether a positive or negative attribute, less 'mature'.

> *"Facebook's for university and MySpace is more about your culture. Facebook is more about identity, and communication, whereas MySpace is where you get stuff… about poems and crying"*
>
> Male, frequent users at school and home group

It should be pointed out that the groups were conducted at a time in which Facebook was surging in popularity[1], and that it did not meet universal approval with our participants – one participant in the infrequent users at school and home group complained that it was too complicated, and others preferred Bebo.

Q How often, if at all, do you do the following?

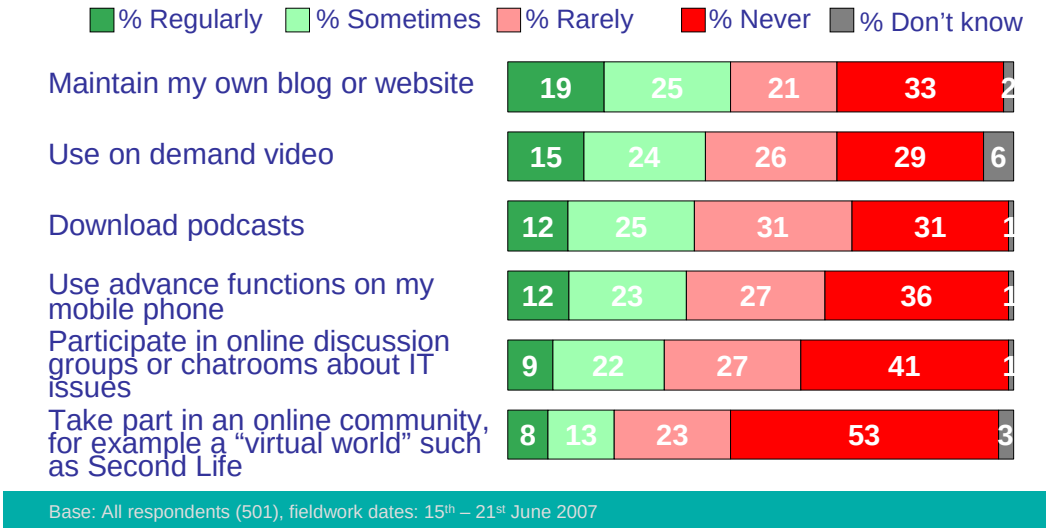


Base: All respondents (501), fieldwork dates: 15th – 21st June 2007

As the above charts show, some services are being used by the vast majority of respondents. Instant messaging emerged as just as popular as social networking websites, with only one in ten (9%) rarely, or never, using it. Many of the respondents are used to uploading video or photos to the internet. Interestingly, just 5% never watch videos or TV live online – perhaps attesting to the popularity of video sharing sites such as YouTube and the maturing nature of video on demand being offered by many of the large TV broadcasters (BBC and Channel 4 for example).

[1] http://www.e-consultancy.com/news-blog/363671/facebook-s-popularity-drive-continues-in-uk.html

Q How often, if at all, do you do the following?



Base: All respondents (501), fieldwork dates: 15th – 21st June 2007

Equally there are some technologies which do not have quite the same usage levels. Six in ten (61%) online respondents rarely or never download podcasts; only 12% say they do this regularly. This subject only came up in the groups after prompting; most of the participants downloaded music regularly, but only a handful downloaded podcasts, though perhaps this would be different if they had had exposure to podcasts within the framework of a learning environment.

There is another issue, which our groups did not touch upon, that of HEIs possibly facing capacity issues by students using sites which consume a great deal of bandwidth (e.g. file sharing sites and online multiplayer games). There is a dilemma between how much bandwidth should be taken up by this and their responsibility to provide capacity for teaching and research (assuming there is a limited bandwidth). This did not seem to have been brought to the attention of the students we spoke to, and perhaps simply wasn't important to them. We will explore this in more detail below.

The groups also touched on the subject of buying things online – Amazon emerged as the most popular site for online retail, more so than Ebay. When pressed, this was a 'trust' issue – the groups felt safer buying from Amazon, seen as an established retailer in the same vein as Tesco, rather than Ebay, which was seen as a more 'public' sale.

> *"You don't necessarily know what you're getting on Ebay – also Amazon do reviews, which are useful."*
>
> Male, frequent users at school and home group

Indeed the students in the discussion groups were relatively savvy about buying goods online, with insurance for example, because of the discounts granted to both online customers and younger customers. This behaviour was not seen as particularly leading edge in technological terms, simply the norm for this age group.

But trust may again play a part when students choose to use ICT to check personal details such as grades and medical information.

It terms of editing online content, there was a mixed response – 44% say they maintain their own blog or website regularly or sometimes, and more than three in five (62%) use wikis/blogs/online networks. Of the latter, males were more likely to use these sites regularly than females (31% compared with 23%).

In the qualitative discussions, the internet emerges as a research resource more than anything, whether for schoolwork or information in general (news, gossip). It appears that it is only the minority of students in this age group who are prepared to submit content for public scrutiny. This may have implications for HEIs' course development if the emphasis is on flexible or group working using online networking.

> *"I use the computer in work situations like coursework, but otherwise just to send stuff and email people*"
>
> Female, frequent users at school and home group
>
> "*I use it for research and stuff, if you've got coursework then you can just do it online at home instead of going to the library*"
>
> Female, infrequent users at school and home group

The least popular technological pursuit from the online survey was taking part in an online community e.g. Second Life. The majority (76%) have never, or only rarely, done this, and three fifths (60%) of females have never done this.

Participants in the groups articulated the idea that a 'community' had a social implication which could not be replicated by this type of technology – it is a very niche market and offers different benefits from other social sites. Indeed, few had actually heard of Second Life.

> *"That's a bit weird, to be honest. You would be quite sad to do that"*
>
> Male, infrequent users at school and home group

Young people are positive about technology; they see it as a useful tool that augments, but does not dictate, their social lives. They realise how, with the advent of downloads and sites such as Youtube, it can entertain them, but they see technologies as a means to an end. Second Life appeared to be an idea for people older than themselves, for the generation above who were interested in technology for its "own sake". This is perhaps why the idea amused our participants and why they felt it was "sad". The implications here for HEIs are that they cannot assume that presenting new technologies automatically makes their institution more youth-friendly – this new generation like to see the concrete benefits of technologies.

Use of ICT at school

As the above suggests, the target audience is technically competent – having grown up with digital technology as part of their lives. This use and understanding is transferred to school/college and the developing technological landscape there.

The online respondents were asked how much of their recent study had been supported by ICT. As might have been expected, the majority feel that ICT has supported their recent study at least a fair amount and only a handful of respondents said that it had not been used at all. The 16 year old respondents were more likely to think that it has been used a lot (42%) but this drops for the 17 and 18 year olds (to 27% and 29%). This all suggests a high prevalence of ICT in the school environment, although perhaps that awareness diminishes over time.

There were mixed feelings about the role of ICT in teaching. Around two in five (18%) said that their school or college uses too much ICT for teaching – this rises to 23% for those who say they use a lot of ICT at school - although half (54%) did not feel this way, particularly those with high expectations of ICT provision at university. One deduction from these figures might be that HEIs should use the system of learning at schools and colleges as a model, since the status quo seems to be popular.

