Survey of FE learners and e-learning

GfK NOP Social Research

Conducted on behalf of Becta
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Contents

Table of tables

Table of charts

Executive Summary

Introduction

This research was commissioned by the Becta in January 2007. The research project was commissioned to understand more about Information and Communication Technology (ICT) from the Further Education (FE) learner's perspective and will help to verify some of the key findings from previous institution and practitioner level studies.

This main objectives of the research were to assess the following:

- Learner access to ICT resources within the college and outside (e.g. at home, in the workplace);
- How learners use/experience ICT and e-learning in their programmes of study, and also outside of college (nature and frequency);
- Learner perceptions of how the use of ICT/e-learning impacts on their learning (and also the extent to which they enjoy this form of learning);
- Learner estimates of their confidence and competence in using different forms of ICT for particular tasks;
- Support for ICT provided by the college and levels of take-up.

The sample was sourced from the Individualised Learner Records (ILR) which are held by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). All of the records selected to be in the sample were 16+ with a telephone who had agreed to be re-contacted. The sample was stratified by the key variables (type of institution, local LSC region, age, gender, ethnicity, learning difficulty/disability, mode of study and course type) and in total, 18,000 records were selected.

The final agreed sample size was 4,000 interviews to allow for analysis of sub-groups such as learners with disabilities, learners with learning difficulties and learners from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The questionnaire was designed in consultation with Becta to cover the survey objectives. The survey was conducted via a telephone data collection method and the interview length was 20 minutes. Fieldwork took place between 20 April and 24 May 2007. A pilot survey of 32 interviews was conducted a few days before the start of fieldwork to test the questionnaire length, question clarity and flow. Recommendations were fed back to Becta and minor changes agreed before proceeding to the main stage of the survey.

The data was weighted by key variables (age within gender, sector and mode of study) based on the IRL database to ensure it reflected the FE learner population.

Learner confidence and expertise in using computers

The survey found the majority of FE learners felt confident about using computers. Around a third (35%) said they were very confident in using computers for a wide range of tasks, whilst four in ten (40%) described themselves as quite confident.

Overall, men were more likely than women to describe themselves as very confident about using computers (45% compared with 29% of women). There were also differences between ages, with older learners less confident than younger learners. Only a fifth of learners in the 45+ age category (20%) and a quarter of 35-44 year olds (24%) felt very confident about using computers compared with nearly half of 16-18 year olds.

Learners taking full-time courses were more likely to feel confident about their computer use than learners on part-time courses. This was highly correlated with age as younger learners were far more likely to be taking full-time courses than part-time courses. Indeed, 68% of 16-18 year olds were on full-time courses compared with 20% of 19-24 year olds and less than 10% of learners aged 25+. This trend exists throughout the survey findings with younger and full-time learners more likely than older or part-time learners to feel more confident about using computers and using ICT more extensively.

Confidence in computer use also varied by subject of study. Those studying Business, Administration, Management and Professional subjects, Engineering, Technology and Manufacturing, Sciences and Mathematics, Visual and Performing Arts and Media and Humanities were amongst the most confident in their use of computers. Other more confident users included learners with no learning difficulty and those with a computer at home which they used for their course.

Learners were provided with a list of computer related tasks and asked to rate their level of expertise for each task (either expert, intermediate or beginner). At least four in ten learners considered themselves expert in communicating with other people and finding information on the internet, whilst just over a quarter felt they were expert in word processing or adding visual information/decoration to their work. Expertise levels were lowest for analysing numerical information (38% rated themselves as beginners)

Generally, learners aged under 25 and those with a computer at home were more likely to rate their expertise higher across most computer related tasks than other learners. More part-time learners rated their expertise as 'beginner' whereas full-time learners were more inclined to rate themselves as 'expert' across the majority of computing skills.

Access to computing facilities at home

Over eight in ten learners (84%) had access to a computer at home that they used for their college course. This was particularly high amongst those aged under 25 and

those with no disability or learning difficulties. The vast majority of learners with a computer at home said that they had access to the internet (94%) and broadband was the most widespread mode of accessing the internet.

Notably, learners with a computer at home were much more computer confident and likely to be using ICT more extensively at college as well as at home. Those who did not have access to a computer at home were not necessarily using college computers to compensate for a lack of computer at home, as a third of these learners (32%) said they never made use of computers at college.

Around four in ten of those who did not have a computer at home said that they planned to get one in the next 12 months. Most of those who did not intend to get a computer said that this was because they would not use it.

Computing leisure activities

Learners were asked which leisure activities they regularly carry out at home using their computer. Over eight in ten learners regularly surfed the internet (88%) or communicated with others via email or instant messaging (81%). Around half regularly shopped online, created things or downloaded music video or podcasts.

A higher proportion of men than women took part in all computer related leisure activities listed, with the exception of online shopping (which was reported by around half of male and female learners with access to a computer at home).

Learners under 25 years of age were more likely to regularly take part in all computer related leisure activities, with the exception of online shopping and learning about something other than their college course. The same trend existed between full-time and part-time learners, reflecting the different age profiles of learners on these courses.

Computer provision at college

Just over three-quarters of learners (77%) were using computers at college whilst around a quarter of learners (23%) said they never used the college computers. Those not using the college computer facilities tended to be learners aged 35+, women, part-time learners, less confident users and as already mentioned, those who did not have access to a computer at home.

Most learners using the computers felt that access to computers at college was good: four in ten said it was always possible to get onto a computer whilst three in ten said it was usually possible to do so. Three quarters of users of college computer equipment considered their quality good enough for them to be used for all their college coursework.

Eight out of ten learners (82%) using college computers used them to access the internet. Internet connection at college was judged to be good by the majority of

users: four in ten said it was always fast and a similar proportion said that the connection was usually fast, but that it sometimes slowed down

A larger proportion of learners aged 16-18 (96%), Asian learners (89%) were accessing the internet, as were those with a computer at home (85%). This suggests that those accessing the internet at college were not doing so because they could not access it elsewhere.

Around half of users of college computers said that their college provided them with an email address, but this was lower among e-enabled colleges. This suggests that these colleges were encouraging learners to communicate by other means, such as a virtual learning environment or learning platform.

Amongst college computer users, technical support was most usually sought from a member of the college IT support staff or a course tutor. Notably, those who were least confident in their computing ability would be more likely to ask a course tutor for help, whilst those who felt more confident would approach a member of the IT support staff instead. Almost all learners who sought technical support felt that it was either very or quite easy to get help and only 7% found it difficult.

Usage of computers and ICT on FE courses

Around two-thirds of learners (63%) agreed that it was essential to use a computer to learn about their subject. Older learners were more likely to agree strongly (possibly related to high proportion of older learners on short term IT courses) whilst younger learners were more likely to agree or agree strongly reflecting higher usage of computers among younger learners taking full-time courses. About the same proportion of learners (62%) said they used computers on their course because they had been directed to do so by their tutor.

Around seven in ten learners were required by their tutors to use a computer to produce assignments (71% said either a lot or some of the time) and/or to learn about the subject being studied (69% said a lot or some of the time). Learners were less likely to be required to use computers to communicate with their tutor or work with other learners.

Around 4 in 10 learners (42%) said they used computers more often in their own time than in timetabled classes. A quarter (26%) used computers more in timetabled classes whilst 28% used computers equally in their own time and timetabled classes. Only learners studying ICT used computers more often in timetabled classes (41%).

Computers were used most frequently for presenting written work or data (82% said either 'all the time' or 'occasionally') and researching topics (86% said 'all the time' or 'occasionally'). In contrast, computers were least likely to be used to catch up with sessions missed (32% said 'never'), communicating with the tutor or other learners (31% said 'never') or participating in group projects (29% said 'never').

Use of e-learning and other technologies

In terms of e-learning resources, usage was fairly low with only a quarter of learners (27%) currently required to use virtual learning environments, mostly to access resources about the subject they were studying (mentioned by 86%). Even fewer were required to use e-portfolios (20%). However, those using them overwhelmingly found them helpful: 9 out of ten of users (89%) agreed it helped them see if they were meeting their course objectives and 86% agreed it helped improve the quality of their work.

Just over a quarter of learners (27%) had received electronic feedback from their tutor and a similar proportion (30%) had taken a computer based test that contributed to their final mark.

Men, learners aged 16-18 and ethnic minority learners were more likely than other learners to be using computers for a range of purposes, including virtual learning environments and e-portfolios.

Almost four out of ten learners (39%) had their own laptop or PDA that they took into college, but a very small minority (8%) took them into college regularly (once a week or more). Text messaging was fairly common between learners (40% had sent a text to another learner about their subject) but a much smaller minority had sent a text to a tutor (14% about an administrative issue and 7% about the subject there were studying).

Attitudes towards computer and ICT usage

Learners were asked their attitudes towards computer usage as part of their course and more traditional methods of learning. Overall, learners were positive about using computers and recognised the benefits. Almost three quarters of learners (74%) agreed or agreed strongly that they preferred to learn through a variety of media than just reading books or listening to the tutor and around two-thirds of learners felt they did better in assessments as a result of using computers (65%). A similar proportion (66%) said because of the way computers were used on their course, they have more choices about where and when they can study. In addition, almost six out of ten (59%) were in agreement that they understood their subject better because computers were used on their course and only 28% felt they learnt *less well* when computers were used.

Despite this, many learners preferred traditional teaching methods and face-to-face contact rather than the use of computers. Almost three-quarters of learners (74%) said they learn better through face-to-face contact with tutors and other learners and over half of learners (53%) agreed that they preferred to read from a book or handout rather than a computer screen. In addition, only half of learners (53%) stated that using computers on their course motivated them to study and a similar proportion (55%) said they *did not* rely on computers to keep in touch with other learners on their course.

Therefore, although computers were not necessarily seen as a replacement for face-to-face contact and printed material, there was widespread recognition that they provided more choice, a better understanding of the subject and helped improve the quality of assignments. Most learners valued the benefits of learning through a range of media rather than just books and listening to the tutor. However, there is still some way to go before computer technology is used by all learners for studying and communication purposes.

Men, learners aged 16-18, full-time learners and learners from ethnic minorities were more inclined to recognise the perceived benefits of using computers than other learners. Learners with a disability or learning difficulty were more likely than those with who did not to agree that computers gave them more choice about where and when to study.

Just over 4 in 10 (43%) of learners said they enjoyed using technology and would like to use it more on their course, while a further 48% said the current level of technology use was about right. Men were more likely to state that they enjoyed using technology than women (50% and 38% respectively). However, as more women said the level of technology use was about right (52% compared with 44% of men), attitudes were generally positive for both.

Learners aged under 25 typically enjoyed using technology more than learners aged 25+ (47% of 19-24 year olds compared with 40% of learners aged 25+). Learners from ethnic minorities were more likely than their white counterparts to enjoy using technology (61% of black learners compared with 40% of white learners).

Three in ten learners (30%) felt their experience of using computers at college was better than they expected, while 55% said it was the same as expected. Learners aged 16-18 were more inclined to say their experience was the same as expected (61%) while learners aged 25+ were more likely to say they didn't know or didn't have any expectations (13%). The same trend existed between full-time and part-time learners.

Among learners whose expectations had not been met, the most common reasons were that they had not used computers as much as they expected (mentioned by 54%), the quality of computers was not good (38%), they didn't like the way they had been required to use computers (37%) and they did not have good access to computers or programs at college (36%)

Overall, four fifths (79%) of learners felt tutors were very good or fairly good at using computer technology to teach. Almost all full-time learners rated their tutor as very or fairly good at using computers whilst part-time learners were far more likely to say they didn't know. Men, younger learners, black learners and those with a disability were more likely than other learners to rate their tutor as good at using computers to teach.

Introduction

This research was commissioned by the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (Becta) in January 2007. Becta is the organisation which leads the national drive to improve learning through technology. The organisation works with industry to ensure they have the right technology for education in place. They also support the education sector to make the best use of technology so that every learner in the UK is able to benefit from its advantages and achieves the best they can.

There is a long history of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) use within the Further Education (FE) sector in England. Large scale development dates back to 1999 with the National Learning Network (NLN) which aimed to accelerate the development of ICT infrastructure in FE colleges through dedicated funding. The development of learning within the FE sector is now shaped by the Post-16 E-learning Programme, which is part of the government's larger strategy for ICT in education – the Harnessing Technology strategy.

There have been a number of recent large-scale research studies on ICT and e-learning in the FE sector including Becta's annual survey of ICT/e-learning in FE colleges which collects data from college managers on a range of issues including the institutions ICT infrastructure and levels of access for staff and students. Evidence from this study and other relevant studies commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and other bodies provide valuable insight into current progress in provision and use of ICT/ e-learning within the sector. However, there is a relative lack of evidence from large-scale studies of learners themselves and their experience of and attitudes towards using technology on their courses.

Research Objectives

This research project was therefore commissioned to understand more about ICT from the learner's perspective. The research findings will help to verify some of the key findings from previous institution and practitioner level studies, for example have tutors accurately estimated student levels of ICT use? Do learners agree with tutors on whether ICT has or has not made a positive impact on their effectiveness? Is student access to college ICT facilities more or less adequate than college managers say? Beyond this, research among learners will also contribute to a better understanding of issues on which national level evidence is missing, such as what access FE learners have to technology at home and how this relates to their college use.

This research was therefore commissioned to address the following areas:

- Learner access to ICT resources within the college and outside (e.g. at home, in the workplace);

- How learners use/experience ICT and e-learning in their programmes of study, and also outside of college (nature and frequency);
- Learner perceptions of how the use of ICT/e-learning impacts on their learning (and also the extent to which they enjoy this form of learning);
- Learner estimates of their confidence and competence in using different forms of ICT for particular tasks;
- Support for ICT provided by the college and levels of take-up.

It was recommended that the questionnaire should take no longer than 25 minutes to complete and the sample size should be relatively large to allow the survey data to be analysed with some confidence. The sample needed to take account of at least some of the following:

- Institutional characteristics such as college location, size and e-maturity (i.e. the extent to which they had embedded e-learning in mainstream college processes);
- Learner characteristics including gender, age and ethnicity;
- Level of study;
- Subject of study;
- Mode of study (full or part-time).

Sampling

The sample was sourced from the Individualised Learner Records (ILR) which are held by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The ILRs are submitted by colleges and institutions as a record of the learners currently enrolled on their courses. When the learner details are added to the ILR, they are asked if they are willing to have their details passed on to a third party for research purposes. Only individuals who agreed to follow up were included in the sample.

All of the records selected to be in the sample were 16+ with a phone who have agreed to be re-contacted. If individuals appeared more than once in the sample frame (for example, if they were doing more than one course) their first record would have been used and all other discarded to ensure all learners had an equal chance of being selected.

The sample was stratified by the following variables and in total, 18,000 records were selected:

Type of institution (general FE and tertiary/sixth form colleges/specialist designate colleges)

- Local LSC region
- Age
- Sex

- Ethnicity
- Learning difficulty**/Disability*
- Mode of study
- Course Type

*Disability included anyone with any of the following disabilities: Visual impairment, Hearing impairment, Disability affecting mobility, Other physical disability, Other medical condition (for example epilepsy, asthma, diabetes), Emotional/behavioural difficulties, Mental ill health, Temporary disability after illness (for example post-viral) or accident, Profound complex disabilities or Multiple disabilities

**Learning difficulty included anyone with any of the following: Moderate learning difficulty, Severe learning difficulty, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Other specific learning difficulty, Multiple learning difficulties or other.

More details of the sampling process are included in the technical appendix. A breakdown of the number of completed interviews compared with the FE population is shown in section 2.6.

The final agreed sample size was 4,000 interviews to allow for analysis of sub-groups such as learners with disabilities, learners with learning difficulties and learners from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Methodology

The questionnaire was designed in consultation with Becta to cover the survey objectives.

The survey was conducted via a telephone data collection method. This method was chosen as it allowed the selection of a completely unclustered, stratified random sample of learners (from each of the learner groups) and to monitor the sample continually during the fieldwork process. This approach also allowed response rates to be maximised by careful sample management and a longer fieldwork period.

Fieldwork

Telephone interviewing took part between 20th April and 24th May 2007. The interviewing team was thoroughly briefed by the GfK NOP project team prior to starting data collection.

The data was captured using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) which allowed automatic routing and the GfK NOP project team to monitor fieldwork progress continually.

A pilot survey of 32 interviews was conducted a few days before the start of the main stage to test the questionnaire length, question clarity and flow. Recommendations

were feedback to Becta and minor changes agreed before proceeding to the main stage of the survey.

The interviews were 20 minutes in length on average. A full breakdown of the sample outcomes can be found in the technical appendix.

Weighting the data

The data was weighted by the following variables based on the IRL database to ensure it reflected the FE learner population:

- age within gender;
- sector;
- Mode of study (full-time or part-time);

Breakdown of completed interviews

The following table shows the number of interviews completed for each of the key variables and the weighted figures. As the data was weighted to reflect the FE population, the table allows comparisons to be made between the make up of the sample and the FE population.

	Number of interviews		Weighted data (FE population)	
	Number	%	Number	%
Gender				
Male	1794	45	1623	41
Female	2207	55	2378	59
Age				
16-18	1943	49	1253	31
19-24	670	17	643	16
25-34	359	9	546	14
35-44	478	12	751	19
45+	551	14	809	20
Ethnicity				
Asian	304	8	280	7
Black	227	6	233	6
Mixed	90	2	85	2
White	3298	82	3311	83
Other	77	2	85	2
Disability				

Yes	266	7	277	7
No	3730	93	3720	93
Learning Difficulty				
Yes	294	7	261	7
No	3702	93	3734	93
Provider type				
General FE	3399	85	3521	88
Sixth form	547	14	332	8
Other	55	1	148	4
Mode of study				
Part time	1586	40	2218	55
Full time	2319	58	1593	40
Region				
East Midlands	273	7	292	7
East of England	355	9	335	8
London	557	14	577	14
North East	182	5	187	5
North West	634	16	619	15
South East	658	16	602	15
South West	332	8	355	9
West Midlands	549	14	559	14
Yorkshire and Humberside	401	10	417	10

Full details of the weighting matrix can be found in the technical appendix.