However, we should also remember that these young people may have had little experience of different types of ICT-based learning. The qualitative research uncovered that students perceive ICT use at school to be limited. Hence, it may be that half our respondents stick with the status quo through natural conservatism and through a lack of exposure to the full benefits of ICT enabled learning. Similarly, those who feel their school uses 'too much' ICT may have had bad experiences. These findings suggest, at least, that HEIs need to ensure that any ICT they use has clear benefits.

As well as this, a quarter (25%) say they learn better though a computer than face to face. Those who are more computer savvy – the respondents identified as 'leading edge' or 'high users of ICT at school' – were more likely to suggest that they learn better through a computer, as well as 16 year olds (31% agree) and males (30%). In terms of how the school educated them in ICT itself, there was roughly the same proportion who felt that their ICT skills were stretched at school, as those who did not think this was the case.

So, on a quantitative level, there seems to be some differences in preferred learning methods – (e.g. some prefer taking notes on paper, and some prefer using a laptop) which suggests that achieving the correct balance between the various traditional and digital teaching techniques may be a difficult task.

ICT - fading into the foreground?

In the discussion groups, participants were asked what ICT their school or FE college offered, both in terms of resources provided outside the classroom (ICT labs, intranets etc.) and in terms of ICT as an aid to learning (whiteboards etc.).

From this emerged an interesting theme – our participants needed to be prompted to name more than just the basic and obvious types of ICT, such as computer rooms and smartboards. It soon became clear that so much of their existing systems and interfaces - even those that have emerged relatively recently - are seen as the norm, and have been totally assimilated into their understanding of the learning environment. These include electronic registration systems and automated school reports. These technologies are part of the fabric of their lives.

It may be that these types of technology are not associated with ICT but it is still interesting to see that when prompted, the majority of participants were aware of these:

> *"It's like walk in, touch a big database so teachers can check who's not been in what lesson, and stuff like that."*
>
> Male, infrequent users at school and home group

> *"They have touchboards – you touch the board instead of using the computer and and play videos on the central server instead of messing round with DVDs"*
>
> Male, frequent users and early adopters group

In this sense, technology in the learning environment, and perhaps technology in general, does not produce the 'wow-factor' that it might have done in years gone by. Young people, as represented by our groups, are not constantly seeking new types of technology in their school lives (as they are at home) - they are pragmatic in their approach to technology and take it in their stride.

As might be expected, virtually all the online respondents (86%), especially those with high school ICT usage and high expectations of university provision (91% and 94% respectively), use the internet regularly as a source of information for coursework and learning, a theme which was seen also in the discussion groups.

> *"I think it's for the exams. Because BBC do a bite sized room thing on the internet which helps a lot. It breaks it all down, and you don't get all the complicated stuff"*
>
> Female, frequent users at school and home group

ICT and teachers

There was also an understanding for some of the participants that the internet is used by their teachers for researching classes. Sometimes this was seen as a good thing although in other situations it was not.

> *"It's quite tedious. A lot of the teachers tend to just get the stuff off the internet, and read it straight to you. Whereas before they might have explained it more, and they would have to have used their own words, rather than the internet's words.*
>
> ***Moderator: So it has made the teachers a bit more lazy, has it?***
>
> *Yeah. I just mean with my business teachers, they just go and visit, and copy stuff there, and just read it to you. Whereas I can just go on the internet and do exactly the same. I'm not particularly learning much from them. "*
>
> Male, infrequent users at school and home group

The students were also aware that different subject areas allowed for differing levels or types of ICT use:

> *"It depends what kind of course you're doing. Because I guess, with a media course, you'll be using a lot more technology - computers, video cameras, things like that"*
>
> Male, infrequent users at school and home group

Another example of this is when one of the participants mentioned that information from the internet was used as part of his PE lessons. He saw this as a waste of time – interestingly, this may have stemmed from the fact that he saw that this particular teacher was not as computer literate as some of his other teachers.

This was something that was pointed out by some of the frequent users group in Bristol as well – often the students felt they were more technologically advanced than their teachers – thus creating a learning barrier. However, some saw that there were efforts being put into the training of their teachers:

> *"I think our teachers have IT lessons, I think once a year … so they know a lot of the stuff we don't"*
>
> Female, frequent users at school and home group

"*The teachers don't know how to use them – their understanding of computers is behind ours*"

Male, frequent users at school and home group

This could have an interesting impact on how these students will perceive the use of technology at university, especially, as we will see, because they are very quick to understand when it is being used as a genuine learning aid, integrated into the teaching style, as opposed to technology for its own sake.

ICT and different learning and teaching styles

In a general sense, ICT was seen as a source of learning assistance by the groups but they did sometimes complain about over-reliance on unnecessary technology, while tacitly realising the usefulness of it in their daily school life. Some in the Bristol group talked approvingly of smartboards, which seemed to be replacing their whiteboards, and how they and the teachers can use touch screen technology and upload videos onto central servers.

"With the smartboard you go on the internet, and you can check demonstrations that you can't on the internet. They have little animations, and stuff, so that when you demonstrate them they'll show you how it works"

Female, frequent users at school and home group

School intranets were seen as useful as well, and helped them to 'brush up' on things they might have missed in class. One also mentioned 'Ranger Outpost' – a system whereby school files can be accessed at home via a disc.

Both the online and group respondents felt that technology outside the classroom was a useful auxiliary tool to recap what was happening in class – they still seemed to prefer the traditional teacher/pupil classroom environment in terms of a 'structure' for learning, but realised that ICT could help them fill in any gaps.

"*We can get onto learning resources for our school site, and it gives people the opportunity to download past papers for exams, and stuff…that we might need for our subjects*"

Male, frequent users and early adopters group

With the presence of ever changing technological advances going on all around them, some students, particularly older ones, were able to compare current systems with the more basic ones of the past. But advances did not necessarily meet approval. While one participant at the Bristol group could remember paper registration, and thought that electronic registration was much quicker and simpler,

another in the group of infrequent users at school and home talked of his views on the large monitor screens recently put up around the school;

> *"They are just pointless – no-one really looks at them. They put stuff up about what is in the canteen. And no-one really cared. Money could have been better spent somewhere else. It just looks flashy."*
>
> Male, Infrequent users at school and home group

They were enthused by most types of technology, but only when it is of perceived benefit to them and their learning:

> *"I've visited Kings in Australia, and their library is absolutely massive. They've got a new computer system, and if you're looking for a certain book, you just type in the book, and it comes up with the code, the floor, and where you can find it on that floor. It's really cool."*
>
> Male, frequent users and early adopters group

What put them off was a perception of technology for its own sake – they were only too conscious of the limitations of school budgets.

> "*You'd think the money could be better spent on sports supplies, or a trip for the class…"*
>
> Female, infrequent users at school and home group

The implications here are that perceptions of technology are based more on perceptions of immediate utility than a full appraisal of what the technology can do.