Reporting conventions

Throughout the report, the following conventions are used within charts and tables:

* denotes a figure less than 0.5% but greater than zero

** denotes a small base (unweighted base less than 100)

- denotes a value of zero

All differences referred to in the report are statistically significant differences, that is, they are statistically different at 95%. This means we can be 95% sure that the differences exist within the population.

College e-enablement

The data has been analysed by differing levels of technology use by FE colleges referred to as 'e-enablement'. This has been based on Becta's annual survey of ICT/e-learning use in FE colleges which captures data on various aspects of ICT provision and use in colleges and uses multiple variables to produce an overall rating of e-enablement (on a scale of 0-100), across the following dimensions:

- **Access:** this dimension describes students' access to the college infrastructure
- **Workforce:** this dimension describes the skills of the teaching staff and their ability to access ICT for their work
- **E-learning:** this dimension describes the extent to which ICT is deployed for teaching and learning purposes
- **Resources:** this dimension describes a college's ability to access, produce and deliver educational content
- **Management:** this dimension describes the extent to which ICT is used for management information and the extent to which e-learning activities are planned for at college level

The colleges for which there is e-enablement data have been divided into four categories based on their scores, which are:

- E-enabled
- Enthusiastic
- Ambivalent
- Late adopter

The chart below shows the number of colleges and learners classified within each category of e-enablement. College e-enablement is referred to throughout the report and any statistically significant differences have been commented on.

E-enablement classification of colleges and learners in sample

Base: All respondents (4001)	Number of colleges	Number of learners
Wtd base:	314	4001
E-enablement classification		
E-enabled	32	486
Enthusiastic	101	1152
Ambivalent	43	574
Late adopter	41	386
Not classified	97	1403

Overall levels of confidence and expertise with using ICT at college and at home

This chapter looks at how learners perceived their levels of confidence. It also examines learners' expertise in using computers, as well as their existing level of computer use outside of the college setting.

Learner confidence in using computers

In order to gain an understanding of how learners perceive their overall computing confidence, they were asked to indicate which of the following statements best described the way they felt about using computers:

- I'm not confident at all in using computers
- I'm OK in using computers for a few basic tasks but I'm not confident beyond these
- I'm quite confident in using computers, and will usually have a go at doing things that I've not done before
- I'm very confident in using computers for a wide range of tasks

Overall learner confidence in using computers was fairly high, with three quarters (75%) rating themselves as being either very confident (35%) or quite confident (40%). A fifth (19%) considered that they were ok in using computers for a few basic tasks, but not confident beyond that, while just 5% of learners felt that they were not confident at all in using computers.

Learner confidence in using computers

I'm not confident at all in using computers
5%

I'm OK in using computers for a few basic tasks but I'm not confident beyond these
19%

I'm very confident in using computers for a wide range of tasks
35%

I'm quite confident in using computers, and will usually have a go at doing things that I've not done before
40%
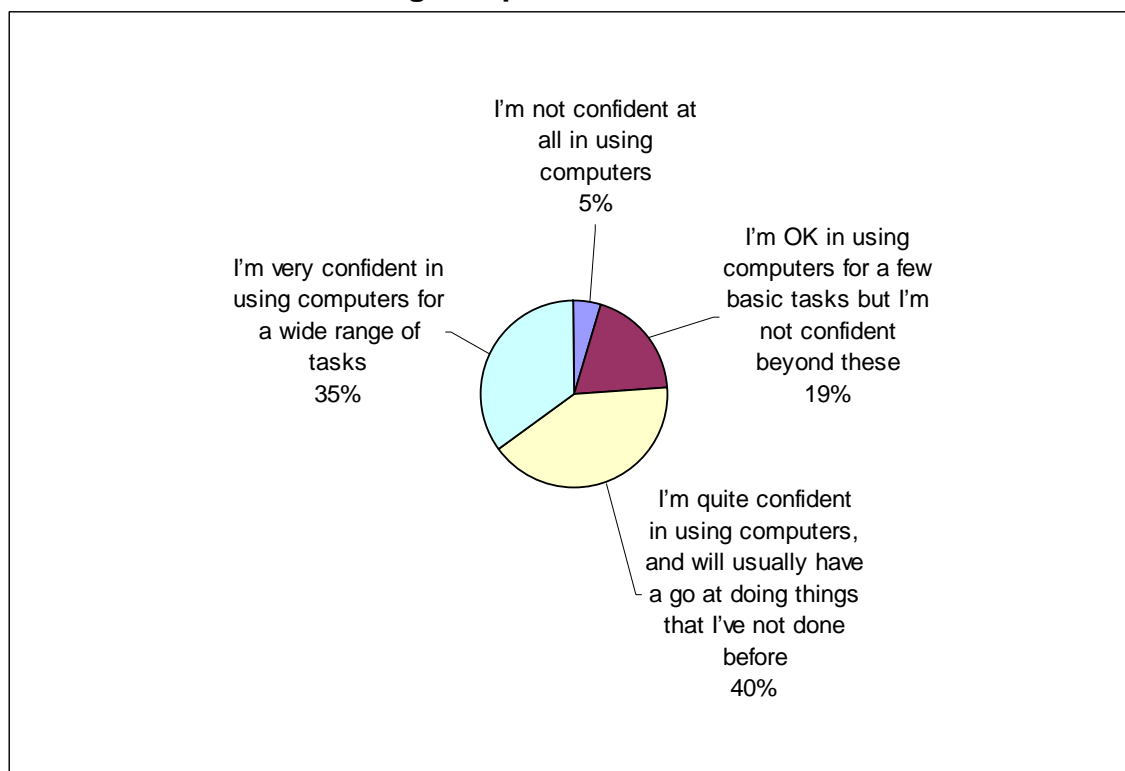
Wtd base: all respondents (4001)

When analysing computing confidence by gender, a significant difference existed between the proportion of men and women saying they were very confident in using computers for a wide range of tasks. Nearly half of men (45%) considered themselves to be very confident compared with three in ten women (29%).

Confidence in using computers was lower among older learners with only a fifth (20%) of learners aged 45+ stating they were very confident compared with almost half (48%) of 16-18 year olds and 44% of 19-24 year olds. Confidence in computer usage drops sharply among learners aged 35-44 (24% felt very confident) compared with those aged 25-34 (34% felt very confident).

Just under a third of learners (30%) aged 45+ felt they were ok in using computers for a few basic tasks compared with around one in ten of under 25's, and 13% felt they were not confident at all in using computers compared with just 3% of under 25's. Learners aged 45+ account for 20% of the survey sample and of the FE learners population nationally, whilst learners aged under 25 account for 47% of the survey sample and of the FE population.

Level of confidence using a computer, by age and gender

Base: All respondents (4001)		Gender		Age				
	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25-34	35-44	45+
Wtd base	4001	1623	2378	1253	643	546	751	809
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
I'm not confident at all in using computers	5	4	7	1	2	5	7	13
I'm OK in using computers for a few basic tasks but I'm not confident beyond these	19	15	22	11	13	19	27	30
I'm quite confident in using computers, and will usually have a go at doing things that I've not done before	40	35	42	39	40	42	41	37
I'm very confident in using computers for a wide range of tasks	35	45	29	48	44	34	24	20

Note: Table excludes learners answering 'don't know'

Over four in ten learners studying the following subjects described themselves as very confident users:

- Business Administration, Management and Professional subjects (47%)

- Engineering, Technology and Manufacturing (46%)
- Sciences and Mathematics (43%)
- Visual and Performing Arts and Media (43%)
- Humanities (41%)

Around three in ten learners studying Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy (30%), Health Social Care and Public Services (29%), English Languages and Communication (28%), and ICT (27%) were either not confident in using computers or ok for a few basic tasks. The findings suggest that there is a correlation between tutor required computer use and ICT confidence, as learners studying subjects where the tutor required them to use computers to learn about the subject were among the most confident using ICT. This is discussed in more detail in the section: *Tutor-required use of computer*.

With regard to mode of study, learners on a full time course were more likely to describe themselves as 'very confident' in using computers than those on a part time course (44% compared with 30%).

Learners with a learning difficulty were generally less confident in using computers. Three in ten (27%) were very confident in using computers (compared with 36% of learners without a learning difficulty), and they were more likely to answer that they were not confident at all (9% compared with 5%) or that they were ok for a few basic tasks (25% compared with 19%).

As might be expected, learners who have a computer at home which they use for their course were significantly more likely to be very confident in using computers for a wide range of tasks (38% compared with 22% who do not have a computer at home). Amongst learners without a computer at home 13% were not confident in using computers at all compared with 5% of learners overall, whilst three in ten (28%) were ok in using computers for a few basic tasks, compared with just 4% and 18% respectively of learners with a computer at home.

The proportion of respondents that were very confident was lower at colleges classified as 'late adopters' (27% very confident) compared with 'enthusiastic' (39%) and 'e-enabled' (37%) colleges. Overall, 10% of learners in the survey were based at colleges classified as 'late adopters', whilst 12% were at 'e-enabled' colleges and 29% were at colleges classified as 'enthusiastic'. A third of learners (35%) were at colleges which we were unable to classify.

Level of confidence using a computer, by whether learner had a disability and presence of home computer and Mode of study

Base: All respondents (4001)		Has a disability		Have computer at home which use for course		Mode of study	
	Total	Yes	No	Yes	No	Full Time	Part Time
Wtd base	4001	277	3720	3348	653	1593	2218
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
I'm not confident at all in using computers	5	10	5	4	13	2	7
I'm OK in using computers for a few basic tasks but I'm not confident beyond these	19	22	19	18	28	13	24
I'm quite confident in using computers, and will usually have a go at doing things that I've not done before	40	37	40	40	36	40	39
I'm very confident in using computers for a wide range of tasks	35	30	36	38	22	44	30

Note: Table excludes learners answering 'don't know'

Learner expertise in using computers

In order to examine learners' levels of computing expertise in more detail, they were asked to rate their expertise (either expert, intermediate or beginner) in carrying out a variety of education-related computing tasks, as follows:

- Word-processing a coursework assignment
- Creating a computer-based presentation (for example, using PowerPoint)
- Analysing numerical information

- Communicating with other people (for example, using email, Instant Messenger)
- Finding information on the Internet about the topic being studied (by doing your own research rather than following web links you've been given by your tutor)
- Recording and storing evidence of achievement (for example, as part of a portfolio of evidence)
- Adding visual information or decoration to work (for example, charts and graphs; graphics)

Level of computer expertise for a range of tasks

Task	Expert	Intermediate	Beginner
To add visual information or decoration to your work	26%	43%	29%
To record and store evidence of your achievement	22%	47%	27%
To find information on the internet about the topic you're studying	40%	44%	15%
To communicate with other people	43%	39%	17%
To analyse numerical information	15%	45%	38%
To create a computer-based presentation	20%	44%	33%
To word-process a coursework assignment	29%	50%	21%
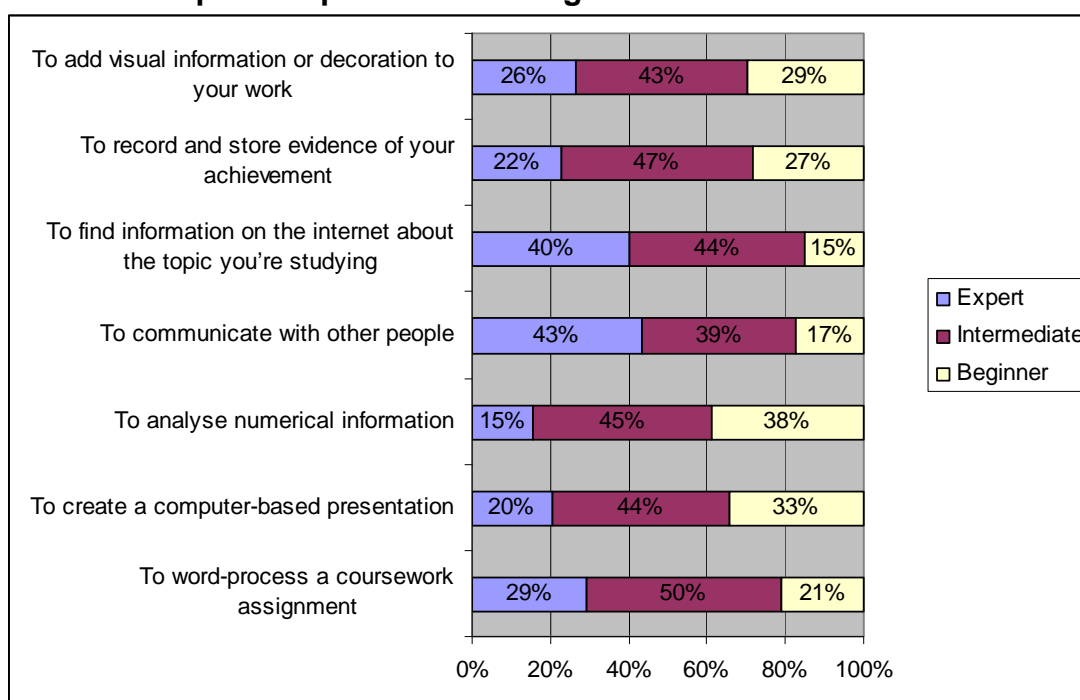
Wtd Base: All respondents (4001)

Learners were most likely to rate themselves as an expert in email and internet skills. For example, at least four in ten considered they were an expert in communicating with other people (43%) and in finding information on the internet (40%). Over a quarter felt they were an expert in word-processing (29%) or adding visual information or decoration to their work (26%).

Between 43% and 50% of learners considered themselves to be at an intermediate level for each computing skill, apart from communicating with other people (39%).

Levels of expertise were lowest for analysing numerical information using computers; nearly four in ten learners (38%) rated themselves as beginners in this respect. Around three in ten learners stated that they were beginners at using a computer to create a computer-based presentation (33%) or adding visual information or decoration to their work (29%), whilst approximately a quarter described themselves

in the same way in relation to recording and storing evidence of their achievement (27%)

A small proportion of learners answered 'don't know' when asked to rate themselves for each of these tasks, indicating that they either did not know what was involved or had never carried out a particular task before. Learners were most likely to be unsure whether they had recorded and stored evidence of their achievements (4% answered 'don't know) compared with 1-2% for the other tasks.

The following groups of learners rated their expertise significantly higher than average across the majority of computer related tasks:

- Learners with a computer at home
- Learners aged under 35

These findings suggest that younger learners and those with a computer at home were more likely to be computer literate and to be using computers for a range of tasks both at home and in college.

Level of computer expertise for a range of tasks, by age and presence of home computer

Base: all respondents (4001)		Age					Computer at home used for course	
	Total	16-18	19-24	25-34	35-44	45+	Yes	No
Wtd base	4001	1253	643	546	751	809	3348	653
% saying 'expert'	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
To word-process a coursework assignment	29	37	37	28	22	16	31	16
To create a computer-based presentation	20	28	26	20	13	10	22	12
To analyse numerical information	15	16	17	18	13	11	16	11
To communicate with other people	43	57	50	41	31	26	46	25

To find information on the internet about the topic you're studying	40	49	49	42	34	24	43	26
To record and store evidence of your achievement	22	23	26	24	20	16	23	17
To add visual information or decoration to your work	26	36	34	27	15	15	27	18

In contrast, the following groups of learners rated their expertise significantly lower than average across the majority of computing skills:

- Learners with a disability
- Learners with a learning difficulty
- Learners aged 35+
- Part-time learners

Level of computer expertise for a range of tasks, by whether learner has a disability or learning difficulty and Mode of study

Base: all respondents (4001)		Has disability		Has learning difficulty		Mode of study	
	Total	Yes	No	Yes	No	Full-time	Part-time
Wtd base	4001	277	3720	261	3734	1593	2218
% saying 'expert'	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
To word-process a coursework assignment	29	22	29	17	30	35	25
To create a computer-	20	21	20	21	20	27	16

based presentation						
To analyse numerical information	15	17	15	12	15	16	14
To communicate with other people	43	33	43	39	43	53	36
To find information on the internet about the topic you're studying	40	29	41	35	41	48	36
To record and store evidence of your achievement	22	20	22	21	22	24	21
To add visual information or decoration to your work	26	27	26	28	26	34	21

Additionally, respondents who *disagreed* that they used computers on their course because they had been directed to do so by their tutor were more likely to consider themselves an expert for each skill (compared with those who agreed that they had been tutor-directed). Therefore, those possessing more advanced computing skills were more likely to apply them to their learning, regardless of whether this was a necessity of their course. The proportion of learners falling into this proactive and highly skilled category varies across the tasks. Overall, 10% of all learners described themselves as expert at finding information on the internet and said they were not directed by their tutors. In comparison, 7% of all learners described themselves as expert at word processing a coursework assignment and were not directed by their tutors.