Access to sites and blocking

Participants in the groups were aware of the ability of the school to block certain content but, in general, were not too perturbed by it:

> *M – "But they block loads of websites, so you can't play games, and stuff… and they'll come and say, there's someone always watching the computers.*
>
> *M. Yeah. I think that's at ours as well."*
>
> Discussion in frequent users and early adopters group

However, they saw these restrictions as something which would pass when they arrived at university:

*"I think, fair enough at the school. But when you get to university, it should be you're allowed to look through, look at what you want. Because you **are** 18"*

Male, frequent users and early adopters group

Saying this, some were relatively savvy about being able to avoid the blocks and get to the sites that they wanted to visit:

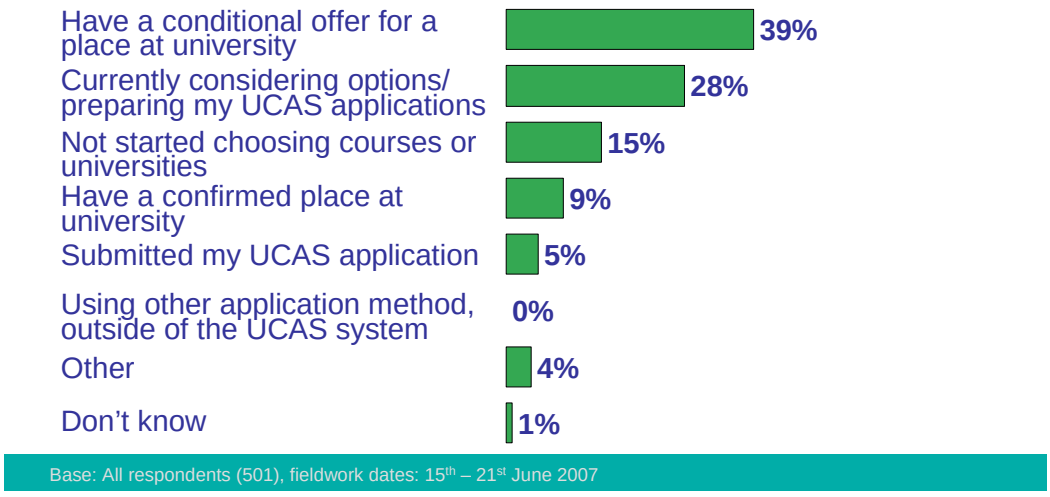
"…just wade round it using proxy sites, which you can use if you search for a (proxy server) or something. It comes up with loads of different ones (to access the sites that are blocked)."

Male, frequent users and early adopters group

Applying to university

As was the case for the young people we spoke to in the discussion groups, the online respondents were at different stages of the application process for university.

Q What stage of the university application process are you in?



Around 1 in 7 of the online group had not started the process of applying for university although the remainder had at least begun the process of considering their options or putting together their UCAS form. While 71% of those who have started the process had visited universities in person, more had used the web to research the institution (73%) or had read their online prospectus (83%). This pattern was seen across all user groups in the online research, regardless of their school or home technology usage. For some students this process seems to have been facilitated:

"Where you have a UCAS week, where you go to loads of websites, and do loads of applying for unis, and stuff"

Male, frequent users and early adopters group

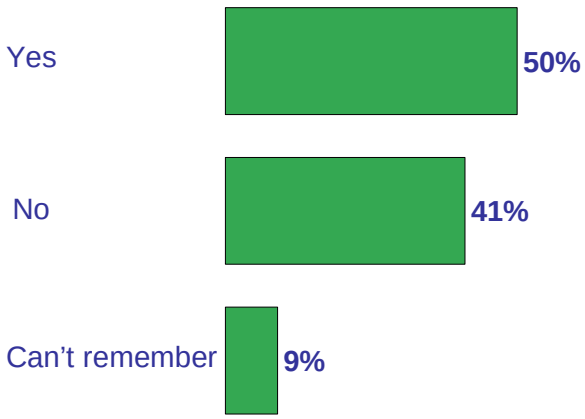
However, another respondent was a little more traditional in some respects:

"I didn't look too much online because there's quite a mountain of information"

Male, frequent users at school and home group

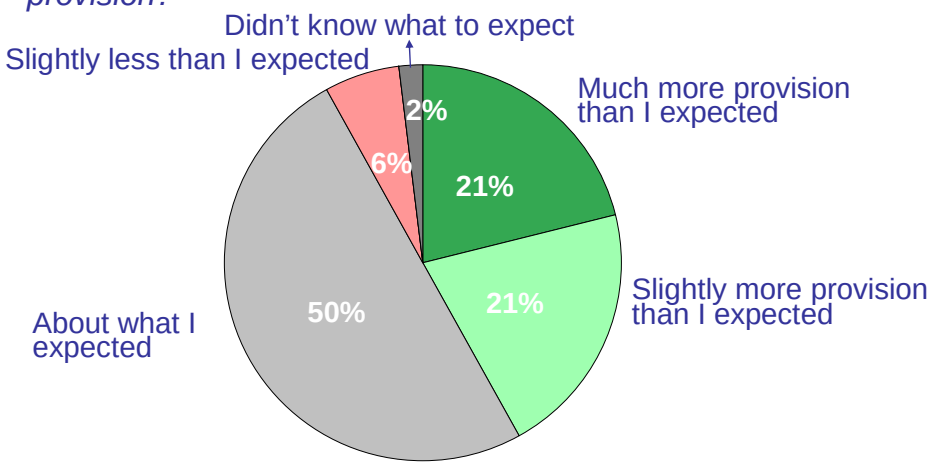
The online respondents were also asked if they had looked at ICT provision in the application process. Half of those who had started the process of application had looked at ICT provision and it was those with high expectations of ICT provision at university and leading edge users of technology who were more likely to have looked into this.

Q When choosing universities, did you look at or ask for information about the types of IT provided?



Base: All those who have at least started to apply to university, except those who stated 'none of the above' at Q6 (401)

Q How did this match your expectations in terms of their IT provision?



Base: All those who looked at IT provision (202), fieldwork dates: 15th – 21st June 2007

Of those who had looked at ICT provision, half felt that there was about as much as they had expected, although 42% said that their expectations had been exceeded. Interestingly, it was those with high use of ICT at school who were more likely to have had their expectations exceeded when looking at ICT provision. Another interesting finding is that arts students are much less likely to have seen more IT provision at universities they looked round (28% agreed) than science students (46%)

For 42% of online respondents, a university's provision of IT is a factor in choosing to apply for a course there. As might be expected, this rises to 69% of high users of technology but only 24% of those who use very little technology at school ('none' or 'not very much' at Q11). 53% of those who are in the process of applying see this as important, compared with 33% of those who have a conditional offer.

Expectations of ICT provision at university

Understanding the expectations of students for university ICT provision needs to be set in the context of students' expectations from university overall.

There was some uncertainty from the discussion groups about what universities had to offer in general. Although some had an idea of what it will offer – through visits, contact with friends and family or online research – it became apparent that their understanding of what life was going to be like, both academic and otherwise, is undeveloped. This may not be surprising, in fact it tallies with the impressions we get from applicants in our work for HEIs around admissions. Also, it is worth pointing out that there were five 18 year olds in our qualitative research, and around half the online survey was 18. The implication is that they only really think about university properly towards application time.

It will be important that HEIs do not overestimate the understanding that students have of the day to day experience of being at university, when explaining how their ICT provision fits in with student life.

This meant that the participants in this survey were not well equipped to answer questions about how ICT could help with the kind of teaching and learning they might meet at university. This is perhaps what lies behind one important statistic from the online group - four-fifths (80%) felt that the quality of teaching at university is "more important than the IT provision". This is seen across the board – high or low ICT use does not necessarily correlate with perceived importance of quality of teaching over ICT provision. ICT is seen as a supplement to teaching, not as a substitute for the personal interaction to which they are used.

However, despite a somewhat fuzzy understanding of the academic and practical life at university, students did hold to some underlying principles about the *benefits* of university life, and these also framed their judgements about ICT provision and the kinds of learning experience they wanted to have.

> *"You need a total outline of what it is, an explanation of what the lesson is going to be. Or what sorts of learning you're going to do, and how you're going to do it."*
>
> Male, frequent users and early adopters group

When discussing Second Life, students felt that games and virtual worlds as part of learning could easily become "tragic" – technology being used for its own sake, and used rather childishly. They would need to understand the educational benefits of virtual worlds or games, it is not enough that they are simply 'new'.

Social life

The students saw university as the birth of independence, and, as such, the start of self-determination in the way they learn. However, they did not always want total independence (one student in Bristol wanted to go to a university that was far from home, but not too far in case she needed anything from her parents). In this sense they saw themselves as becoming adults when going to university, and assumed an unshackling of some of the rules associated with their home and school environments.

With this new lifestyle comes an appreciation that they are customers paying for their place at university. This was pointed out more than once by the participants in the discussion groups, and helped shape their expectations, particularly around ICT support services.

This was strongly evident when participants reacted to the scenario set in the social environment. In this scenario, Dan is not allowed to access social networking sites from any computer at the university, not even his own computer in halls, while his friends in other institutions did not have these restrictions.

It should be pointed out that this scenario is unlikely to happen - it was added to encourage and stimulate response.

Universal sympathy was felt for Dan. One of the main criticisms was that Dan would have been paying for the service and as such should not have any restrictions on usage:

> *"It is thoroughly unfair that the university chooses to ban a website which I want to see, considering I am paying for the service"*
>
> Online respondent

Others commented on Dan's inability to access some sites – specifically the social networking sites on any of the university networks. Three quarters (74%) of the online group expect to have unrestricted access to the internet on the university's system. However, those who rarely or never use social networking sites are not as expectant in this regard – only 57% would expect unrestricted access. The issue of access was also picked up on in the scenario testing; social networking sites are crucial, particularly for new students, and this sparked outrage among some.

This is clearly an emotive issue amongst this age group – and one of the few areas in which the respondents were clear about what they expected to find at university. As we will discuss later, they struggled to see how social networking could be used as a learning tool – this emotive response is based on the social use of these sites as a way of keeping in touch with, and perhaps finding new, friends.

"I don't think blocking social networks is fair as it allows people to keep in contact with one another especially between old school friends who are at different universities. I think unsuitable content should be potentially blocked, but then again you're paying a lot of money to go to university and if you're using your own computer then I don't think it should be restricted."

Online respondent

Students understand that there may be occasions where blocking sites is a good option, although the idea of independence is still very much at the heart of the majority of objections:

"I think this situation is ludicrous. I can assure governing bodies that this seriously hampers social activities and especially easing into university life. I do not think there should be any restrictions on the content that I am able to view - a restriction would be in breach of my rights. It would also restrict free speech and the ability to learn.

I fail to see how this situation is operable as well - a blanket ban on all websites except certain approved ones is crazy as no research will be able to be undertaken. A ban on just certain websites such as Facebook etc will just push students to find other websites they can use to socialise.

None of these websites have dangerous content or are flooded with viruses etc. Usage of bandwidth must be the only issue here?

Perhaps a simple way around this issue is to monitor bandwidth used by students, but not the sites they use it on, anyone downloading illegal content or watching films etc will be flagged up and dealt with easily. Anyone innocently arranging the next night out on a networking website will pass by unaffected."

Online respondent

Teaching

The majority of the online group (78%) felt that they would have to use online databases more at university than previously, perhaps attesting to their understanding of the coursework related expectations there will be on them at university. A similar proportion (79%) felt that ICT would enhance their learning experience. These sentiments were seen across all online groups – suggesting that

an understanding of the potential benefits and role of ICT is well established. Indeed, 62% expect ICT to play a bigger role in their learning than it does now.

However, it seems that our audience of young people automatically think of ICT improving their learning through giving them more access to data and research resources, rather than imagining totally new methods of teaching, learning, or interacting with peers and lecturers. This mirrors their understanding of how ICT works at school and home – and it also mirrors the experience they have had so far at school, a traditional teacher and pupil environment. They find it hard to imagine other kinds of interactions and engagements.

So, when we asked about being taught by lecturers, the traditional teacher/pupil environment was preferred. The face to face teaching quality was felt to be the most visible sign of the university's "value for money" – it's what they believe they are paying for. Similarly many felt that their learning was optimised in this setting but could see the benefits of a varied working pattern, as was suggested in one of the scenarios.

In this scenario, Josh has normal lectures but also uploads lecture notes to a shared webspace, has an online class every week and can download podcasts of the lectures and notes.

Initial reactions to this scenario were positive – the varied use of technology and media was seen as attractive by some of the group participants, as is underscored by the two-thirds (66%) of online respondents who expect to have all their university materials provided online (rising to 74% for those who are high users in school). The ability to hear from an expert from the other side of the world was also seen as a key benefit in this scenario.

One of the problems they had was not necessarily to do with the ICT, it was concerning the fact that everyone had to upload their notes to a shared webspace – participants were concerned that this would be more like submitting coursework than actual notes which are essentially personal, and designed to help the person who wrote them. Another worry was that people would pay no attention in the lecture, and simply copy everybody else's notes.

Downloading podcasts of the lectures was seen as a useful back-up resource for those who, for whatever reason, were not able to attend the lectures. However, there was a worry that this will make not going to lectures a little bit easier, echoing the need, as mentioned earlier, for 'supervised' independence. It is also interesting considering relatively few qualitative or quantitative respondents download podcasts currently. There were also worries about watching live video streams and making notes at the same time – some felt this might pose some logistical problems.

> *"I like the fact that he has access to a wide range of learning sources. I think that the idea of being able to print notes from the computer is a great idea as he has the materials to revise from when he comes to the exams. It is also good that he has to contribute to lecture notes as this would help his understanding of the subject.*

I don't like the idea of the online classes as I prefer to learn face to face with a teacher helping me understand any problems that I have. The standard of education would probably be different in other countries. Although it is a good idea I feel that it would benefit Josh more if he had less of the online lectures and more classes with the teacher."

Online Respondent

As this highlights, one of the social elements that is important is that of interaction with their lecturers. Rather than technology providing a means of getting in touch with lecturers and tutors, the worry was that it might be a barrier to accessibility if, for example, lectures and tutorials are solely provided online. What was preferred was a more Socratic way of working, in which the students learn through interaction with other students, as well as being able to put questions to their tutors and lecturers. Additionally, interaction was needed with other students from a social point of view, and particularly in the first year of university.

Learning

The importance of personal interaction came up in another of the scenarios. In this scenario, Shimal and her group have to present a project online. They work together through a website and blog, and stay in touch through emails and SMS.