There were certain courses that were more likely to teach and require specific computing skills, which in turn is likely to have had an impact upon levels of learner expertise. In particular, it was found that:

those studying Science and Mathematics or Business, Administration, Management and Professional subjects were most likely to consider themselves as an expert in using computers to analyse numerical information (21% and 23% respectively)

learners studying Visual and Performing Arts and Media were most likely to be expert in adding visual information or decoration to their work (38%)

Access to computing facilities at home

Access to computing facilities outside of college was found to be high, with 84% of learners stating that they had a computer at home that they used for their college course. Home computing access was particularly high among the following groups:

the youngest age groups; nine out of ten 16-18 year olds (90%) had access to a home computer. This figure fell to 85% of 19-24 year olds, 82% of 25-44 year olds and 76% of over 45 year olds. A quarter (24%) of learners aged 45+ did not have access to a computer at home compared with only 10% of 16-18 year olds.

learners without disabilities or learning difficulties; 75% of learners with a disability and 79% of those with a learning difficulty had access to a home computer, compared with 84% of learners without a disability and 84% without a learning difficulty.

full-time learners; 90% of full-time learners had a computer at home, compared to only 81% of part-time learners.

Access to a computer at home for use on college course by gender and age

Base: All respondents (4001)		Gender		Age				
	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25-34	35-44	45+
Wtd base	4001	1623	2378	1253	643	546	751	809
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	84	82	85	90	85	82	81	76
No	16	18	15	10	15	18	19	24

Notably. learners who did not have access to a computer at home were more likely to say they never made use of computers at college (32% compared with 21% with access to a home computer). This finding suggests that learners who did not have access to a computer at home were not more likely to be using a computer at college to compensate for the lack of a computer access at home. In fact, as the previous section highlights, those with a computer at home were more likely to be computer literate and to be using computers both at home and college for a range of tasks. The same trend exists for those accessing the internet at college (85% among those

with access to a computer at home compared with 67% among those who did not). These findings suggest that those accessing the internet at college were not doing so because they could not access it elsewhere.

Among those who did not have a computer at home, 43% said they or someone else in the household intended to get a computer in the next 12 months. Interestingly, learners at e-enabled colleges were much more likely to be intending to get a computer than those at colleges classified as 'ambivalent' or a 'late adopter' (59% compared with 36% and 32%, respectively).

In addition, learners who described themselves as either very or quite confident users were more inclined to consider getting a home computer (51% and 48% respectively compared with 36% or less of other learners).

Intending to acquire a computer in the next 12 months by confidence and college e-enablement

Base: all respondents without a computer at home that they use for college course (653)	Total	Confidence rating				College e-enablement			
		Not confident	Ok for basic tasks	Quite confident	Very confident	E-enabled	Enthusiastic	Ambivalent	Late adopter
Wtd base	653	**88	181	234	146	**79	175	**94	**58
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Intend to acquire a computer	43	32	36	48	51	59	41	36	32
Do not intend to acquire a computer	45	55	51	41	39	33	47	58	44
Don't know	12	14	13	10	10	9	12	6	23

Among those who did not intend to get a computer in the next 12 months, around three in ten (27%) said the main reason for not getting one was they would not use it.

Other reasons for not getting a computer within the next 12 months were:

- too expensive (mentioned by 16%)

- didn't need a computer as they could access one at college (mentioned by 10%)
- didn't need a computer as they could access one at another location (9%) – this was most likely to be the case amongst learners aged 25+ (12% versus 6% or less in younger age groups) , and amongst part-time learners (10% versus 5% of full-time learners).

Although a large proportion of learners had access to a computer at home, computers were often shared within a household, which meant that learners were not always able to use them when needed. Despite this, only a very small proportion of learners using a computer at home said that they experienced difficulties in accessing it to do their college work:

- 3% said that they have to wait to use the computer which made it hard to do college work at home;
- 14% said they had to wait to use the computer, but that this did not affect their college work;
- around half (48%) of all respondents who had access to a computer at home for college work had sole access to the computer;
- a third (34%) had priority over others they shared the computer with.

Sharing computers at home and effect on coursework
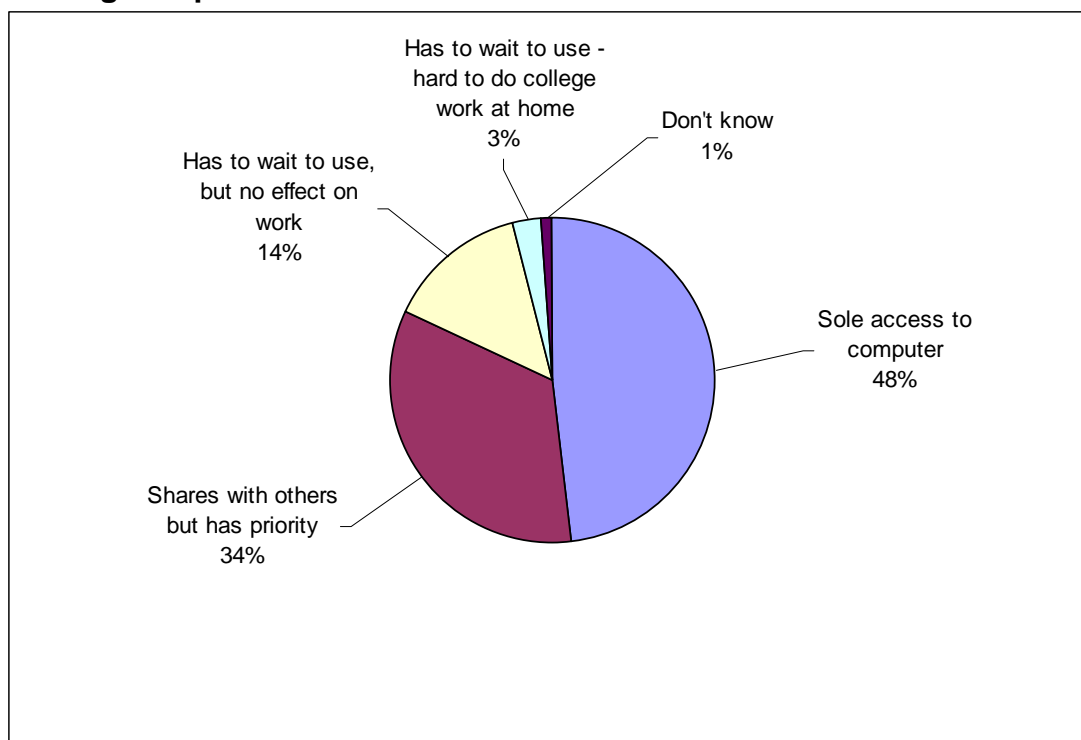
Wtd base: all respondents with computer at home that they use for college course (3348)

Men were more likely to have had sole access to the computer than women (55% compared with 44%) and there were no specific differences between age groups. Also, full-time learners were more likely than part-time learners to have to wait to use

the computer, making it harder to do college work at home (4% versus 2% respectively).

For the majority of learners, their home computing facilities were sufficient for them to do at least some, if not all, of their college work. To summarise:

- three-quarters (76%) said home computer facilities were good enough to let them do all of their college work
- a fifth (20%)felt their home computers were good enough to let them do some, but not all of their college work
- just 2% said their home computer was not good enough to let them do a lot (or any) of their college work

Learners studying Visual and Performing Arts and Media subjects were more likely than those studying other subjects to state that their home computing facilities allowed them to do some, but not all of their college work (31% compared to 24% or less of learners studying other subjects). The same was also true for those with a learning difficulty (28% compared with 20% of those with no learning difficulty). This may be related to the requirement for specialist software necessary for media-based courses and to assist those with learning difficulties.

Access to the internet at home

Almost all learners with a computer at home said they had access to the internet (94%). Broadband was found to be the most widespread mode of accessing the internet, with 86% of learners using this technology compared with just 8% using dial-up internet access. Just 5% stated that they had no internet access at home.

A greater proportion of part-time learners and learners aged 25+ used a dial-up internet connection (each 10%) compared with full-time learners (5%) or those aged under 25 (7% or less).

Computing leisure activities

Learners with access to a home computer were asked which of the following leisure activities they took part in on a regular basis (once a week or more often):

Communicating with others (for example, through email or instant messaging)

- Surfing the net
- Online shopping
- Playing computer games
- Maintaining a personal website, blog, online journal, myspace page, etc
- Creating things (for example, digital photography/video, music, writing, etc)
- Taking part in an online community, for example an internet forum or message board; a 'virtual world' such as Second Life

- Downloading music, video, podcasts, etc
- Learning about something other than your college course (for example, a foreign language; a musical instrument)

As chart 4 shows, the majority of learners with access to a home computer regularly surfed the internet (88%) or communicated with others via email or instant messaging (81%). Around half regularly shopped online (50%), created things (49%) or download music, video or podcasts (48%). Over four in ten learnt about something other than their college course (43%), whilst around a third regularly maintained a website, blog, etc (33%) or played computer games (35%). A fifth (21%) took part in an online community on a regular basis.

Leisure activities carried out regularly on home computer
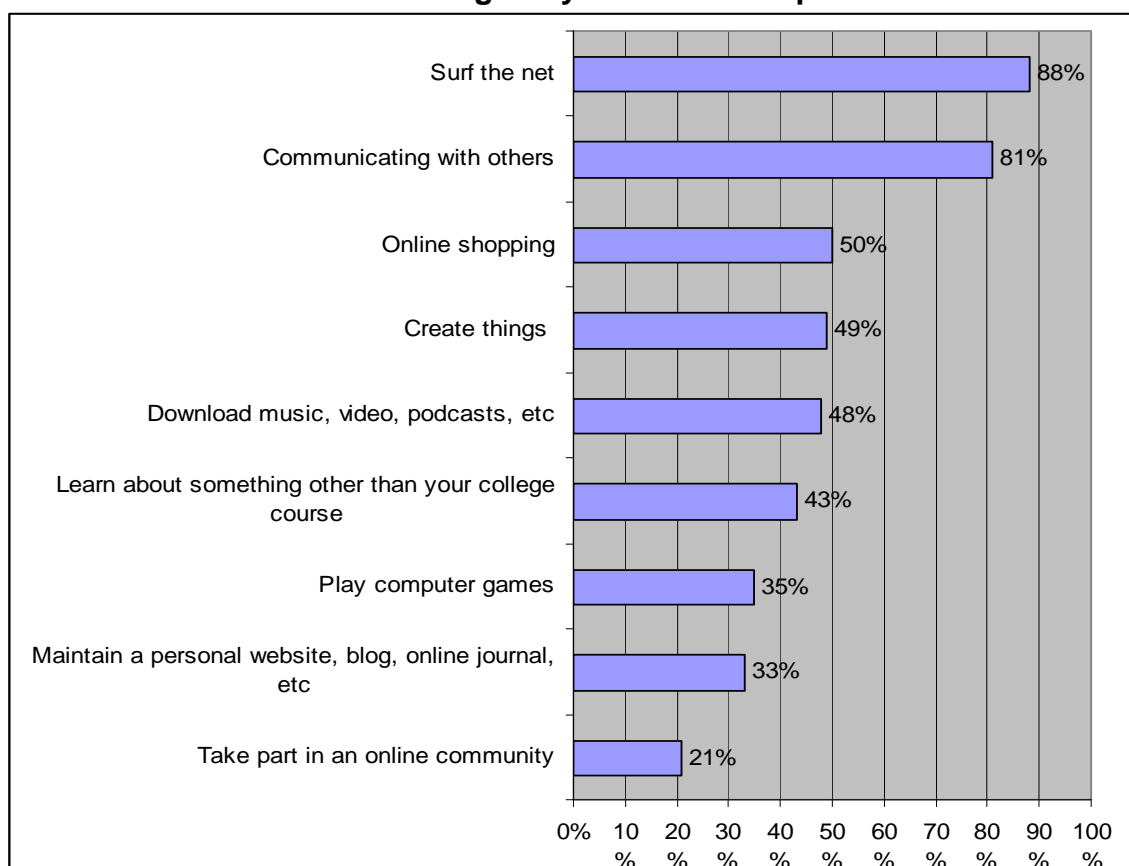
Wtd Base: All respondents with a computer at home that they use for their course (3348)

As might be expected, those who perceived themselves to be more confident computer users participated more regularly in computing leisure activities than those with lower confidence. In addition, it was found that:

- a higher proportion of men compared with women took part in all computer leisure activities, with the exception of online shopping (which was reported by around half of male and female learners with access to a computer at home)

- a greater number of learners under 25 years of age took part in all computer leisure activities, with the exception of online shopping and learning about something other than their college course.
    - following on from this, those aged 16-18 were most likely to communicate with others (88% versus 83% or less in other age groups), download music/video/podcasts (64% versus 59% or less), maintain a personal website/blog/online journal (55% versus 40% or less) or play computer games (46% versus 37%)
    - those aged 25-44 were most likely to be shopping online (60% compared with only 41% of 16-18 year olds) and half of 25-34 year olds (50%) were the most likely to be using their computer to learn something other than their college course compared with 4 out of 10 learners in other age groups.
- learners with a disability or a learning difficulty were less likely to communicate with others through email or instant messaging (73% and 75% respectively versus 81% of those without a disability or learning difficulty), but more likely to play computer games on a regular basis (44% and 49% respectively, versus 34% of those without a disability or learning difficultly). Notably those with a learning disability were more likely to maintain a personal website, blog or online journal (44% compared with 32% without a learning difficulty).
- learners of white ethnic backgrounds were much more likely to take part regularly in online shopping than those from a mixed, black or Asian background (52% versus 39% or less). In addition, those from black and Asian ethnic groups participated in the following computer activities much less than those from white ethnic groups:
    - communicating with others
    - surfing the net
    - creating things (digital photography/video, music, writing)
- a significantly greater number of full-time learners took part in all computer leisure activities, with the exception of online shopping, creating things and learning about something other than their college course. Conversely, more part-time learners than full time learners took part in online shopping.

Leisure activities done regularly on home computer, by gender and age

Base: all respondents with a home computer that they use for their course (3348)		Gender		Age				
	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25-34	35-44	45+
Wtd base	3348	1325	2022	1126	549	449	609	615
% saying they do activities regularly	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Communicating with others	81	83	79	88	83	75	76	74
Surf the net	88	90	87	93	93	84	88	79
Online shopping	50	51	49	41	50	61	60	46
Play computer games	35	46	27	46	37	33	23	23
Maintain a personal website, blog, online journal, etc	33	36	31	55	40	21	14	12
Create things	49	53	46	50	52	51	45	44
Take part in an online community	21	28	16	28	27	21	13	8
Download music, video, podcasts, etc	48	55	43	64	59	45	37	20
Learn about something other than your college course	43	48	39	41	43	50	40	43

Leisure activities done regularly on home computer, by whether learner has disability or learning difficulty and Mode of study

Base: all respondents with a home computer that they use for their course (3348)		Has disability		Has learning difficulty		Mode of study	
	Total	Yes	No	Yes	No	Full-time	Part-time
Wtd base	3348	208	3135	205	3137	1427	1793
% saying they do activities regularly	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Communicating with others	81	73	81	75	81	86	76
Surf the net	88	87	88	88	88	92	85
Online shopping	50	46	50	41	50	44	54
Play computer games	35	44	34	49	34	42	29
Maintain a personal website, blog, online journal, etc	33	39	32	44	32	51	19
Create things	49	57	48	51	49	50	48
Take part in an online community	21	25	20	26	20	27	16
Download music, video, podcasts, etc	48	45	48	51	48	61	37
Learn about something other than your college course	43	43	43	46	43	42	43

Summary

Confidence in using computers

- The majority of learners were confident about using computers; around a third (35%) said they were very confident in using computers for a wide range of tasks, whilst four in ten (40%) described themselves as quite confident.

- Men were more likely than women to be very confident about using computers; 45% described themselves in this way compared with three in ten women (29%).

- Age was an important factor, with older learners less confident than their younger counterparts. A fifth of learners in the 45+ category (20%) and 35-44 year olds (24%) felt very confident in their use of computers compared with nearly half of 16-18 year olds and 44% of 19-24 year olds and a third (34%) of 25-34 year olds.

- Confidence in computer use varied by subject of study. Those studying Business, Administration, Management and Professional subjects, Engineering, Technology and Manufacturing, Sciences and Mathematics, Visual and Performing Arts and Media and Humanities were amongst the most confident in their use of computers.

- Those studying Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy, Health Social Care and Public Services, English Languages and Communication, and ICT were amongst the least confident users of computers.

- Other more confident users included learners with no learning difficulty and those with a computer at home which they used for their course.

- Confidence in computer use also varied based on Mode of study. Full-time learners showed more confidence in their ability to use a computer than part-time learners.

Learner expertise in using computers

- Faced with a list of computer related tasks, at least four in ten learners considered themselves expert in communicating with other people and finding information on the internet. Over a quarter felt they were expert in word processing or adding visual information/decoration to their work.

- Between 43% and 50% of learners considered themselves to be at an intermediate level for all the computing skills, apart from communicating with other people (39%).

- Expertise levels were lowest for analysing numerical information (38% rated themselves as beginners).

- Generally, learners aged under 25 and those with a computer at home were more likely to rate their expertise higher across most computer related tasks than other learners.

- More part-time learners rated their expertise as 'beginner' whereas more full-time learners rated theirs as 'expert' across the majority of computing skills.

Access to computing facilities at home

- There was good access to computers at home: over eight in ten learners (84%) had a computer at home that they used for their college course. This was particularly high amongst those aged under 25 and those without disability or learning difficulties.
- Notably, learners who did not have access to a computer at home were not using college computers to compensate as they were more likely to say they never made use of computers at college (32% compared with 21% with access to a home computer). Overall, those with a computer at home were much more computer literate and likely to be using computers both at home and college for a range of tasks.
- Around four in ten of those who did not have a computer at home said that they planned to get one in the next 12 months. Those who did not intend to get a computer were most likely to say that this was because they would not use it.
- Three-quarters of learners with a computer at home said that this equipment was good enough to let them do all their college work.
- The vast majority of learners with a computer at home said that they had access to the internet (94%) and broadband was the most widespread mode of accessing the internet.

Computing leisure activities

- Over eight in ten learners with a computer at home that they used for their course regularly surfed the internet (88%) or communicated with others via email or instant messaging (81%). Around half regularly shopped online, created things or downloaded music video or podcasts.
- A higher proportion of men compared with women took part in all the computer related leisure activities listed, with the exception of online shopping (which was reported by around half of male and female learners with access to a computer at home).
- Learners under 25 years of age were more likely to regularly take part in all computer related leisure activities, with the exception of online shopping and learning about something other than their college course.
- A greater number of full-time learners took part in the majority of computer leisure activities, with one exception being 'online shopping' in which part-time learners were more involved.

Learner access to and college provision of ICT

This chapter examines the provision of computing at colleges, including learner access to computers and whether the computers were sufficient for learners' needs, as well as the computing support provided by the college.

Computer provision at college

Learners were asked to consider which of the following statements best described their access to computers outside of timetabled class sessions:

- it is always possible to get onto a computer
- it is usually possible to get onto a computer but sometimes I have to wait
- it is often difficult to get onto a computer
- it is usually impossible to get onto a computer
- don't know as I never use computers in college

Overall 77% of learners had used the computers at colleges and were able to rate their level of access to computers. Generally, access to computers within college was seen to be fairly good: Four in ten (41%) felt it was always possible to get onto a computer, whilst three in ten (29%) stated that it was usually possible to get onto a computer, but sometimes they had to wait. Five percent often found it difficult to get onto a computer, whilst 2% said it was usually impossible.

Significantly more full time learners said it was 'always' or 'usually' possible to get a computer (44% for each) than part-time learners (39% 'always' and 19% usually).

The ability to access a computer tended to be slightly more of a problem for learners at colleges classified as 'late adopters', with over a third of learners in this setting (35%) stating that it was always possible to get onto a computer compared with 41% of learners overall and (7%) that it was often difficult to get on a computer compared with 5% of learners overall.

However, almost a quarter of learners (23%) said they never used computers in college. This was especially apparent among learners aged 35+ (40% of 35-44 year olds and 42% of learners aged 45+ never used computers compared with 4% of 16-18 year olds and 10% of 19-24 year olds).

Other learners who were more likely than average to never use computers at college were:

- women (27% compared with 18% of men);
- those studying Retailing, Customer Service and Transportation subjects (53% never used college computers compared with 36% or less of those studying other subjects)

- learners who did not have access to a computer at home (32% compared with 21% with access to a home computer)
- less confident computer users (43% who were not confident at all compared with 20% who felt 'very confident')

Notably, around a third of part-time learners (37%) said they never used computers at college compared with only 3% of full-time learners. This was highly correlated with gender (as 63% of part-time learners were women) and with age (as 81% of part-time learners were in the 25+ age category).

Access to computers outside timetabled class sessions, by college e-enablement

Base: all respondents (4001)		College e-enablement			
	Total	E-enabled	Enthusiastic	Ambivalent	Late adopter
Wtd base	4001	486	1152	574	386
	%	%	%	%	%
It is always possible to get onto a computer	41	41	42	41	35
It is usually possible to get onto a computer but sometimes I have to wait	29	29	32	30	26
It is often difficult to get onto a computer	5	5	5	4	7
It is usually impossible to get onto a computer	2	2	1	2	2
Don't know as I never use computers in college	23	23	20	23	30

Notably, learners who were required to use a computer for their college course were more likely than other learners to state it was always possible to get onto a computer. This was particularly apparent among the following groups:

- learners studying an Information and Communication Technology course (57% stated it was always possible)
- learners for whom it is essential to use a computer on their course (47% stated it was always possible)
- learners who use computers on their course because they are directed to do so by their tutor (47% stated it was always possible)

Access to computers outside timetabled class sessions, by age and gender and Mode of study

Base: all respondents (4001)		Gender		Age					Mode of study	
	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25-34	35-44	45+	Full-time	Part-time
Wtd base	4001	1623	2378	1253	643	546	751	809	1593	2218
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
It is always possible to get onto a computer	41	45	39	44	43	40	38	39	44	39
It is usually possible to get onto a computer but sometimes I have to wait	29	30	28	44	38	23	17	14	44	19
It is often difficult to get onto a computer	5	5	5	6	6	4	4	4	7	3
It is usually impossible to get onto a computer	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	2
Don't know as I never use computers in college	23	18	27	4	10	31	40	42	3	37

Overall quality

Learners who used computers in college were asked about the quality of computer equipment in terms of its speed and reliability. Nearly three-quarters of learners (74%) considered their college computers to be good enough to let them do all of their college coursework, whilst a fifth (21%) stated that college computers were good enough to let them do some, but not all of their college coursework. Just 2% found their college computers to not be good enough to let them do a lot (or any) of their college coursework.

Quality of college computers for doing coursework
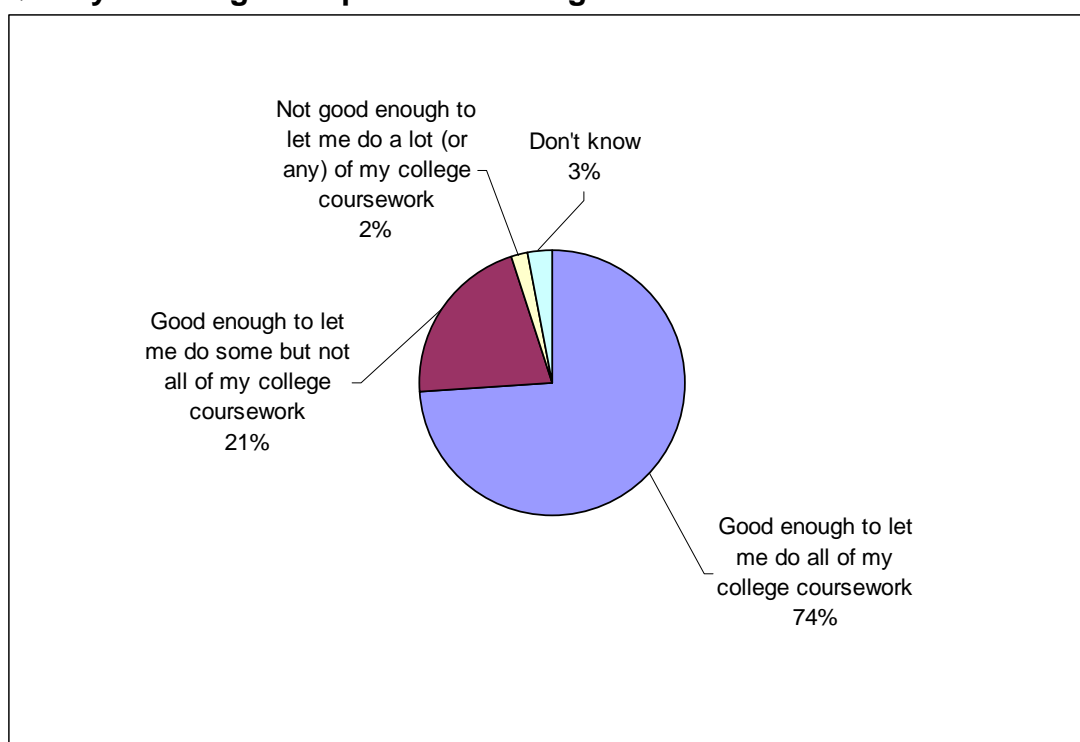
Wtd base: all respondents who use computers in college (3079)

Learners aged 25+ were more likely than younger users to say that college computers were good enough to let them do all of their college coursework (76% versus 72% or less). There was no significant variation in response by region or by college e-enablement. However, significantly more full-time learners (25%) described college computers as being good enough for some but not all of their college coursework than part-time learners (18%).

There were some variations by subject with those studying Health, Social Care and Public Services and Visual and Performing Arts and Media more likely to say college computers were good enough to allow them to do some but not all of their work (26% and 30% respectively) whilst the majority of learners studying other subjects considered the quality of computers good enough for them to do all their work.

College internet

As stated previously, over three-quarters (77%) of learners participating in the survey had used computers at their college. Among these learners, around eight out of ten (82%) who used college computers had accessed the internet while at college.

Interestingly, this figure was higher among learners who also had a computer at home than those that did not (85% compared with 67%). This suggests that those accessing the internet at college were not necessarily doing so because they could not access it elsewhere. Indeed, the proportion of learners accessing the internet at college was significantly greater among learners that considered themselves to be more confident computer users (88% compared with 62% of those 'not at all' confident with computers).

Accessed the internet at college by home computer and age

Wtd Base: All respondents who use computers at college (3079)		Have a computer at home		Age				
	Total	Yes	No	16-18	19-24	25-34	35-44	45+
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Wtd base	3079	2632	447	1205	577	376	452	468
Yes	82	85	67	96	89	68	65	66
No	18	15	33	4	11	32	35	34

The following groups were more likely to have accessed the internet whilst at college:

- Learners aged 16-18 (96% compared with 89% of 19-24 year olds and 66% of learners aged 25+). There were no differences within the 25+ age category.
- Learners in the South East (88% compared with 77% in the South West)
- Learners studying Visual and Performing Arts and Media subjects (93%) and Humanities subjects (92%)
- Learners who have a computer at home (85% compared with 67% who do not have a computer at home)
- Asian learners (89%) compared with white (81%) and mixed ethnicity (78%) learners

In addition, a third (34%) of those aged 25+ had never accessed the internet at college compared with 4% of 16-18 year olds. Surprisingly, almost a quarter (23%) of learners studying an ICT course had never accessed the internet at college.

Learners who had accessed the internet whilst at college were asked about the speed of the internet connection (compared with the speed of access at home, at their workplace or any other location).

- 44% stated that it was always fast
- 44% stated that it was usually fast but sometimes it slowed down
- 8% said that it was slow most of the time
- 3% thought it was always slow

The 35-44 age group was more likely to consider that the internet connection was always fast (57% compared with 40% of 16-18 year olds and 44% of learners aged 45+). No differences in internet connection speed were found based on college e-enablement.

Speed of internet access at college by age

Base: all respondents who have accessed the internet at college (2526)		Age				
	Total	16-18	19-24	25-34	35-44	45+
Wtd base	2526	1152	516	256	295	308
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Always fast	44	40	45	47	57	44
Usually fast but sometimes slows down	44	49	45	38	28	46
Slow most of the time	8	8	6	11	10	5
Always slow	3	3	3	2	2	2
Don't know	1	*	1	2	3	3

Learners studying Science and Mathematics and Construction were most likely to state the internet connection was fast all the time (48% and 52% respectively) whilst those studying ICT and Visual and Performing Arts and Media are more likely to say it's usually fast but sometimes slows down (48% and 49% respectively).

Email

Over a half of learners (55%) who used college computers said that their college provided them with an email address. This figure rose to nearly seven out of ten 16-18 year olds (66% compared with 55% of 19-24 year olds and 44% of learners aged

25+). Significantly more full-time learners said that their college provided an email address, than part-time learners (66% compared to 44%).

Surprisingly learners at colleges classified as 'late adopters' were slightly more likely to have been provided with an email address (60% versus 54% or less). However, it could be that learners at more e-enabled colleges were provided with alternative and more advanced means for communication (indeed, 34% of learners at e-enabled colleges reported using a virtual learning environment or learning platform as part of their course, and this proportion was significantly higher than learners at colleges that were less e-enabled).

College provided e-mail address to learner by Age, College e-enablement and Mode of study

Base: all respondents who use computers in college (3079)	Age			College e-enablement				Mode of study	
	Total	16-18	19-24	25+	E-enabled	Enthusiastic	Ambivalent	Late adopter	Full-time	Part-time
Wtd base	3079	1205	577	1297	372	923	439	270	1547	1397
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	55	66	55	44	51	55	52	60	66	44
No	41	31	42	50	44	42	41	37	31	50
Don't know	4	3	3	6	5	4	7	3	3	6

Technical support

The survey also investigated which members of college staff learners would be most likely to approach for assistance or support if they experienced computer problems. Four in ten (40%) were most likely to ask a member of the college's IT support staff, and a similar proportion (39%) would ask one of their course tutors. One in ten (13%) would ask another member of staff.

Who learners would approach for assistance with computer problems
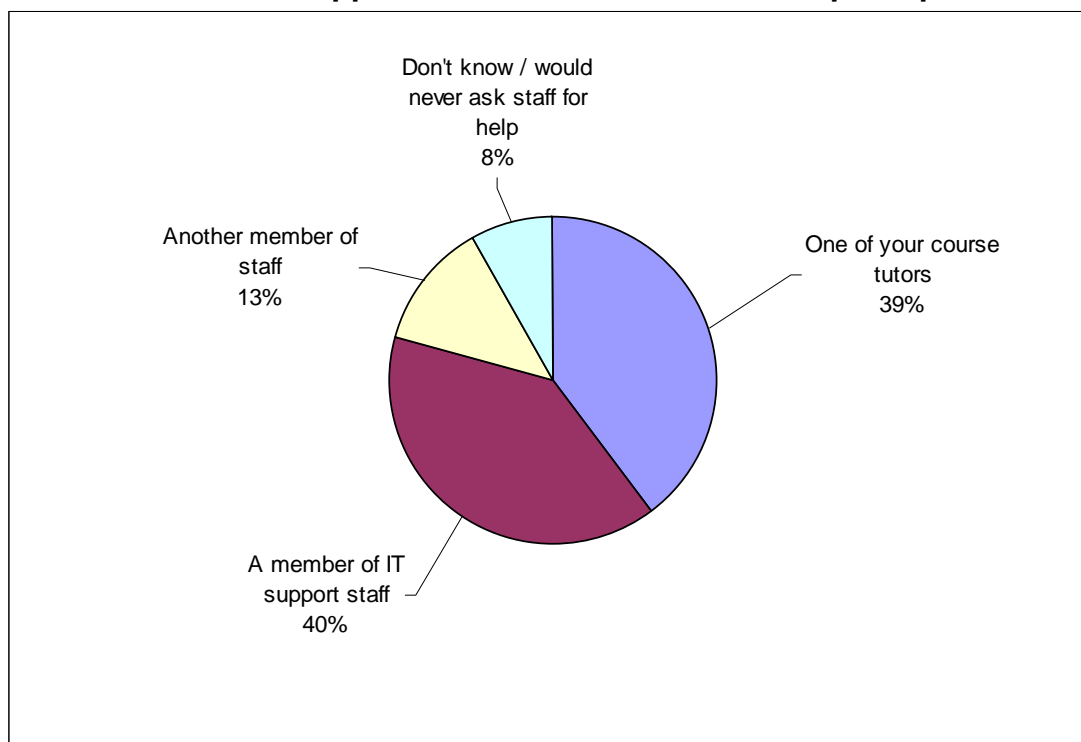
Wtd base: all respondents who use computers in college (3079)

Understandably, those studying ICT courses were most likely to ask their course tutor for help (64% versus 47% or less of those studying other subjects). Likewise, those who agreed that it was essential to use computers or that they were directed to do so by their tutor were more likely to ask their tutor (45% and 44% respectively).

Notably, those who were least confident in their computing ability would be more likely to ask a course tutor for help (49%) , whilst those who felt more confident would approach a member of the IT support staff (45%). This linked with both age and mode of study; those aged 25+ and those on a part-time course were more likely than their younger or full-time counterparts to say that they would approach their course tutor (51% versus 35% or less for age, and 49% versus 30% for mode of study).

Encouragingly, nine out of ten learners (88%) considered it easy to get help with computers from college staff (very easy 41%, quite easy 47%), while just 7% found it difficult.

Printing

Over a third of learners (36%) were required to pay for printing out work at college, whilst 57% said they got all their work printed for free. Seven percent of learners have never used the printing facilities at college. Of those who did pay for printing, 67% had some of their work printed for free, but had to pay for the remainder. Notably, almost twice as many full-time learners as part-time learners had to pay for

printing out work at college (47% compared to 25%). However, of those full-time learners, only 27% had to pay for all of it.

The following regions had the highest proportion of learners that had to pay for printing out their work at college:

- London (43%)
- East of England (43%)
- South East (42%)
- North West (39%)

In contrast, those in the East Midlands (26%), West Midlands (26%) and North East (27%) were least likely to have to pay for printing. There were no differences by college e-enablement and the likelihood of having to pay for printing.

Requirement to pay for printing by Region

		Region								
	Total	East Midlands	East of England	London	North East	North West	South East	South West	West Midlands	Yorks and Humberside
Wtd base: all respondents who use computers in college (3079)	3079	230	254	439	153	478	442	268	436	333
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	36	26	43	43	27	39	42	36	26	32
No	57	69	52	51	67	52	51	54	64	62
Don't know – never used printing facilities at college	7	5	5	6	5	9	7	9	10	7

Summary

Computer provision at college

- Just over three-quarters of learners (77%) were using computers at college whilst around a quarter of learners (23%) never used computers. This was more likely to be the case amongst learners aged 35+, women, less confident users and those who did not have access to a computer at home.

- The majority of learners (70%) said that access to computers at college was good: four in ten said it was always possible to get onto a computer whilst three in ten said it was usually possible to do so.

- Three quarters of users of college computer equipment considered their quality good enough for them to be used for all their college coursework.

- Eight out of ten learners (82%) who used college computers were using them to access the internet. Internet connection at college was judged to be good by the majority of users: four in ten said it was always fast and a similar proportion said that the connection was usually fast, but that it sometimes slowed down.

- A larger proportion of learners aged 16-18 (96%), Asian learners (89%) and those with a computer at home (85%) were accessing the internet. This suggests that those accessing the internet at college were not doing so because they could not access it elsewhere.

- Around half of users of college computers said that their college provided them with an email address.