Initial reactions, particularly from the Bristol group, were that this is a very efficient, almost futuristic way of working, and that the technology would certainly help with a lot of the organisation of schedules, and particularly in relation to the designation of tasks. Respondents were realistic in thinking these methods should not be the main ways of working together

"There's no point in collaborating unless you can all get together, and, despite instant messaging, it's still pretty hard to get an idea of what's going on"

Male, frequent users at school and home group

Some thought that working this way would be to the detriment of organisation, as the communication with team members and the work itself all happens through the same channel, with the difficulty of doing two things at once. The worry about being distracted (by non-work related internet sites etc) was also raised, which ties in with the idea touched on earlier, the lecture theatre/classroom environment enables people to learn. Though some liked the flexible nature of the study, some argued that the impetus to work is removed by the optional nature of when to do it.

Interestingly, the respondents in the discussion groups did not respond well to the suggestion from the moderator that these kinds of organisational and disciplinary skills might actually be part of the task that the university is teaching them to perform. Because of their experiences at school, as ever the groups remained

focused on the substantive course content as their primary focus; not responding particularly to the idea that ICT might help them in "learning to learn".

In essence, it was felt that this technology was best used as a 'support tool' for the project, but that structured group sessions should form the backbone of the work (even if the presentation was done online) as this is the best way to both iron out agreements and disagreements, and ensure that everyone makes a concerted effort.

> *"The use of social networking site to organise the group seems pointless as they're using emails/messenger/texts and the central website anyway. I think this would just cause distractions.*
>
> *The use of multimedia must have a purpose. There is no point wasting time creating a flashy website when more time could be spent understanding the overall subject. Therefore, types of media must be limited to ones that will be directly useful.*
>
> *Overall it's a good thing to use technology like this, but not to rely on it. This could make an even more valuable contribution at secondary level. At university level it might prove a bit patronising and distracting."*
>
> Online respondent

It's worth pointing out that some were put off by the idea of working collaboratively generally, and this has nothing to do with technology per se. However, as mentioned above, this may underline a lack of understanding about different types of learning methods at university, rather than preferences for ICT provision.

Structure and administration

In terms of their living environment, our participants were a little pessimistic. In their student halls, they expected only the most basic provisions:

> *"They've got a tiny little room…with a bed. Maybe a shower, and a toilet. It's like a little pod. That's my picture of university."*
>
> Male, frequent users and early adopters group

However, in terms of general hardware and connectivity, the online group were relatively demanding of what they would be doing. Most (79%) would expect to have to take their own computer to university with them and be able to use it on their network (81%). This was particularly the case for those who have a conditional offer or an offer of a place at university.

From one of the scenarios there was a clear message that using ICT outside of the learning environment could be very beneficial:

The scenario is that Emmy is able to go online and check her class information as well as grades, and information on library books, all held on a secure server.

The fact that useful information was contained on the secure server was welcomed by our respondents. It was seen as a 'win-win' situation – the students can access this useful information at any time, reminding them what and when future lectures and classes are, and other useful administrative information.

Information about overdue library books was thought to be a particularly good idea by all groups. They also liked the fact that information was held centrally, though some concerns were raised about security. One participant thought that academic and personal data should be kept separately, in case of hackers, though most were happy that the information was password protected.

The SMS service was well received on the whole, though some participants were worried about the implications of teachers having their mobile numbers etc.

> *I don't know if I would particularly like getting texts from the university. Because your phone is your private, social thing.*
>
> Female, Frequent users and early adopters group

And some concerns were raised about reliance on SMS as the only method of alerting students, as they can be unreliable – phones can be switched off/lost/out of battery etc.

However, In the Bristol group, some participants already had positive experience of using SMS and some thought the idea would be useful at university.

> *The library, class information and text alert system are very good - they are all conducive to improving the learning experience. They help forgetful students and such methods are widely accessible when a secure server is password protected but available publicly.*
>
> Online respondent

So, there is a key role for ICT at university but the boundaries of where it reaches are formed in conceptions of how it will interfere with other elements of the social and academic aspects of university experience. Universities therefore need to consider what their students think are the boundaries between their social and academic lives when creating a role for ICT.

Conclusions and Implications

The research audience were all children of the digital age. They have simply grown up with more advanced technology than preceding generations, particularly in the field of communications. This is interwoven into their lives. They expect it to be just as present in their school life as it is at home, and thus assume it will also be present at university.

But it is difficult for them to project how they imagine technology helping them learn in ways that they have not experienced before. In part, this is because they basically find it hard to imagine the kinds of learning and teaching that they might meet at university, and try simply to map their current sixth-form experiences onto this new world. So, they are excited by technological options which they imagine will assist and complement their studies, but not by ones which they imagine will complicate or inhibit them, or take them out of their comfort zones with regard to teaching and learning.

These young people have grown up with technology as an intrinsic part of their lives, and expect that this will only increase with time. Although the students we spoke to in the discussion groups were generally unsure on their expectation of university ICT provision they were quite adept at evaluating different ICT options. It would follow that if they do not know what to expect when they get there, there will not be a mismatch between expectation and reality. However the research shows that they do know instinctively what works for them and what they prefer, when they are presented with it, therefore we can assume that they will be able to take decisions about any new technology they may meet at university.

While the students expect to be able to set themselves up, technologically, in the same way that they are perhaps used to now, they will not expect either their connectivity to decrease or for the technology to encroach on what they see as the key benefits from university – interaction and learning.

The traditional methods of teacher/pupil learning seem neither hierarchical nor outmoded to them. They see personal, face to face interaction as the backbone of their learning. It would be interesting and relevant to carry out a similar study with first-year undergraduates, who have begun to appreciate the many different ways learning can happen at university, to see if opinions differ significantly and if the potential for ICT is more easily understood once they have experienced the different teacher-learner relationships of university.

The audience for our research thinks that technology should;

- support established methods of teaching and admin;
- act as an additional resource for research and communication;
- be a core part of social engagement and facilitate face-to-face friendships at university.

These principles run across all groups identified in the online research. Those who are leading edge users or have high use of ICT at school are perhaps more technology savvy and open to its use, but they do not want technology to encroach on their learning or social experiences.

Fundamentally, this age group suspects that if all learning is mediated through technology, this will diminish the value of the learning.

Key findings and Implications for HEIs

This research shows that future university students base their expectations on their experience at school or college. As a consequence there are some clear implications for HEIS.

There is a basic level of expectation about the ICT that universities provide – a 'hygiene factor' that students would assume was present at all universities. This would simply be internet access for all, a level of tech support for admin systems, a profile and presence "on the system" for all members of the University, which helps an individual access resources, and an online backup for lectures, course notes, and other resources which could be accessed if, for instance, a student missed a lecture.

This is often based simply on the school's provision of ICT, along with a lack of knowledge about what universities both provide and are capable of.

Applicants see themselves as consumers and expect a basic level of ICT provision (including connectivity in halls) to aid their study and extra curricular activities.

Key learning for HEIs, then, is to explain clearly what they provide, and what the benefits are:

> Universities need to be quite clear and explicit about the hardware, software and networking that they use and provide – if the basics are not there, they need to explain why.
>
> HEIs need to bear in mind the ubiquity of social networking – 88% of online respondents use these websites, although only in a social context. Respondents found it hard to imagine using social networking sites for coursework or study, and had reservations about this when presented with the scenario. Universities therefore need to explain how social networking tools relate to learning, if they choose to use these methods.
>
> Young people are not constantly looking for new technology to incorporate into their everyday life. They appreciate and endorse it when they can see a palpable social or academic benefit. HEIs need to understand this and adapt their communications accordingly.
>
> HEIs need to steer clear of the assumption that new technology is automatically youth friendly – young people sometimes feel patronised by this, they are able to pinpoint injudicious spending on technology (e.g. flatscreen TVs showing dinner menus)

Students do not fully understand how ICT and learning can work together. They imagine and like the idea of the traditional, Socratic, or "chalk and talk" methods with face to face learning. 42% had their expectations exceeded by the technology that their potential university had to offer. But the qualitative groups showed a lack of articulate understanding about what they were expecting beyond what they had come to expect at school. When presented with scenarios, online and group respondents expressed concerns about collaboration through ICT – some of this was a result of inexperience of collaborative work per se – many just thought of their

contribution being graded separately. Some saw collaboration as a face to face experience, and thought ICT was a barrier to this, rather than a tool of assistance.

> Universities may need to give clearer exemplars and demonstrations of how, for instance, collaborative working might pan out, at the application stage. Given that one of the benefits of ICT is distance learning, could applicants be encouraged to take part in online lectures, or watch some course content through webcams, or similar?
>
> Traditional teacher/pupil learning methods are preferred as the backbone for everyday learning. Technology needs to be used as a tool to complement this way of learning. Similarly HEIs should explain the benefits of technology.
>
> A reluctance to submit content online for public scrutiny – students need to be given assurances that this is good practise, and won't lead to them being embarrassed by their work, or level of input.

Students are concerned about technology in the classroom environment as they imagine there might be discrepancies between their ability to use it and that of the teacher. This was seen as a potential obstacle and barrier to learning. The teacher, by virtue of his/her position, should not have to be taught by the students.

> HEIs, therefore, need to ensure that the lecturers are up to speed with the equipment and processes they are being asked to use.

But these students are not inflexible – once they arrive at university it is likely that their opinion of ICT and its role in learning will change. One notion emerging from this research is that schools themselves could be supported to help prepare young people for technology-enabled projects and learning styles at university.

Universities could also consider which technologies they wish to invest in now, and which they could tactically invest in later. These participants found some of the more modern elements of networking hard to grasp; but these are technologies which they may, in two years, be "taught" to use by consumer brands seeking to sell MoSoSos and the like. So, if universities want to take advantage of, for instance, web 2.0 or distributed learning systems, they could choose the launch time carefully, waiting until the target audience have already been "trained" by consumer systems, and then presenting adaptations of the systems that audiences are already familiar with.

The discussion group participants were interested in the ideas once the moderator had explained them and they had had a chance to discuss and ask questions. This underlines the benefits of a personal approach, especially with undergraduate applicants who are always more timid and less certain of themselves than they may appear. Where possible, a personal conversation or training session where a human being explains the technologies may be a very useful thing for universities to provide.

Appendices

Discussion Guide

Description	Comments	Time (mins)
Introduction Thanks,1.5 hour chat, tape recorded, no right or wrong answers We will be discussing the university experience, research into what people like you expect it will be like when you get there. Reassure that we're not expecting them to know or get the right answers! Our client is not any particular university but a body who looks at what all universities have to offer students - we'll tell you more later Name, Where are you applying, what subject, why are you interested in that	As always our guides are sets of prompts for discussion, rather than a set list of questions to be asked in order If they talk about their prior expectations of uni, probe on this	5
1. Imagining life at university ***Plans so far*** How far have you got in looking into universities *probe for use of online prospectuses, student evaluation websites* How are you finding the whole process, what was fun, what stressed you out, etc The universities you've looked at so far – how are they different from each other - Websites, open days, approach, subjects… *probe on anything to do with tech* What are the most important features for you, when choosing a place to go and subject to do, and how do you identify them Did you look at exactly what universities will offer in terms of ICT – from free hardware to internet and network access in halls? *Probe for what they saw and what they were looking for* Do you have a clear picture in your mind about what profession you are interested in after uni? – How does this impact on which university you decide to go to? *And how important is ICT provision with this in mind?* Where do you get advice or info from, what	Good to start with general discussion about future ideas – lets us see if technology is important and mentioned at all and gets a picture of where they start from. Draw them towards discussion of what technology they have. They will start more broadly, moderator to	10

information's most useful so far ***Imagining daily life*** Now imagine you're <u>there at uni</u> – what is life going to be like? Describe the way you live – what kind of room do you have? What's in the room? Where do friends live? Where do you go for teaching? What are the "teachers" like? How will it be different from school – o The way you learn o The resources you have access to o The buildings and infrastructure o The way you interact with friends	steer towards technology gently.	

(THIS SECTION CAN COME BEFORE SECTION 2 FOR THE LOWER ICT USE GROUP) 2. **The way you use technology now** What do you use now **at school** *collect all* *NB they may find some technology quite "normal" so we may need to prompt with things like electronic registration, virtual assessment, e-learning, podcasts etc* Do you personally use all this, or is it just available at school? What's changed in recent years? What are the benefits of using technology to help in the classroom? And at home, with coursework…? Do you ever get frustrated with doing work online, as opposed to with a teacher or group or schoolmates? How does your school ensure you're up to speed with technology? What do you understand easily / not understand? Anything around you on a daily basis that you don't get involved with? Why, why not? How far is it the school's job to help you work with technology? Why do you think that? Are you personally more up to speed with technology than your school, or less? How does this happen? Where/when used? **At home / in your social life:** *collect all – may need to prompt on music, home computing, playing games online, mobile phones, MoSoSos (Mobile Social Software), virtual worlds…* What do you like using best? What have you got into, in the last year or couple of years? What's really annoying about using technology? How do you get round it? Where do you go for help if something doesn't work Do you ever do school work at home on your computer or share work/do projects with others online – in forums, chat rooms etc.? Have you ever accessed the school intranet from home and downloaded materials from it/submitted coursework online? What technology do you have at home, and does your school ever provide any? Are you allowed to bring your own hardware to school, and do you expect to be able to use your own hardware at university?	NB – for the leading edge tech group, we will ask this section BEFORE we ask about expectations of technology at university Schools will have different levels	15

Is school work the main reason you use IT at home? Or is it for social stuff?		
3. <u>Technology provision</u> *<u>Expectations of uni now</u>* Today's discussion is all about <u>technology</u>. So now, please think about the <u>technology</u> you will have access to at university: *moderator collect on flip chart and go through each one separately* o Personally in your own room: *probe on computer, broadband, mobile phone, email accounts, security systems…* o As part of the teaching: *probe on distance learning, lectures and modules available online, different ways to contact your tutor, podcasts, group work over social networks, virtual Vs paper library…* o What you'll use in your social life: *probe on things like Facebook, MySpace, local networking software on the campus, websites for clubs, text messaging, phones, cashless society on campus …* **For each** o How will you have access to this – automatic, or you'll have to set it up *probe for expected access to university network, compatibility of their own computer with the university network* o How will this be paid for - by you or the uni *probe for provision of free hardware like laptops and ipods, or will they have to bring their own* o Who will help you if it goes wrong, who would you turn to o How would you feel if this wasn't available o Which are essential, vs. nice to have o What do you think about security (where relevant) o How will it feel different from traditional methods – e.g. how will a "virtual" lecture be different from a "face to face"? What would the right balance be? o How do you think the university will help you if you're not great at using this - Do you expect unis to assess your ICT capabilities? … to offer	This section should try to explore the balance between traditional and virtual learning and the pros and cons of each We will suggest examples like these if participants find it hard to imagine – but will gather spontaneous ideas first Barriers to learning can partly be discovered simply by looking at the way participants talk about the services they imagine. With enthusiasm, or with concern? Worried or gung-ho?	15

help? Why / not?