- Amongst college computer users, technical support was most usually sought from a member of the college IT support staff or a course tutor. Notably, those who were least confident in their computing ability would be more likely to ask a course tutor for help, whilst those who felt more confident would approach a member of the IT support staff.

- Nine out of ten of those that would seek support on technical problems felt that it was either very or quite easy to get help. Just 7% found it difficult.

- Printing had to be paid for, in full or part, by just over a third of learners, and this varied by region.

Use of computers/ICT at college

This chapter covers the use of computers in college in more detail including courses where computers were seen as essential, levels of tutor directed computer use and whether computers are used more in lessons than in the learners own study time. It also examines how often learners were carrying out a range of learning related tasks using computers.

This chapter also covers the use of e-learning such as virtual learning environments and e-portfolios in addition to other technologies such as laptop computers and mobile phones.

Essential computer usage in college or on course

Learners were asked to state their level of agreement with the statement "on my course, it's essential to use a computer to learn about the subject." Almost two-thirds (62%) agreed that this was the case, while over a quarter (30%) disagreed. As would be expected, agreement was highest amongst those studying ICT subjects (91%), but was also found to be higher than average in the following subjects:

- Hospitality, Sports, Leisure and Travel (71% agreement versus the average of 62%)
- Business administration, Management and Professional (66% agreement)
- Visual and Performing Arts and Media (63% agreement)

The findings indicate that essential computer use for certain subjects were correlated with learner ICT confidence, as learners studying Business Administration, Management and Professional subjects and Visual and Performing Arts and Media were particularly likely to describe themselves as very confident users (47% and 43% respectively). However, it is unclear whether the use of ICT on the course has improved ICT confidence or whether confident ICT users were more likely to be attracted to these types of course.

There was also a strong correlation between mode of study and essential computer usage on courses with 70% of full-time learners agreeing that using a computer was essential for their course compared with only 56% of part-time learners.

Those most likely to disagree that it was essential to use computers on their course were those studying Construction (44% disagreement), English Languages and Communication (43%) and Health, Social Care and Public Services (39%).

There were some differences between ages of learners with older learners more likely to strongly agree that it was essential to use a computer on their course (22% of learners aged 25+ compared with 15% of 16-18 year olds). This probably reflects the high proportion of older learners taking short-term introductory ICT courses. Overall however, younger learners were more likely to agree or agree strongly (69%

of under 25s compared with 57% of over 45s) reflecting higher usage of computers by younger learners taking full-time courses.

Additionally, it was found that learners with a disability and those with a learning difficulty were more likely to agree that it was essential for them to use a computer on their course (71% agreement in both cases compared with 62% of those without a disability and without a learning difficulty)

Essential computer use on course by gender, age and mode of study

Wtd Base: All respondents (4001)		Gender		Age					Mode of study	
	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25-34	35-44	45+	Full-time	Part-time
Wtd base	4001	1623	2378	1253	643	546	751	809	1593	2218
% stating 'agree/ agree strongly'	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Agree/ agree strongly	62	66	60	69	68	60	55	57	70	56

Tutor-required use of computer

Learners were asked to state their level of agreement with the statement "when I use computers to study on my course, it's because I've been directed to do so by my tutor". Six in ten (62%) learners were in agreement (14% agreed strongly, 48% agreed), suggesting that computer use is driven strongly by tutors' requirements. However, 21% of learners disagreed with the same statement (17% disagree, 4% disagree strongly).

Learners on full-time courses were more likely to agree that they were directed to use computers on their course (54% compared with 44% of learners on part-time courses).

Younger learners were more likely to be using computers on their course because they were directed to do so by their tutor. Almost three-quarters (73%) of 16-18 year olds and two-thirds (64%) of 19-24 year olds agreed compared with 55% of learners aged 45+. A quarter (24%) of this age group disagreed that they were using computers on their course because they had been directed to do so.

The survey examined how often learners were required by their tutor to use a computer on their course to do the following:

- learn about the subject you're studying (e.g. reading information about a topic on the internet)
- produce assignments
- communicate with your tutor
- work with other learners

Around seven in ten learners were required to use a computer a lot or some of the time to produce assignments (71%) and/or to learn about the subject being studied (69%).

Notably, learners at 'e-enabled' colleges were more likely to be required to use a computer a lot to learn about the subject they were studying (45%) and to produce assignments (56%), when compared with colleges classified as 'late adopters' (37% and 47% respectively).

Comparing all the tasks, learners were less likely to be required to use computers to communicate with the tutor or work with others, compared with learning about the subject or producing assignments. Around half of learners (50% and 49%) said they communicated with their tutor or worked with other learners using a computer 'a lot' or 'some of the time' whilst around a third (31% and 33%) said they were never required to do so. No differences were found amongst colleges with different e-enablement ratings.

When comparing all the tasks based on mode of study, significantly more part-time learners that full-time learners 'did not' use a computer at all for any of the tasks. Furthermore, for the majority of the tasks (with the exception of communicating with the tutor) significantly more full-time learners said they used a computer 'a lot'.

Thinking just about producing assignments, over half of learners (51%) said they were required to use a computer to produce assignments *a lot* of the time. This was particularly the case for learners studying Business Administration, Management and Professional (65%), Hospitality, Sports, Leisure and Travel (61%), Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy (61%), and Health, Social Care and Public Services (60%). In terms of those who gave the response 'not much' or 'not at all', learners studying Construction, English Languages and Communication, and Engineering, Technology and Manufacturing were the least likely to have to produce assignments using computers (those studying these subjects were also least likely to be required to use computers to learn about the subject being studied).

As discussed in previous sections, there appeared to be a correlation between levels of ICT use between subjects and overall learner confidence. Learners studying subjects where they were most likely to be directed by tutors were also among the most confident ICT users. This was particularly the case for these subjects:

- Business Administration, Management and Professional subjects (42% were directed to use computers 'a lot' to learn about the subject and 47% described themselves as very confident);
- Humanities (31% used computers 'a lot' to learn about the subject and 41% were very confident)
- Visual and Performing Arts and Media (41% used computers 'a lot' to learn about the subject and 43% were very confident)

By contrast, these figures were lowest amongst learners studying the following subjects, who were also among the least confident ICT users:

- English, Languages and Communication (24% used computers 'a lot' to learn about the subject and only 34% described themselves as very confident using computers)
- Construction (24% used computers 'a lot' for learning about the subject and only 34% described themselves as very confident using computers)
- Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy (23% used computers 'a lot' for learning about the subject and only 27% described themselves as very confident using computers)

The most notable exception is learners studying ICT courses, which displays the highest required use of a computer (68% said 'a lot' to learn about the subject) but the lowest overall confidence (34% described themselves as 'very confident'). However, it is to be expected that learners who are studying ICT, do so in order to improve their computing skills and overall confidence. It is also interesting to note that learners studying Engineering, Technology and Manufacturing display a comparatively high level of overall confidence (46% were very confident) despite the fact that they are less often required to use a computer to learn about the subject (31% said 'a lot').

Tutor required use on course by gender, age and mode of study

Wtd Base: All respondents (4001)		Gender		Age					Mode of study	
	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25-34	35-44	45+	Full-time	Part-time
Wtd base	4001	1623	2378	1253	643	546	751	809	1593	2218
% stating 'agree/ agree strongly'	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Agree/ agree strongly	62	67	60	73	62	57	57	55	69	58

Frequency of being required by their tutor to use a computer for tasks, by subject

Wtd base:All respondents (4001)		Subject/skills being studied													
	Total	Sciences, maths	Land based provision	Construction	Engineering, technology, manufacturing	Business admin management, professional	ICT	Retailing, Customer Service and Transport	Hospitality, Sports, Travel, Leisure	Hairdressing, beauty therapy	Health, Social Care, Public Service	Visual and Performing Arts	Humanities	English languages and communication	Foundation programmes
Wtd base	4001	395	**32	171	317	347	729	**41	224	174	682	425	188	578	**34
% saying 'a lot'	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Learn about the subject being studied	40	32	50	24	31	42	68	32	48	23	36	41	31	24	43
Produce assignments	51	49	52	40	44	65	57	40	61	61	60	50	57	38	62
Communicate with tutor	27	27	27	24	25	28	34	14	29	24	25	23	17	25	23
Work with other learners	23	21	23	28	24	21	31	11	26	24	22	21	15	19	20

Note: ** denotes small base (less than 100)

Usage of ICT in classes or own study time at colleges

The survey examined whether learners were more likely to use computers in their own time or in timetabled classes. A majority of learners (42%) used computers more often in their own study time than in timetabled classes. Over a quarter of learners (28%) said they used computers equally in class and in their own study time, whilst a quarter (26%) used computers more often in classes than in their own study time.

Usage of the computers at college
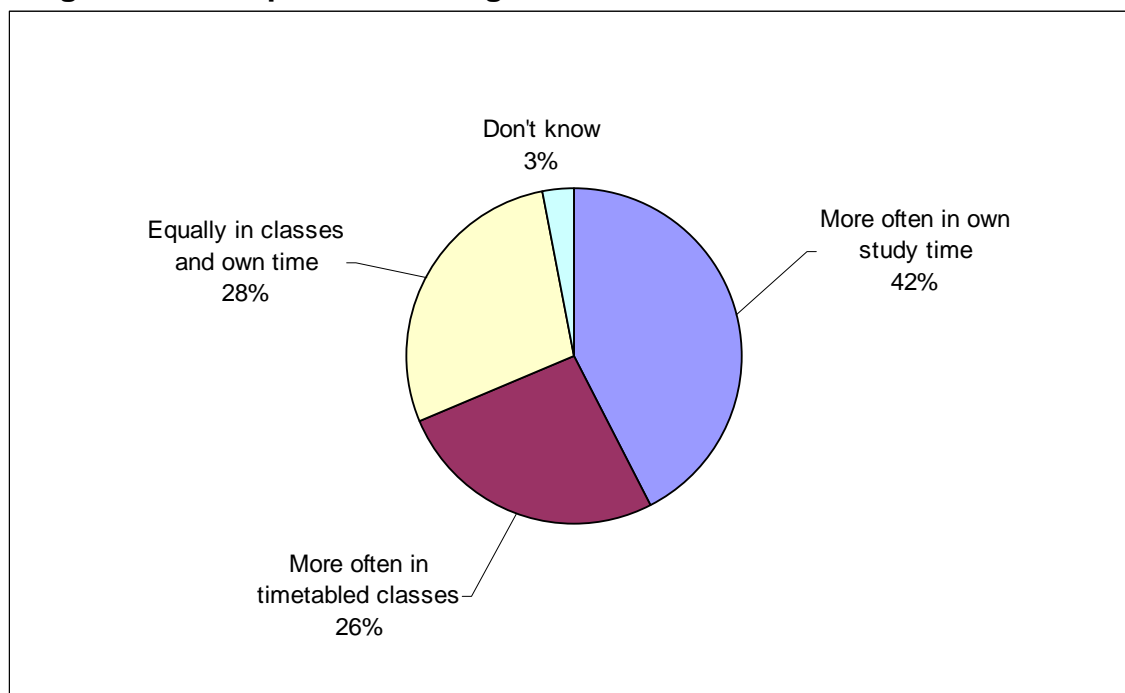
Wtd base: all respondents who use computers in college (3079)

As one would expect, the use of computers in timetabled classes was related to the subject being studied. The only subject where learners stated they spent more time using computers in timetabled classes than in their own study time was, as would be expected, in Information and Communication Technology (41% used computers most often in timetabled classes compared with 26% mostly using computers in their own study time).

Those studying Hospitality, Sports, Leisure and Travel were the only learners who were more inclined to say they used computers equally in class and in their own study time (43% spent equal time using computers in class and their own study time).

For all other subjects, learners were most likely to state they used computers more often in their own study time. The proportion of learners using computers more often in their study time was particularly high for these subjects:

- Humanities (56% stated more often in their own time compared with 16% more often in timetabled classes)
- English Languages and Communication (53% stated more often in their own time compared with 19% in timetabled classes)
- Sciences and Mathematics (52% in their own time compared with 19% in timetabled classes)

Learners on full-time courses were more likely to say they equally used computers in classes and in their own study time (34% compared with 22% of learners on part-time courses). In contrast, learners on part-time courses were more likely to mostly use computers in their own time (46% compared with 39%). These differences reflect the fact that full-time learners are more likely to be using computers because they are directed to by their tutors and part-time learners have more time available for study outside the classroom.

Learners aged 45+ were more likely than other age groups to be using computers in timetabled classes than in their own study time (36% compared to 22% of 19-24 year olds) but they were still slightly more likely to be using computers in their own time than in classes (41% compared with 36%).

Men were more likely than women to be using computers in timetabled classes (29% compared with 25%) whilst women used computers more in their own study time (45% compared with 38% of men).

Use of computers at college, by gender and age and mode of study

Wtd Base: All respondents who use computers in college (3079)		Gender		Age					Mode of study	
	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25-34	35-44	45+	Full-time	Part-time
Wtd base	3079	1334	1745	1205	577	376	452	468	1547	1397
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
More often in classes than in own study time	26	29	25	27	22	24	24	36	26	26

Equally in class and own study time	28	30	27	36	30	22	21	17	34	22
More in own study time than classes	42	38	45	37	46	49	47	41	39	46
Don't know	3	3	4	1	2	5	8	6	1	6

Frequency of using ICT for a range of purposes

Learners were asked how often they had made use of information technology for the following purposes:

- Presenting written work or data (for example, writing a coursework assignment using a word processor or spreadsheet)
- Researching topics (for example, finding information on the Internet)
- Creating and delivering presentations (for example, using PowerPoint)
- Creating graphics, music, photos or video
- Revising and following up on what you've learned in taught sessions
- Taking a computer-based test or a quiz set by the tutor
- Submitting assignments or work to your tutor (for example, by email)
- Organising and managing your college workload (for example, knowing when your classes are; what the assignments are on and when they're due in, etc)
- Contacting your lecturer/tutor with queries (e.g. via email)
- Working with other students on a group project – using a computer in a face-to-face meeting; collaborating with other learners through email or over the Internet
- Communicating with other learners about the course (for example, using email or an online discussion group)
- Catching up on sessions that you've missed (for example, by downloading tutor's notes)

Learners were asked to state whether they used computers and Information Technology 'all the time' (once a fortnight or more often), 'occasionally' (once a month or less), or never. The chart below shows the proportion of learners using computers and Information Technology for each of these purposes 'all the time'.

Frequency of using information technology and computers 'all the time' to carry out tasks

% stating all the time

Task	Value
Present written work or data	44
Research Topics	41
Create and deliver presentations	25
Create graphics, music, photos or video	15
Revise and follow up on things learned in taught sessions	24
Take a computer-based test or a quiz set by the tutor	15
Submit assignments or work to tutor	21
Organise and manage college workload	22
Contact lecturer/tutor with queries	12
Work with other students on a group project – using a computer in a face-to-face meeting; collaborating with	11
Communicate with other learners about the course	13
Catch up on sessions missed	10

Wtd Base: all respondents (4001)

Information technology and computers were more frequently used for purposes such as presenting written work or data (44% said they used IT 'all the time' and a further 38% said 'occasionally') and for researching topics (41% said 'all the time' and 45% said 'occasionally').

Information technology and computers were least likely to be used to catch up with sessions that had been missed (32% said 'never' and only 10% said 'all the time') or for communicating with the tutor or other learners (31% said 'never') or participating in group projects (29% said 'never').

Learners based at e-enabled colleges were more likely to be using IT for a range of purposes compared with learners based at 'ambivalent' or 'late adopter' colleges. Almost half (45%) of learners at e-enabled colleges were using IT 'all the time' to research topics compared with 36% of learners at 'late adopter' colleges.

The next section examines the usage of information technology and computers by key variables including mode of study, gender and age.

Frequency of using information technology and computers 'all the time' to carry out tasks, by gender and age and mode of study

Wtd Base: All respondents (4001)		Gender		Age					Mode of study	
% stating 'all the time'	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25-34	35-44	45+	Full-time	Part-time
Wtd base	4001	1623	2378	1253	643	546	751	809	1593	2218
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Present written work or data	44	42	46	46	47	49	44	37	50	41
Research Topics	41	41	41	48	48	47	34	27	51	34
Create and deliver presentations	25	25	25	29	31	25	23	16	32	20
Create graphics, music, photos or video	15	18	12	19	18	14	10	10	20	11
Revise and follow up on things learned in taught sessions	24	27	22	28	23	28	21	20	28	23
Take a computer-based test or a quiz set by the tutor	15	19	12	15	16	18	13	14	16	14
Submit assignments or work to tutor	21	22	20	25	27	23	13	14	27	16
Organise and manage	22	23	22	26	25	23	20	16	26	20

college workload										
Contact lecturer/tutor with queries	12	12	12	12	15	16	11	7	13	11
Work with other students on a group project – using a computer in a face-to-face meeting; collaborating with other learners through email or over the Internet	11	12	10	15	16	8	6	6	15	8
Communicate with other learners about the course	13	13	13	17	17	12	10	8	17	11
Catch up on sessions missed	10	11	10	14	14	11	8	5	14	8

Usage of computers by mode of study

As would be expected, analysis of computer usage by mode of study reveals strong correlations with the age of the learner, as younger learners (particularly those aged 16-18) were much more likely to be on a full-time course. As the table above shows, learners on full-time courses have a greater tendency to be using computers 'all the time' for a range of tasks compared with part-time learners. In particular, there were significant differences for:

- Researching topics (51% compared with 34%);
- Creating and delivering presentations (32% compared with 20%);
- Submitting assignments or work to tutors (27% compared with 16%)

These differences could also be related to tutor required usage of computers on full-time courses, as full-time learners were more likely to say they were using computers on their course because they were directed to by their tutor (69% compared with 58% of those on part-time courses). There were also a high proportion of full-time learners stating that using computers were essential to the course (70% compared with 56% of part-time learners).