And overall – how would these technologies affect your view of the university?

How far is it the university's *job* to make sure you can work with technology? Why do you say that?

What would you *like* there to be, but not expecting "as standard"? What would pleasantly surprise you?

What technology would you *not* want to see / have to use at university? Why? What would really upset or annoy you, what would make it hard for you to study there?

Do you expect university lecturers to be technically competent? To what extent? Why? Would this be the most important thing?

Concerns

Any other concerns you have about all of this?

Do you imagine this will be compulsory, or will there be other ways of getting information / participating in student life? What happens if you don't use it? *I.e. is the uni providing choice, or a new way of learning, and does this advantage more adept students?*

What will be the effect on teaching?

University of the future

Do you expect the university to have a Second Life presence? What would this look like? How do you think you would use this?

If you were to design the best university, taking advantage of the newest technology; in 2008; what would it be like?

***Projective*:** walk them through campus, staff, admin, teaching styles, course materials, pastoral care… Partly will be summary of the best of the previous section

- In your room
- As part of teaching
- As part of your social life

And how will you get access to this – who pays for it?

How about university in 2018, in 10 years' time –what technology will be standard?

How will it improve life for the students of 10 years' time?

What might be less good, who might get left behind? ***Your decision process*** **<u>In the light of our discussion about decision-making, how far do you notice what tech is available now when looking at a university? Why/not? Any example?</u>**		

4. Scenarios **We're going to imagine these are descriptions of different universities. For each one, imagine you're there and tell me what it might be like** ***Rotate order of presentation. For each:*** **What's good about it** **What doesn't appeal** **How relevant is this idea for students today** **How realistic is it that you'll get this? Why / not** **What kind of people will enjoy this/benefit from this** **What kinds of subjects, universities or people does this feel right for** **What kind of institution would have this idea (what kinds of people would think this up, what do they want to provide for students)** **How would you sum up this university – what kind of people is it for?** **How different from universities today?** **Concerns – what might be less good about this university? What would you be worried about?** *Personification:* **if everything you know about this university was a person, what would he/she be like? Car drive, hobbies, age, gender, what would he/she have to say to you… What would annoy you about them** **OR: the *world* of this university. Imagine if you went to a world that was all X uni. What would it be like, colours, shapes, music playing, people there, smells, sights…** Specific prompts for scenarios *Teaching:* Should these things be accessible, compulsory, optional? ***Learning:* How do you feel about 'collaborative' learning and working – will they really get credit for their own work – could the marks for the individuals of the group be brought down by weaker contributions or weaker / lazy members of the group** *Entertainment*: Is it ok to stream and share videos and films most of which are likely to be copyright – what should the uni's perspective be on this? How far do you expect free rein in terms of using uni systems and hardware for social stuff (e.g. installing software on	Each scenario to summarise different hypotheses about technology at university	40

institutionally provided PCs, saving iTunes on Uni networks, accessing any sites they want etc). ***Looking at all together*** **What would you take from each to make best university** **What would you expect will be in your university next year**		
5**. Summing up** We're working on behalf of JISC – the body which supports higher education institutions in using technology the best way they can. They are interested in what young people's expectations are about technology and university, and whether, in fact, we are assuming that there will be quite a lot of high-tech provision there, maybe more than really exists. How realistic do you think your expectations are? What has shaped those expectations – school, family, friends, home, the media? ***In summary*** - of all the things we've talked about, what's "normal" in terms of the modern technology you would expect to find at a university – and what's "extra" Final advice for JISC to give to universities ***Thanks and close***		5

Appendix: Quantitative topline results

Results are based on 501 responses

Fieldwork was between 15th and 21st June 2007

Where results do not sum to 100, this may be due to multiple responses, computer rounding or the exclusion of don't knows/not stated

Results are based on all respondents unless otherwise stated

An asterisk (*) represents a value of less than one half or one percent, but not zero

Screener questions

S1 **In which country do you live?** SINGLE CODE ONLY

	%
England	84
Northern Ireland	3
Scotland	9
Wales	5

S2 **Are you?** SINGLE CODE ONLY

	%
Male	50
Female	50

Q1 **How old are you?** SINGLE CODE ONLY

	%
16	19
17	27
18	54

Q2 **Which of these best describes your current situation?** SINGLE CODE ONLY

	%
At school	7
In sixth form at school	28
At sixth form college or FE college	15
Just finishing/finished final GCSE	6
Just finishing/finished final sixth form exams	35
Currently in gap year	3
In other form of education	6
Not in education	0

Q3 **Do you hope to go to university?** SINGLE CODE ONLY

	%
Yes	100

Applying to university

Q4 **What stage of the university application process are you in?** SINGLE CODE ONLY

	%
Not started choosing courses or universities	15
Currently considering options/ preparing my UCAS application	28
Submitted my UCAS application	5
Using other application method, outside of the UCAS system	0
Have a conditional offer for a place at university	39
Have a confirmed place at university	9
Other	4
Don't know	1

Q5 **What area of study do you hope to follow when you go to university?** SINGLE CODE ONLY

	%
Business and management	13
Education and teacher training	4
Environment	1
Health and social care/Health studies	4
Humanities: arts, languages, English, history	14
Information technology and computing	3
Law and criminology	6
Mathematics and statistics	5
Psychology, philosophy, politics, economics	9
Physical Sciences	6
Social sciences	4
Technology, engineering and manufacturing	6
Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine	7
Don't know/not sure	16

Other (Please specify)	3

ASK ALL THOSE WHO CODED 2-6 AT Q4
Base: All those who have at least started to apply to university (404)
Q6 **What type of contact have you had with universities in relation to your application?** MULTICODE OK

	%
Visited in person	71
Emailed or phoned them	49
Read online prospectuses	83
Searched for the institution on the internet/looked at their websites	73
Asked friends or other people for their opinions or experiences	66
Other	8
None of the above	1

Base: All those who have at least started to apply to university, except those who stated 'none of the above' at Q6 (401)
Q7 **When choosing universities, did you look at or ask for information about the types of IT provided?** SINGLE CODE

	%
Yes	50
No	41
Can't remember	9

IF YES AT Q7
Base: All Yes at Q7 (202)
Q8 **How did this match your expectations in terms of their IT provision?** SINGLE CODE ONLY