Usage of computers by gender

The data reveals some marked differences in the way men and women were using IT and computers. Women were more likely than men to use Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for purposes such as presenting written work or data (46% said 'all the time' compared with 42%). In contrast, men were more likely to be using it for purposes such as:

- creating graphics, music, photos and video (18% said 'all the time' compared with 12% of women);
- revising and following up on what has been learnt in lessons (27% said 'all the time' compared with 23% of women);
- taking a computer based test or quiz set by the tutor (19% said 'all the time' compared with 12% of women);

The differences in usage between men and women were possibly related to the different subjects they tended to study. The research showed that men were more likely than women to be studying subjects that required more usage of IT and computers such as Information and Communication Technology (20% compared with 17% of women) and Engineering, Technology and Manufacturing (18% compared with 1% of women). In contrast, women were more likely to be studying Health, Social Care and Public Services (24% compared with 7% of men), English (17% compared with 11% of men) and hairdressing and beauty therapy (7% compared to less than 1% of men) that require learners to use IT and computers for different purposes.

Usage of computers by age

Overall, younger learners were more likely to be making use of IT and computers for a range of purposes compared with learners aged 35+. Learners aged under 35 were using IT and computers 'all the time' for the following tasks:

- *researching topics* (48% of under 35s compared to 34% of learners aged 35-44 and 27% of learners aged 45+).
- *creating graphics, music, photos and video* (19% of 16-18 year olds compared with 10% of learners aged 35 or more).
- *submitting assignments* (27% of 19-24 year olds compared with 14% of learners aged 35+)

- *catching up on sessions they had missed* (14% of under 25s compared with 8% of 35-44 year olds and 5% of learners aged 45+)
- *communicating with other learners about the course* (17% of under 25s compared with 10% of 35-44 and 8% of learners aged 45+)
- *collaborating with other learners about the course* (16% of 19-24 year olds were using IT 'all the time' compared with 6% of learners aged 35+)

These findings suggest that learners aged 35+ were at a disadvantage as they were not using IT as much as younger learners for research, to submit assignments or to catch up on missed sessions. They were also not interacting or collaborating with other students as much as younger learners. The findings also suggest they were not embracing new technology (for example using IT to create graphics, music, photos or videos) as much as their younger counterparts. This could be related to the types of course older learners were studying as 25-44 year olds were less likely to be studying Visual and Performing Arts and Media (3% compared with 18% of 16-18 year olds).

The next sections examine the usage of information technology and computers by subject studied, ethnicity and computer ownership.

Frequency of using information technology and computers 'all the time' to carry out tasks, by disability, learning difficulty and ethnicity

Wtd Base: All respondents (4001)		Disability and learning difficulty		Ethnicity			
% stating 'all the time'	Total	Disability	Learning difficulty	White	Asian	Black	Mixed
Wtd base	4001	277	261	3311	280	233	**85
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Present written work or data	44	50	40	44	44	51	46
Research Topics	41	43	40	40	45	49	52
Create and deliver presentations	25	30	27	25	28	29	24
Create graphics, music, photos or video	15	19	17	14	15	15	20
Revise and follow up on things learned in taught sessions	24	29	24	24	23	35	32
Take a computer-based test or a quiz set by the	15	19	14	15	14	22	18

tutor							
Submit assignments or work to tutor	21	23	21	20	28	25	29
Organise and manage college workload	22	29	22	22	28	28	20
Contact lecturer/tutor with queries	12	12	14	12	14	18	12
Work with other students on a group project – using a computer in a face-to-face meeting; collaborating with other learners through email or over the Internet	11	14	17	9	17	17	20
Communicate with other learners about the course	13	16	18	12	21	19	16
Catch up on sessions missed	10	15	15	10	13	18	10

 ** Note: double star denotes small base sizes (less than 100)

Usage of computers by subject studied

Learners studying the following subjects were more likely than those studying other subjects to be using IT to research topics:

- Visual and performing arts and media (48% said 'all the time')
- Hospitality, Sports, Leisure and travel (48% said 'all the time')
- Business, administration, management and professional (47% said 'all the time');
- Health, Social care and public services (46% said 'all the time')
- Humanities (44% said 'all the time')
- Mathematics and Science (42% said 'all the time')

Additionally, it was found that:

- Learners studying Retailing, Customer Service and Transportation and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) were more likely than

other learners to be creating presentations using IT (39% and 28% said 'all the time' respectively).

- Those studying ICT and engineering related subjects were the more likely than learners studying other subjects to have taken a computer based test or quiz set by the teacher (25% and 22% said 'all the time' respectively).

- Learners studying ICT and Science and Mathematics were the most likely to use computers 'all the time' to revise and follow up on what they had learnt in lessons (35% and 29% respectively).

- A third of learners studying ICT (32%) used computers to organise and manage their college workload 'all the time'.

Usage of computers by ethnicity

There were also considerable differences between ethnic minority groups and white learners in the way they were using IT and computers. Ethnic minority learners were more likely than white learners to be making use of IT and computers 'all the time' for the following purposes:

- *researching topics* (half of black learners (49%) and mixed ethnicity learners (52%) compared with 40% of white learners).

- *revising and following up on what they had learnt in lessons* (a third of black learners (35%) compared with 24% of white learners).

- *submitting assignments to tutors* (28% of Asian learners and 29% of mixed ethnicity compared with 20% of white learners).

- *organising and managing workload* (28% of black and Asian learners compared with 22% of white learners).

- *communicating with other learners about the course* (a fifth of Asian learners (21%) and black learners (19%) compared with 12% of white learners).

These findings suggest that white learners were using a computer to research topics and submit work to tutors less frequently than learners from other ethnic groups. They were also communicating and collaborating with other learners less often than learners from ethnic minorities about their course.

However, it should be recognised that some ethnic groups were more likely to be studying subjects which tended to utilise computers more often. In particular, a significantly higher proportion of Asian and Black learners were studying ICT (23% of Asian learners and 24% of Black learners compared with 17% of White learners) or Science and Mathematics (16% of Asian learners and 14% of Black learners compared with 9% of White learners).

Usage of computers by computer ownership and expertise

Learners who used a computer at home were more likely than those who did not to use IT to present written work or data (48% said 'all the time' compared with 27%)

and create and deliver presentations (27% said 'all the time' compared with 16%). They were also more likely to submit assignments to tutors (22% said 'all the time' compared with 16%) and contact their tutor with queries (13% said 'all the time' compared with 8%).

As might be expected, those who considered themselves to be very confident using computers were much more likely to be using IT for a range of purposes and the frequency of usage declined gradually for those describing themselves as fairly confident, ok for basic tasks and not confident at all.

Interestingly, learners with learning difficulties had a greater tendency to be collaborating with other learners, either via the internet or email, compared with learners who did not (17% compared with 10%).

Reasons for never using Information Communication Technology and computers at college

Learners who stated that they never used computers for each purpose were asked why this was the case. Of those who never used computers for the following tasks, half or more stated that it was because their tutor doesn't require them to do so:

- Take a computer-based test or a quiz set by the tutor (66%)
- Create and deliver presentations (59%)
- Present written work or data (58%)
- Create graphics, music, photos or video (50%)
- Submit assignments or work to tutor (50%)
- Work with other students on a group project (50%)

Reasons for never using Information Technology and computers for a range of tasks

Wtd Base: All respondents who never use computers for range of tasks	Wtd Base	Tutor doesn't require it	Don't have access to facilities	Don't know how to	Don't think it's important	Other reason
		%	%	%	%	%
Present written work or data	297	58	3	5	4	26
Research Topics	238	49	7	7	10	24
Create and deliver presentations	639	59	2	8	6	23
Create graphics, music, photos or video	1072	50	2	11	11	23

Revise and follow up on things learned in taught sessions	499	35	3	4	12	42
Take a computer-based test or a quiz set by the tutor	914	66	2	2	5	21
Submit assignments or work to tutor	1029	50	3	3	5	37
Organise and manage college workload	1014	31	1	4	16	42
Contact lecturer/tutor with queries	1224	30	5	4	13	46
Work with other students on a group project – using a computer in a face-to-face meeting; collaborating with other learners through email or over the Internet	1160	50	1	2	7	36
Communicate with other learners about the course	1247	23	3	4	17	49
Catch up on sessions missed	1297	25	7	4	8	55

For the majority of tasks, 16-18 year olds were significantly *less* likely to say that they never used computers because their tutor doesn't require them to do this, compared with other age groups. This would make sense, as this age group were the most likely to say they used computers because their tutor directed them to do so. Learners aged 25+ were significantly more likely than 16-18 year olds to say their tutor did not require them to do this for the following tasks:

- Present written work or data (59% compared to 43%)
- Revise and follow up on things learned in taught sessions (40% compared to 21%)
- Organise and manage college workload (35% compared to 21%)
- Contact lecturer/tutor with queries (32% compared to 26%)
- Work with other students (52% compared to 41%)

- Communicate with other learners about the course (29% compared to 15%)
- Catch up on sessions missed (52% compared to 41%)

Additionally, it was found that 17% of learners who never used a computer to communicate with other learners and 16% of those who never used a computer to organise and manage their college workload did not consider it important to do so.

Use of e-learning

Virtual Learning Environments

The survey covered whether learners had to use a 'virtual learning environment' or 'learning platform' as part of their course. Over a quarter of learners (27%) said they were required to use a virtual learning environment as part of their course, whilst almost two-thirds (69%) said they did not.

Use of virtual learning environment
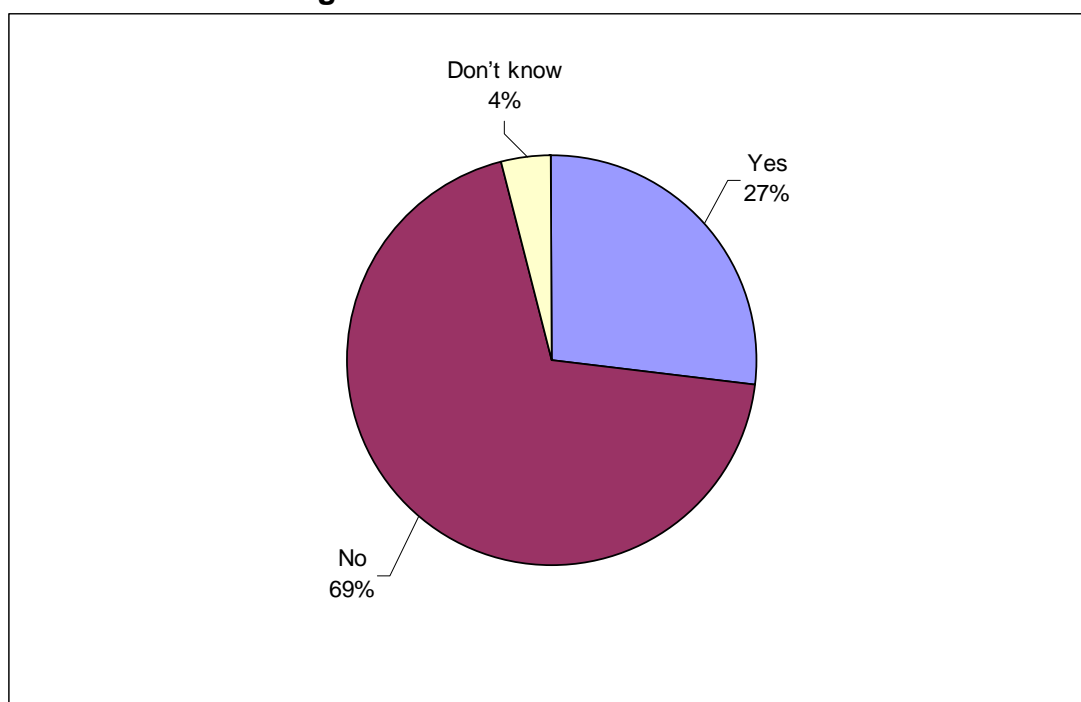
Wtd Base: all respondents (4001)

Learners at colleges classified as e-enabled were more likely to use a virtual learning environment than those classified otherwise (34% compared with 27% of learners overall), as were learners based at colleges in the North East of England (35%).

Learners studying Science and Mathematics courses (43%), Humanities (38%), Hospitality related subjects (37%) and Business courses (36%) were the most likely to be required to use a virtual learning environment.

Men were more likely than women to be using a virtual learning environment (32% and 24% respectively) as were learners aged 16-18 (40% compared with 16% of 35-44 year olds and 11% of learners aged 45+). However, it should be considered that learners aged 16-18 were much more likely than older learners to be studying Science and Mathematics (17% compared with 10% overall), Hospitality (11% compared with 6% overall), and Humanities (9% compared with 5% overall). Similarly, whilst Asian learners were just over 10% more likely to be using a virtual learning environment compared with white learners (37% compared with 26%), they were also more likely than White learners to be studying Business (17% compared with 8% of white learners) or Science and Mathematics (16% compared with 9% of white learners).

There were also differences by mode of study with full-time learners much more likely to be using a virtual learning environment (41%) compared with part-time learners (18%).

Required use of virtual learning environment as part of course by gender and age and mode of study

Wtd Base: All respondents (4001)		Gender		Age					Mode of study	
	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25-34	35-44	45+	Full-time	Part-time
Wtd base	4001	1623	2378	1253	643	546	751	809	1593	2218
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	27	32	24	40	34	27	16	11	41	18
No	69	65	72	57	62	67	79	85	55	78
Don't know	4	3	5	3	4	6	5	4	4	4

As might be expected those describing themselves as very confident with computers were more likely to be using a virtual learning environment than those who considered themselves to be not at all confident (32% and 10% respectively). Those with computers at home also had a greater tendency than those who did not to be using a virtual learning environment (29% compared with 15%). Interestingly, those with learning difficulties were more likely to be using a learning platform than those who did not (32% and 27% respectively).

Among those that had used a virtual learning environment, the survey covered whether they had used it for any of the following tasks:

- To read messages from your tutor(s) about the course
- To access resources about the subject that you're studying (e.g. tutor's notes and handouts; video clips)
- To send messages to other learners on your course
- To take tests or quizzes
- To submit assignments to your tutor
- To check your progress on your course (e.g. the marks you've obtained so far)

The following chart shows the level of usage for each of these tasks

Use of virtual learning environment for the following tasks

% have actually done

Task	%
Access resources about subject studied	86
Read messages from tutor about the course	66
Take tests or quizzes	53
Check progress on course	48
Submit assignments to tutor	47
Send messages to other learners on your course	35
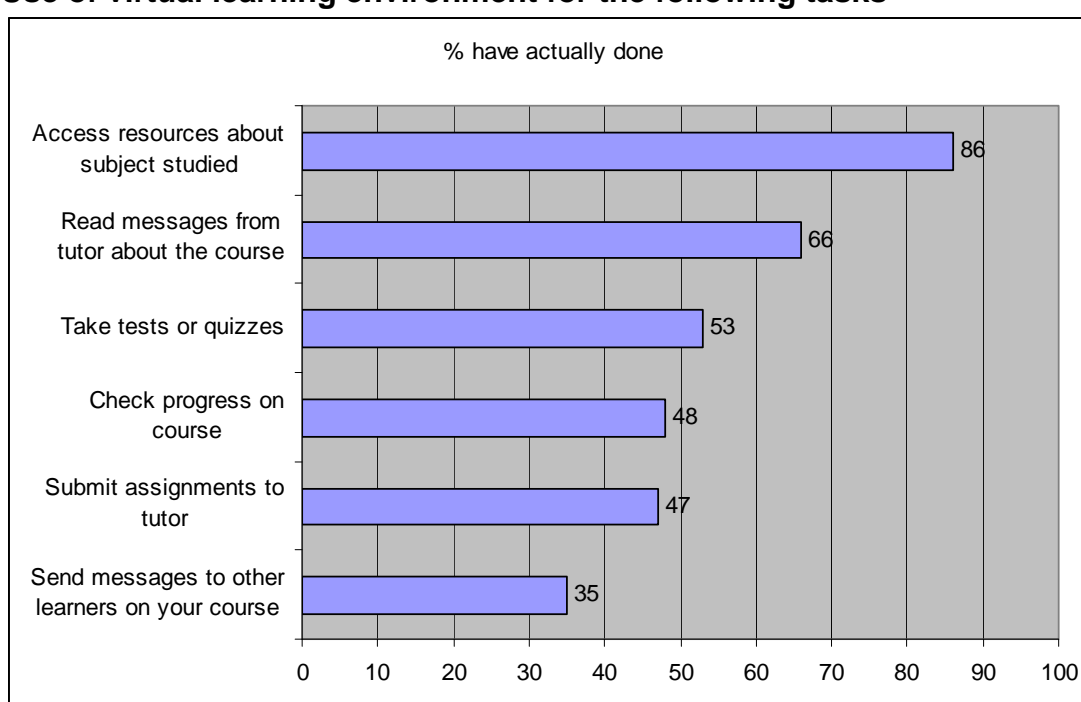
Wtd Base: All respondents required to use a virtual learning environment (1080)

The main reason learners were using a virtual learning environment was to access resources about the subject they were studying (86%). Two-thirds (66%) of learners had used it to read messages from their tutor about the course. Around half had used it to take tests or quizzes (53%), check their progress on the course (49%) or submit assignments to their tutor (48%). A much lower proportion (35%) had used a virtual learning environment to send messages to other learners on their course. This figure may be lower because there were other means of sending messages to other learners, for example via email or mobile phones. A small proportion of learners (4%) answered don't know when asked which tasks they were using the virtual learning environment for, suggesting that although they were required to use one, they had not actually done so.