	%
There was much more IT provision than I expected	21
There was slightly more IT provision than I expected	21
It was about what I expected	50
It was slightly less than I expected	6
It was much less than I expected	0
Didn't know what to expect	2
Don't know	0

Your use of IT

Q9 **To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?** SINGLE CODE ONLY

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
	%	%	%	%	%	%
I like to keep up to date with new technology and use it as much as possible both for study and in my free time	34	50	10	5	1	*
I am the first person in my social group to get new technologies	10	26	37	21	6	*
My friends and family often come to me for advice on IT issues	25	43	18	11	4	*

Q10 **How often, if at all, do you do the following?** SINGLE CODE ONLY

	Regularly	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Don't know
	%	%	%	%	%
Use social networking websites (e.g. MySpace, Flickr or Facebook)	65	23	6	5	*
Download podcasts	12	25	31	31	1
Use instant messaging	68	22	7	2	1
Watch videos or live TV on websites	39	41	15	5	1
Upload video or photo content onto the internet	27	35	21	17	1
Use on demand video	15	24	26	29	6
Use advanced functions on my mobile phone (e.g. Mobile TV, GPS or email)	12	23	27	36	1
Participate in online discussion groups or chatrooms about IT issues	9	22	27	41	1
Use wikis/blogs/online networks	27	35	18	18	2
Maintain my own blog or website	19	25	21	33	2
Take part in an online community, for example a "virtual world" such as Second Life	8	13	23	53	3
Access the internet from my bedroom	56	14	6	23	1

Using IT at school or sixth form

When referring to IT use at school or sixth form we mean to include the full range of IT use, unless otherwise stated. This will include things like computers and laptops, the internet, mobile phone technology, online 'virtual worlds', gaming and simulation, as well as other technology such as electronic registration and electronic white boards.

Q11 Thinking now about your school or college and its provision of IT, such as computer rooms, electronic class schedules and electronic registration. How much of your course/study in the last two years, do you think has been/was supported by IT? SINGLE CODE ONLY

	%
A lot	31
A fair amount	48
Not very much	20
None	1
Don't know	1

Q12 **To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?** SINGLE CODE ONLY

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
	%	%	%	%	%	%
At school/college my IT skills are/were stretched	13	23	24	27	13	1
My school/college uses/used too much IT for teaching	6	12	29	38	16	0
I regularly use/used the internet as a source of information for school/college coursework and learning	47	39	9	4	1	0
I learn better through using a computer, than by face-to-face contact with teachers or other students	11	14	36	27	12	1

Your expectations of IT use when you go to university

Q13 **To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?** SINGLE CODE ONLY

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
	%	%	%	%	%	%
A university's provision of IT is/was a factor in choosing to apply for a course there	13	29	32	18	7	2
The quality of teaching at university is more important than their IT provision	45	35	16	2	1	1

Q14 **To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements with regard to your time at university?** SINGLE CODE ONLY

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know/not applicable
	%	%	%	%	%	%
I expect IT to play a much bigger role in my learning than it does now	19	43	28	8	2	*
I expect to have to take my own PC or laptop to university with me	47	31	14	5	2	1
I would expect to have unrestricted access to all types of web pages on my university's system (such as YouTube and MySpace)	44	31	16	7	2	1
I would expect to have to use the internet or online databases (for example, journals and magazines) more at university than I have so far, to complete my work	42	36	17	3	1	1
I expect to be able to use my personal laptop or PC on all of my university's systems	47	34	13	4	1	1
I think that using IT at university will enhance my learning	38	41	18	1	1	1
I would expect all of my university lecture materials to be provided for me online (slides and podcasts, for example)	34	33	22	8	2	2

Appendix: Scenarios

Administration

Emmy wasn't sure which classes to take in the following term. All the information on the classes is held online on the university's secure server. She went online, looked at how she'd done in this term's courses by checking all her assessment marks, and then checked out what the content was going to be in each of the new classes on the department's website.

She also checked to see if there were any overdue library books she needed to return before being allowed to select a certain course. In fact, by logging on Emmy can control all her admin for university. She can sign up for texts to let her know what time and where lectures are taking place and if any have been changed, get notification of events and even sort out problems with her accommodation.

Imagine you're Emmy. What do you like about this online admin system? What other features should be included on the admin system, that we haven't mentioned? Are there any negative points to having all this information online? For instance, should Emmy be bothered that the University has so much information on her academic life and records?

Learning

Shimal has been given a project to work on with other members of her class. They have to make sure that they present it all online, using different types of media. Shim and the others are expected to use social software (e.g. myspace, facebook) to organise the group and co-ordinate the task. They live in different parts of town, and don't see each other much – but over the next two weeks they go online independently from their study bedrooms or internet access points around the university and work together. They create a website with several pages, including a blog. Their site has links to other sites, uploaded images and video. While they work they stay in touch with emails, messenger and texts.

Imagine you're Shimal. What would you like about doing your coursework this way? What would it be like working with others in this way? Shim and her friends couldn't have done this project without technology. Is it a good or bad thing to have to rely on technology like this?

Social

Dan has just begun his first year at university and is staying in the halls of residence. He has access to the university's network and internet from his room but he's quite annoyed that he is not able to access any of the social sites he's used to accessing, like Facebook and MySpace, from there. In fact he's not able to access these sites from any part of the university network – like the library or wifi in the Student Union – although his mates at other universities don't have this problem.

Imagine you're Dan. What do you think about the university blocking access to particular sites on their network? Do you think this is fair? What other restrictions do you think universities might put on the content you access?

Teaching

Josh is in his first term of Geography. Each week he has five lectures, with the rest of the class in the Geography department. During the lectures he has to make notes and comments on his laptop or PDA. The lecturer's notes are put up on the web after the session and at that point he and everyone in the lecture has to contribute to a structured lecture notes website.

He has another class every week, which is online rather than face to face. This week, when he goes online he will see a live video stream of a lecture from an expert in Geography from Australia. Afterwards he will take part in an online Question and Answer session with the lecturer and all the other people in the class, who will also be online. Josh knows that at any time he can log onto the course webpage and download podcasts of the lectures and all the notes from the whiteboard.

Imagine you're Josh. What do you like about this way of working? Do you have any concerns about this way of learning? Tell us what other technology or devices Josh should be able to use or be provided with in his lectures.

Appendix: Interpretation of the Qualitative Data

Unlike quantitative surveys, qualitative research is not designed to provide statistically reliable data on what people as a whole are thinking. It is illustrative rather than statistically reliable and therefore does not allow conclusions to be drawn about the *extent* to which something is happening.

Qualitative research is intended to shed light on *why* people have particular views and *how* these views relate to demographic characteristics and the experiences of young people. Discussion groups, such as these, enable them to participate in an informal and interactive discussion and to allow time for the complex issues and options for the future to be addressed in some detail. It also enables researchers to test the strength of beliefs and opinions. This approach, in other words, facilitates deeper insight into attitudes underlying the 'top of mind' responses to quantitative studies. It is important to bear in mind that we are dealing with *perceptions* rather than *facts*, although to participants these perceptions *are* facts.

Verbatim comments from the discussion evening have been included within this report. These should not be interpreted as defining the views of the discussion evening as a whole but have been selected to provide an insight into a particular body of opinion.