Use of virtual learning environment for the following tasks, by gender and age and mode of study

Wtd Base: All respondents required to use a virtual learning environment (1080)		Gender		Age					Mode of study	
	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25-34	35-44	45+	Full-time	Part-time
Wtd base	1080	519	561	503	221	**148	**122	**87	650	391
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Read messages from tutor about the course	66	66	67	67	72	67	55	61	67	66
Access resources about subject studied	86	87	86	90	84	83	84	84	87	85
Send messages to other learners on your course	35	34	36	36	38	36	27	32	37	32
Take tests or quizzes	53	57	50	57	50	50	47	56	55	48
Submit assignments to tutor	47	47	46	49	50	40	36	48	50	38
Check progress on course	48	53	43	51	47	50	32	49	51	41

** Note: double star denotes small base sizes (less than 100)

More detailed analysis of learning platform usage revealed:

- men were slightly more likely than women to have taken a test or quiz using a learning platform (57% compared with 50%)

- more younger learners were using it to check their progress than older learners (51% of 16-18 year olds compared with 43% of learners aged 25+).
- younger learners were more likely to be accessing resources about their course than their older counterparts (90% compared with 83% of learners aged 25+).

These findings again demonstrate that older learners were not participating as fully as younger learners in new technology and therefore were not benefiting as much from its potential to support learning.

Although a much greater proportion of full-time learners compared with part-time learners were required to use a virtual learning environment, among those using them, the patterns of usage were very similar. The only exceptions were submitting assignments and checking progress on course, where full-time users were significantly more likely to be using them for these tasks.

Analysis of usage of virtual learning environments by ethnicity reveals that white learners were also participating less fully:

- Two-thirds (65%) of black learners had used it to submit assignments compared to 43% of white learners
- almost half of Asian and black learners (45%) had used it to send messages to other learners compared with a third (33%) of white learners.

Six out of ten (60%) of virtual learning platform users who used a computer at home said they had accessed the learning platform at home. Younger learners aged 16-18 were less likely to be accessing the platform from home than older learners (55% compared with 65%).

Virtual learning environment users were asked how useful they considered it to be in helping them do their course:

- Just under half of learners (46%) using a learning platform thought it was 'very helpful', while a further 44% described it as 'moderately helpful'.
- Only 8% thought the learning platform was 'not very helpful' and only 1% said it was not helpful at all.

The table below shows this question broken down by gender, age group and mode of study.

Usefulness of virtual learning environment in helping to do your course by gender and age and mode of study

Wtd Base: All respondents required to use a virtual learning environment (1080)		Gender		Age					Mode of study	
	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25-34	35-44	45+	Full-time	Part-time
Wtd base	1080	519	561	503	221	**148	**122	**87	650	391
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very helpful	46	48	43	39	51	52	54	50	40	55
Moderately helpful	44	42	45	54	38	32	30	42	51	33
Not very helpful	8	7	9	7	7	12	9	7	7	9
Not at all helpful	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	-	1	1
Don't know	2	2	1	-	2	13	10	7	1	3

** Note: double star denotes small base sizes (less than 100)

Those studying ICT and engineering related subjects (both 50%), Science and Maths (46%) were more inclined to describe the learning platform as 'very helpful' whilst those studying Humanities and Visual Arts and Media courses were less likely to say they were very helpful (35% among learners of subjects).

Learners aged 19+ were more likely than younger learners to say the learning platform was 'very helpful' whilst 16-18 year olds were more likely to say the learning platform was 'moderately helpful', resulting in a high overall helpful score of 92% (compared with 86% of learners aged 25+). This difference may be because younger learner were more used to using ICT and had higher expectations of VLEs than older learners.

There was also some differences by mode of study with part-time learners more likely than full-time learners to say it was 'very helpful' (55% compared with 40%) and full-time learners more likely to say 'moderately helpful' (51% compared with 33%). Again, this could be related to the age profile of learners studying full and part-time courses as younger learners were more likely to be studying full-time courses and tended to be less likely to say VLEs were very helpful.

White learners were also less inclined to describe it as 'very helpful' than learners in some ethnic minorities (45% compared to 58% of black learners). Learners at 'e-enabled' colleges were more likely than those at 'enthusiastic' colleges to think the learning platforms were 'very helpful' (52% compared with 41%).

E-portfolios/computer-based assessment

This section covers whether learners had used an e-portfolio as part of their course. Overall, a fifth of learners (20%) were required to use an e-portfolio on their course, while just over three-quarters (77%) did not.

Use of e-portfolio in your course
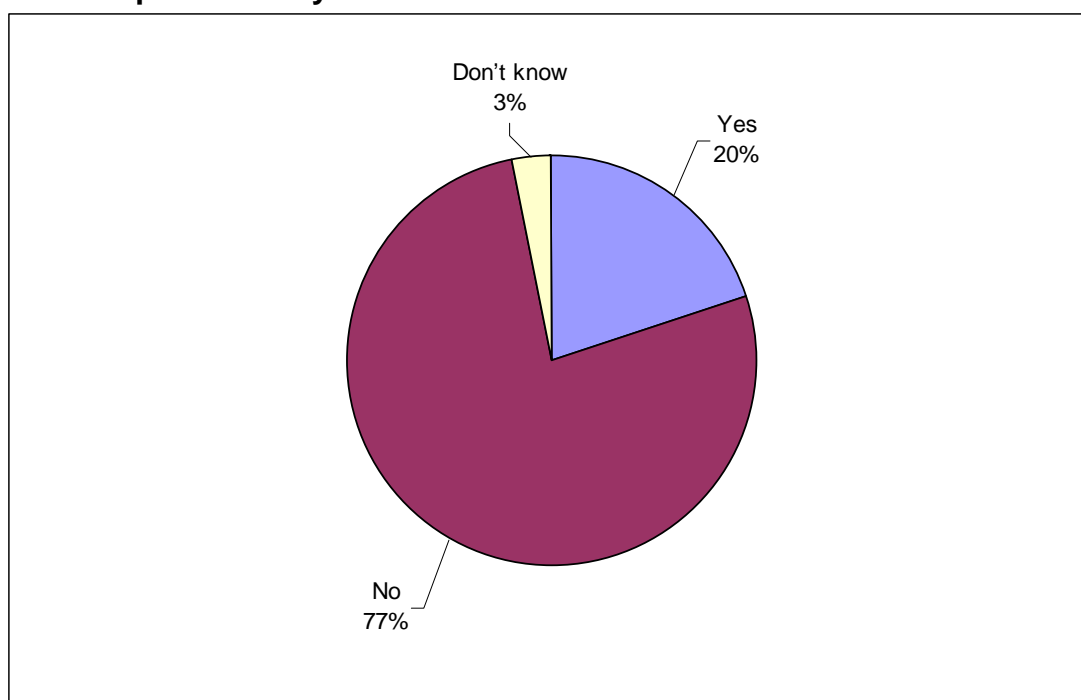
Wtd Base: all respondents (4001)

Learners on Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy courses (31%) and Engineering, Technology and Manufacturing courses (28%) were more particularly likely to use an e-portfolio compared with those studying other subjects.

Men were more likely than women to be using an e-portfolio (25% compared with 17%) as were younger learners (30% of 16-18 year olds compared with 13% of learners aged 25-34). A larger proportion of learners from ethnic minorities were using an e-portfolio compared with their white counterparts (31% of black learners compared with 19% of white learners).

Use of e-portfolio in your course by gender, age, whether learner has a disability and mode of study

Wtd Base: All respondents (4001)		Gender		Age					Disability		Mode of study	
	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25-34	35-44	45+	Yes	No	Full-time	Part-time
Wtd base	4001	1623	2378	1253	643	546	751	809	277	3720	1593	2218
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	20	25	17	30	24	13	11	15	27	20	29	14
No	77	72	80	65	73	84	87	83	71	77	67	84
Don't know	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	1	2	3	4	2

There was also a difference between full-time and part-time learners (29% of full-time learners were using an e-portfolio compared with 14% of part-time learners). Again, this correlates with age as younger learners were more likely to be studying full-time.

Learners with a disability had a greater likelihood of using an e-portfolio than those that did not (27% and 20% respectively) and the same trend existed among those with learning difficulties (30% used an e-portfolio compared with 20% with no learning difficulty).

The survey also covered whether the e-portfolio counted towards the final mark of the course. Among those using an e-portfolio, over three quarters (77%) said that their e-portfolio did count towards the final mark on their course. Learners studying the following subjects were more likely to say this was the case:

- Hairdressing and beauty therapy (89%)
- Construction (85%)
- Science and Mathematics (82%)
- Engineering, technology and manufacturing (82%)

There was no difference between mode of study. A larger proportion of learners with a disability stated that their e-portfolio contributed towards their final mark (86% compared with 75% among those with no disability).

In terms of the benefits of using an e-portfolio:

- Nine out of ten learners (89%) agreed that their e-portfolio helps them to see how well they were meeting their course objectives
- 86% agreed that their e-portfolio helps them to plan how to improve the quality of their work

Benefits of using an e-portfolio by gender, age and whether learner has a disability

Wtd Base: All respondents who use an e-portfolio (814)		Gender		Age					Disability	
% saying 'agree/ agree strongly'	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25-34	35-44	45+	Yes	No
Wtd base	814	412	402	381	155	**73	**79	**125	**76	737
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Helps me see how well I am meeting course objectives	90	90	89	90	90	97	87	85	83	90
Helps me plan how to improve the quality of my work	86	86	86	87	90	84	81	83	87	86

** Note: double star denotes small base sizes (less than 100)

Women were more inclined to agree strongly compared with men that their e-portfolio helped them to see how well they were meeting their course objectives (26% compared with 19%). The same trend existed for helping them to plan how to improve the quality of their work with 21% of women agreeing strongly compared with 16% of men.

Notably, learners aged 25-34 were more likely than any other group to agree the e-portfolio helps them see how well they are meeting their course objectives (81% compared with 68% of 16-18 year olds).

There were no differences between perceived benefits among those studying full-time or part-time.

Receiving electronic feedback from tutors

Overall, over a quarter (27%) of all learners had received feedback from their tutor electronically. Feedback was more likely to have been given to learners studying business related subjects (36%), humanities (36%), science and maths (35%), hospitality (35%) and ICT (31%).

Whether received electronic feedback from tutor or taken a computer based test or quiz
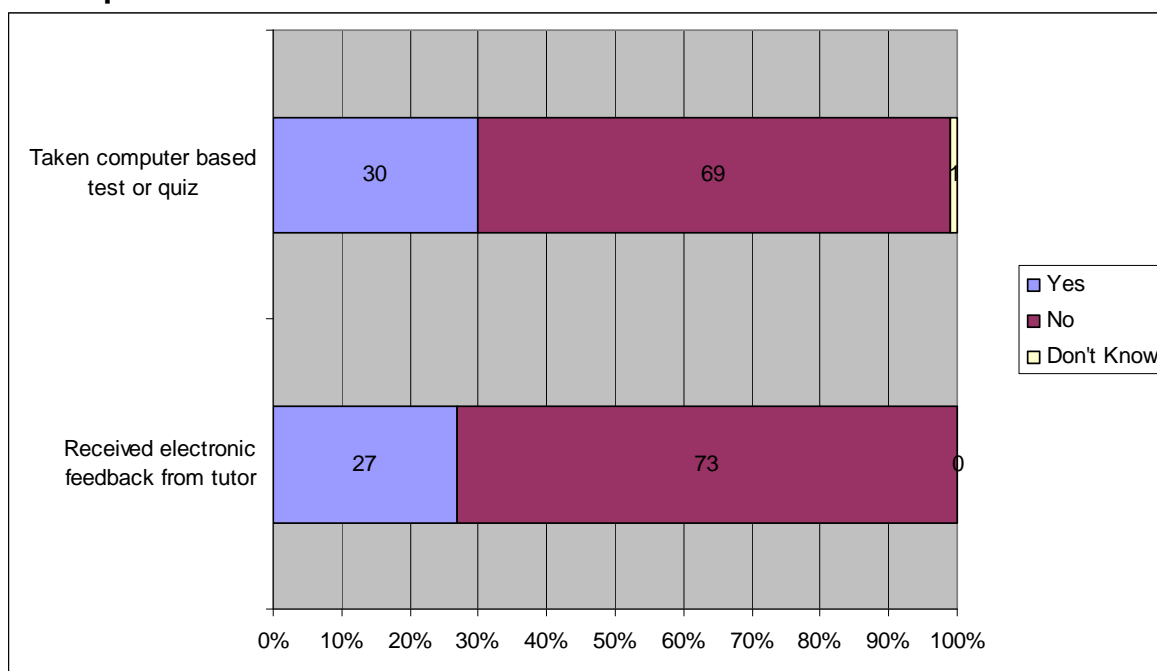
Wtd Base: All respondents (4001)

Further analysis revealed:

- Men were slightly more likely than women to have received electronic feedback (29% and 25% respectively);
- Younger learners were more likely to have received electronic feedback than older learners (35% of 16-18 year olds compared with 23% of learners aged 25-44 and 16% of learners aged 45+).
- A larger proportion of Asian and black learners (35% and 33% respectively) had received feedback electronically compared with white learners (25%).
- Learners on full-time courses were more likely than those on part-time courses to be receiving electronic feedback from their tutor (35% compared with 21%)

Whether received electronic feedback from tutor or taken a computer based quiz or test, by gender and age and mode of study

Wtd Base: All respondents (4001)		Gender		Age					Mode of study	
% saying Yes	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25-34	35-44	45+	Full-time	Part-time
	4001	1623	2378	1253	643	546	751	809	1593	2218
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Received electronic feedback from tutor	27	29	25	35	33	23	23	16	35	21
Taken computer based test or quiz that counts towards the final mark	30	38	25	33	30	30	28	28	33	27

The research revealed differences existed between those with a computer at home compared with those who did not (29% and 16% respectively) and learners who described themselves as very confident with computers (34%) compared with those who considered themselves not confident at all (15%). These findings suggest that feedback is more likely to be given to those who were particularly computer literate, which suggests they have sought tutors to provide them with feedback electronically while other learners have not.

Taking a computer based quiz or test that counts towards the final mark

Just under a third of all learners (30%) had taken part in a computer based test or quiz that counted towards their final mark. Again, learners studying the same subjects as those who had received electronic feedback were more likely to say that this was the case.

The same trends existed across age and gender with men more likely than women to have taken part in a computer based quiz or test (38% and 25% respectively) as well as younger learners (33% of 16-18 year olds compared with 29% of learners aged 25+). Again, those with a computer at home or those more confident with computers were more likely to have taken part in a computer based test or quiz.

A third of learners taking full-time courses (33%) had taken a computer based quiz or test that counts towards their final mark compared with a quarter of part-time learners (27%) which is again closely correlated with age and subject studied.

Other use of technology at college

Laptop computers

Around four out of ten learners (39%) were found to have their own laptop computer or a handheld computer/personal digital assistant (PDA). Learners aged 45+ were less likely to own a laptop than other learners (34% compared with 41% of younger learners). There were no differences by mode of study.

However, the survey found that very few learners took their laptop computers into college to use in their studies on a regular basis (just 8% answering once a week or more). Eight out of ten (82%) stated that they never took their laptop to college, while a further 10% took it to college occasionally (once a month or less).

Frequency of taking laptop computers / PDA into college
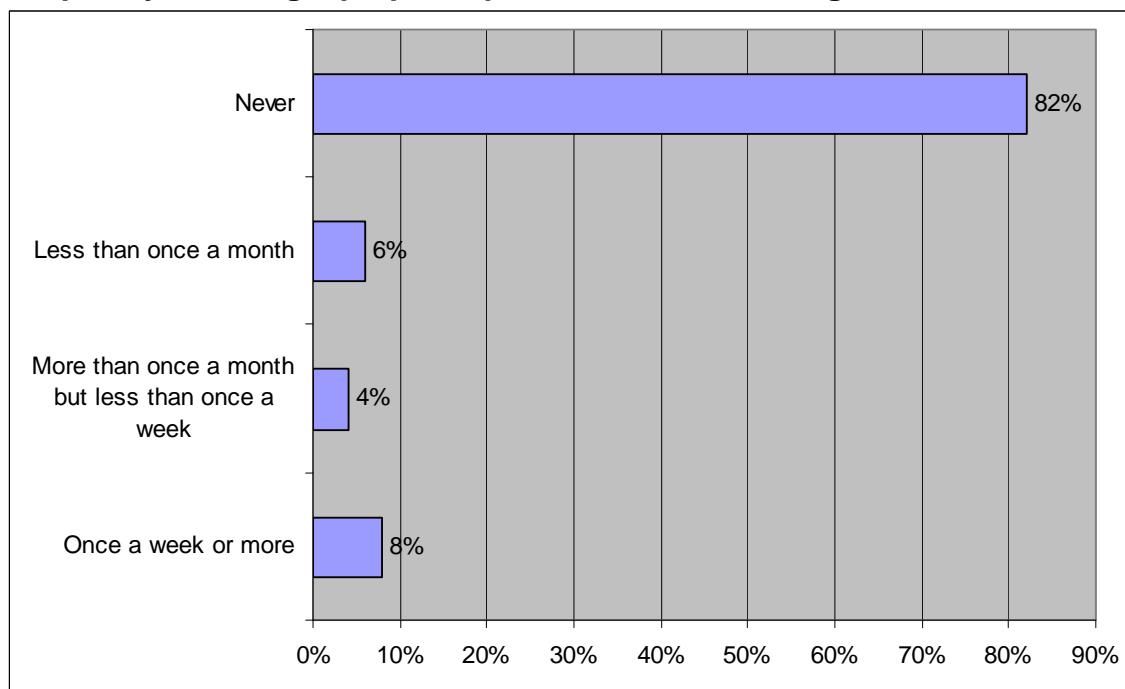
Wtd Base: all respondents who have their own laptop/ PDA (1544)

Further analysis revealed:

- Men were more likely than women to take their laptops or PDAs into college once a week (11% compared with 5%)
- Women were more likely to state they never took their laptops/ PDAs to college (86% compared with 77% of men).

- 15% of 19-24 year olds took their laptops or PDAs into college once a week or more compared with 8% of 16-18 year olds and 5% of learners aged 25+.

There was no differences by mode of study.

Frequency of taking laptop computers / PDA into college by gender and age

Wtd Base: All respondents who have their own laptop/ PDA (1544)		Gender		Age				
	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25-34	35-44	45+
Wtd base	1544	638	906	498	262	211	302	272
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Once a week or more	8	11	5	8	15	10	2	5
More than once a month but less than once a week	4	4	4	3	6	4	5	3
Less than once a month	6	7	5	6	7	5	6	4
Never	82	77	86	83	72	81	86	89

Among learners who owned a laptop or PDA, only 13% used it to connect to the college computer network. Learners aged 16-18 were more likely to do this than older learners (17% compared with 11% aged 19 or older). Those studying full-time were also more likely to connect to the college computer network than part-time learners (18% compared with 10%).

Among those that did connect to the network, the majority (61%) connected their computer to the network wirelessly. Again, younger learners were much more likely to do this than older learners (73% of 16-18 year olds compared with 53% of learners aged 25+).

Mobile phones

Learners were asked for which of the following they have used a mobile phone on their course for:

- To send a text message to your tutor on an administrative issue (e.g. to say you can't attend the session today)

- To send a text message to your tutor about a subject you're studying on your course
- To send a text message to another learner about something you're studying on your course

Use of mobile phones for the following tasks
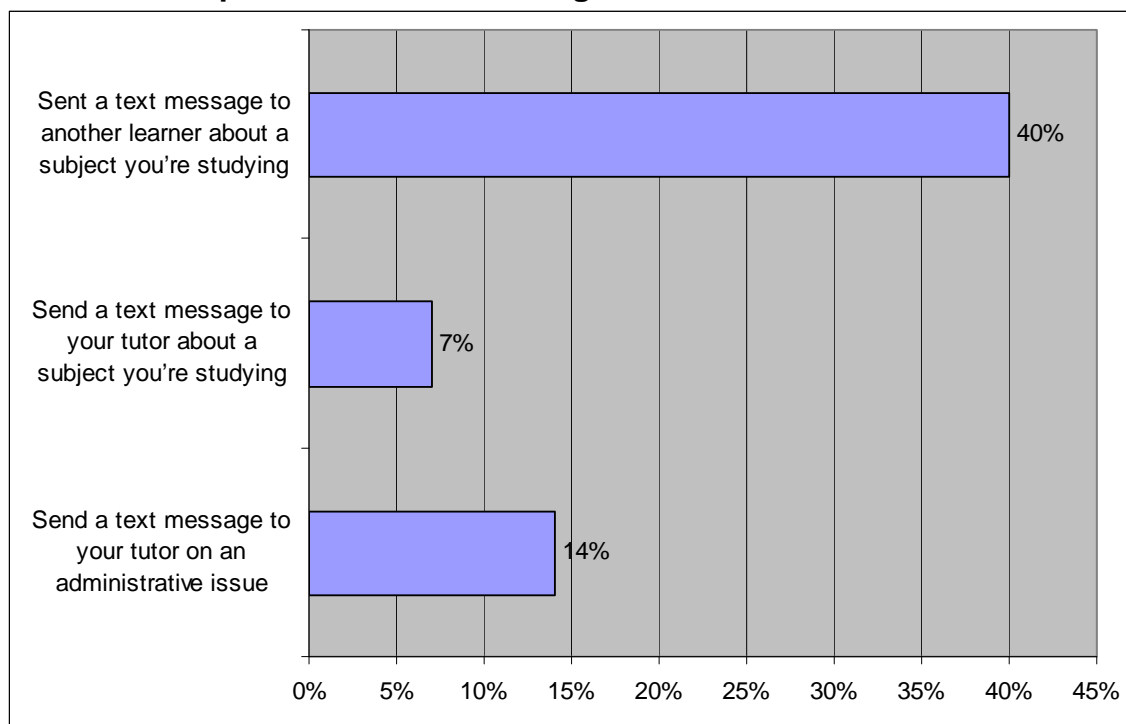
Wtd base: all respondents (4001)

As might be expected, learners were much more likely to have sent a text message to another learner about a subject they were studying on their course than they were to text a tutor (40% had sent a text to another learner). However, 14% had sent a text message to a tutor on an administrative issue, for example, to say they could not attend a session, while 7% had sent a text to a tutor about a subject they were studying on their course.

- Learners aged between 19-24 years were most likely to have sent a text message to their tutor on an administrative issue (20% compared to 12% of learners aged 25-44 and 7% aged 45+) or about a subject they were studying on their course (9% compared to 6% in other age groups)
- Younger learners were more likely to have sent a text to another learner (56% of 16-18 year olds and 58% of 19-24 year olds compared with 38% of 25-34 year olds, 30% of 35-44 year olds and only 13% of over 45 year olds).
- Learners with a computer at home were more likely than those with no home computer to have sent a text to a tutor about an administrative matter (14% compared with 10%) or sent a text to another learner (44% compared with 20%).

Use of mobile phones for the following tasks by gender, age, whether learner has a disability and mode of study

Wtd Base: All respondents (4001)		Gender		Age				
	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25-34	35-44	45+
Wtd base	4001	1623	2378	1253	643	546	751	809
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Send a text message to your tutor on an administrative issue	14	13	14	15	20	12	13	7
Send a text message to your tutor about a subject you're studying	7	7	7	6	9	9	7	4
Sent a text message to another learner about a subject you're studying	40	39	41	56	58	38	30	13

- Learners with a disability were more likely to have sent a text to another learner than those with no disability (41% and 33% respectively).
- Learners studying full-time were more likely than part-time learners to be send texts to other learners (57% compared with 29%) and send a text to a tutor about an administrative matter (17% and 12%).

Use of mobile phones for the following tasks by disability and mode of study

		Disability		Mode of study	
	Total	Yes	No	Full-time	Part-time
Wtd base	4001	277	3720	1593	2218
	%	%	%	%	%
Send a text message to your tutor on an administrative issue	14	12	14	17	12
Send a text message to your tutor about a	7	7	7	7	7

subject you're studying					
Sent a text message to another learner about a subject you're studying	40	33	41	57	29

Summary

- Around two-thirds of learners (62%) agreed that it was essential to use a computer to learn about their subject. Older learners were more likely to agree strongly (possibly related to high proportion of older learners on short term IT courses) whilst younger learners were more likely to agree.

- Approximately six in ten learners (62%) agreed that when they used computers to study on their course it was because they had been directed to do so by their tutor (14% agreed strongly).

- Around seven in ten learners were required by their tutors to use a computer a lot or some of the time to produce assignments (71%) and/or to learn about the subject being studied (69%). They were less likely to be required to use computers to communicate with their tutor or work with other learners.

- The majority of learners (42%) used computers more often in their own time than in timetabled classes. A quarter (26%) used computers more often in timetabled classes whilst 28% used computers equally in their own time and timetabled classes. Only learners studying ICT used computers more often in timetabled classes (41%).

- Computers were used most frequently for presenting written work or data (44% said 'all the time' and 38% said 'occasionally') and researching topics (41% said 'all the time' and 45% said 'occasionally')

- Computers were least likely to be used to catch up with sessions missed (32% said 'never'), communicating with the tutor or other learners (31% said 'never') or participating in group projects (29% said 'never')

- Around a quarter of learners (27%) were using virtual learning environments and the main reason for using was to access resources about the subject studied (mentioned by 86%)

- Only a fifth of learners (20%) were using e-portfolios. Almost 9 out of ten of users agreed (89%) it helped them see if they were meeting their course objectives and 86% agreed it helped improve the quality of their work.

- Around a quarter of learners (27%) had received electronic feedback from their tutor and a similar proportion (30%) had taken a computer based test that contributed to their final mark.

- Men, learners aged 16-18 and ethnic minority learners were more likely than other learners to be using computers for a range of purposes, using a virtual learning environment or an e-portfolio.

- Almost four out of ten learners (39%) had their own laptop or PDA into college but only 8% took it to college once a week or more.
- Four out of ten learners (40%) had sent a text to another learner about their subject but only 14% had sent a text to a tutor on an administrative issue and only 7% had sent a text to a tutor about the subject there were studying.

Perceived impact of technology on learning

This chapter examines learners' perceptions of the impact of technology on their learning. Learners were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:

- I understand the subject that I'm studying better because of the way that computers are used on my course
- I do not rely on computers or information technology to keep in touch with other learners on the course
- Because of the way that computers are used in my course, I've got more choice as to where and when I can study
- I learn less well in classes when the tutor uses computer technology to teach the subject
- I prefer to read from a printed source such as a book or a handout rather than from a computer screen
- The way that computers are used on my course motivates me to study
- I learn better through face-to-face contact with tutors and other learners than by using a computer
- I believe that I do better in my assessments as a result of using computers for my learning
- I prefer learning through a variety of media (for example, text, video, audio) than by just reading books or listening to the tutor

Perceived impact of technology on learning

Statement	% Agree	% Agree strongly	Total
I learn better through face-to-face contact than by using a computer	61	13	74
I prefer learning through a variety of media than just reading books or listening to the tutor	62	11	74
Because computers are used in my course, I've got more choice as to where and when I can study	56	10	66
I do better in my assessments as a result of using computers for my learning	54	11	65
I understand the subject better because of the way computers are used on my course	45	14	59
I don't rely on computers or IT to keep in touch with other learners	46	9	55
The way that computers are used on my course motivates me	48	6	53
I prefer to read from a a book or a handout than a computer screen	43	9	53
I learn less well in classes when teacher uses computers to teach	25	3	28

Wtd Base: all respondents (4001)

Overall, learners were positive about using computers and recognised the benefits. Almost three quarters of learners (74%) agreed or agreed strongly that they preferred to learn through a variety of media than just reading books or listening to the tutor and around two-thirds of learners felt they did better in assessments as a result of using computers (65%). A similar proportion (66%) said because of the way that computers were used on their course, they have more choices about where and when they can study. In addition, almost six out of ten (59%) were in agreement that they understood their subject better because of the way that computers were used on their course and only 28% felt they learnt *less well* when computers were used.

Despite this, many learners preferred traditional teaching methods and face-to-face contact rather than the use of computers. Almost three-quarters of learners (74%) said they learn better through face-to-face contact with tutors and other learners and over half of learners (53%) agreed that they preferred to read from a book or handout rather than a computer screen. In addition, only half of learners (53%) stated that using computers on their course motivated them to study and a similar proportion (55%) said they *did not* rely on computers to keep in touch with other learners on their course.

Therefore, although computers were not necessarily seen as a replacement for face-to-face contact and printed material, there was widespread recognition that they provided learners with more choice, a better understanding of the subject and helped to improve the quality of learner's assignments. Most learners also valued the benefits of learning through a range of media rather than just books and listening to the tutor. However, there was still some way to go before computer technology is used by all learners for studying and communication purposes.

The next sections examine differences in the perceived impact of technology by gender, age, mode of study, learning difficulty or disability and ethnicity.

Perceived impact of technology on learning by gender and age and mode of study

Wtd Base: All respondents (4001)		Gender		Age					Mode of study	
% stating 'agree/ agree strongly'	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25-34	35-44	45+	Full-time	Part-time
Wtd base	4001	1623	2378	1253	643	546	751	809	1593	2218
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%

I understand the subject I'm studying better because of the way computers are used on my course	59	65	54	66	61	55	50	55	66	53
I do not rely on computers or information technology to keep in touch with other learners on the course	55	54	56	54	54	60	54	57	55	56
Because of the way that computers are used in my course, I've got more choice as to where and when I can study	66	70	63	80	74	63	53	53	80	56
I learn *less* well in classes when the teacher uses computer technology to teach the subject	28	32	24	35	32	24	20	21	36	22
I prefer to read from a printed source such as a book or a handout	53	49	55	48	54	51	55	58	49	55

rather than from a computer screen										
The way that computers are used on my course motivates me to study	53	57	51	63	58	52	42	47	62	47
I believe that I do better in my assessments as a result of using computers for my learning	65	69	62	74	70	64	57	55	73	59
I prefer learning through a variety of media than by just reading books or listening to the tutor	74	75	72	79	78	73	70	64	79	70
I learn better through face-to-face contact with tutors and other learners than by using a computer	74	72	75	74	73	71	74	76	73	74

Perceived impact of learning by gender

Men were more inclined than women to feel that the use of ICT had a beneficial effect on their learning.

A larger proportion of men compared with women agreed that:

- they understood their subject better because of the way computers were used on their course (65% agreed or agreed strongly compared with 54% of women).
- the use of IT gave them more choice about where and when to study. Seven out of ten men (70%) agreed with this compared with less than two-thirds (63%) of women.
- the way computers were used on their course motivated them (57% compared with 51% of women).
- they do better in assignments as a result of using computers (69% and 62% respectively)

Paradoxically, men were more likely to agree that they learnt *less well* in classes when the tutor uses computer technology to teach the subject (32% compared with 24% of women). This seems to contradict some other findings and suggests that some learners misheard or did not fully understand the question.

In contrast, women were more inclined to agree that they preferred to read from a printed source rather than a computer screen (55% compared with 49% of men). A slightly higher proportion of women agreed that they learn better through face-to-face contact with the tutor and other learners rather than using a computer compared to men (75% compared with 72%).

Perceived impact of learning by age

Learners aged under 25 were more likely than older learners to agree that IT and computers had a beneficial impact on their learning, as the following findings demonstrate:

- they understood the subject they were studying better because the way computers are used on their course (66% of 16-18 year olds agreed or agreed strongly compared with 53% of learners aged 25+)
- the way computers were used gave them more choice as to where and when they can study (80% of 16-18 year olds compared with 74% of 19-24 year olds compared with 63% of 25-34 year olds and 53% of learners aged 35+).
- the way computers were used on their course motivated them (63% of 16-18 year olds compared with 52% of 25-34 year olds and 47% of learners aged 45+).
- they do better in assessments as a result of using computers (74% of 16-18 year olds were in agreement compared with 64% of 25-34 year olds and 55% of learners aged 45+).

- they prefer learning through a variety of media than just by reading books or listening to the tutor (79% of 16-18 year olds and 78% of 19-24 year olds compared with 64% of learners aged 45+).

However, younger learners were also more inclined to agree that they learn *less well* in classes when the tutor uses computer technology to teach the subject (35% of 16-18 year olds compared with 22% of learners aged 25+). This is inconsistent with other findings and suggests, as mentioned above, that some learners misheard or did not fully understand the question.

Younger learners were more likely than older learners to be using IT and computers to keep in touch with their fellow learners. Around four out of ten (42%) of learners under 25 *disagreed or disagreed strongly* that they do *not* rely on IT to keep in touch with other learners compared with 34% of learners aged 25+.

Older learners were slightly more inclined to say they preferred to read from a printed source rather than a computer screen (55% of learners aged 25+ compared with 48% of 16-18 year olds). This possibly reflects fewer opportunities to use computers whilst at school compared with younger learners.

Perceived impact of learning by mode of study

The research revealed some marked differences between attitudes of full-time and part-time learners towards using ICT on their course, which was closely correlated with the learner's age reflecting the differences in age profile for full and part-time learners. The differences between full and part-time learners were particularly marked for the following statements.

- I understand the subject I'm studying better because of the way computers are used on my course (66% of full-time learners compared with 53% of part-time learners)
- Because of the way that computers are used in my course, I've got more choice as to where and when I can study (80% of full-time learners compared with 56% of part-time learners)
- The way that computers are used on my course motivates me to study (62% of full-time learners compared with 47% of part-time learners)
- I believe that I do better in my assessments as a result of using computers for my learning (73% of full-time learners compared with compared with 59% of part-time learners)

These findings signifying that full-time learners are more likely than part-time learners to feel motivated, understand the subject better, do better and have more choice about where and when to study because they use computers.

Perceived impact of technology on learning by disability, learning difficulty and ethnicity

Wtd Base: All respondents (4001)		Disability and learning difficulty		Ethnicity			
% stating 'agree/ agree strongly'	Total	Disability	Learning difficulty	White	Asian	Black	Mixed
	4001	277	261	3311	280	233	**85
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
I understand the subject I'm studying better because of the way computers are used on my course	59	64	62	56	69	75	72
I do not rely on computers or information technology to keep in touch with other learners on the course	55	58	53	56	49	55	58
Because of the way that computers are used in my case, I've got more choice as to where and when I can study	66	69	73	65	75	74	70
I learn less well in classes when the teacher uses computer technology to teach the subject	28	35	41	25	34	45	35
I prefer to read from a printed source such as a book or a handout rather than from a computer screen	53	55	51	52	52	58	52
The way that computers are used on my course motivates me to study	53	59	63	51	64	69	61
I believe that I do better in my assessments as a result of using computers for my learning	65	71	71	63	77	75	75

I prefer learning through a variety of media than by just reading books or listening to the tutor	74	70	74	74	69	75	79
I learn better through face-to-face contact with tutors and other learners than by using a computer	74	75	79	74	76	71	67

**Note: double star denotes small base (less than 100)

Perceived impact of learning by disability and learning difficulty

Learners with learning difficulties were more likely to recognise that using IT and computers gave them more choice about where and when they study. Almost three-quarters (73%) of these learners agreed that this was the case compared with 66% of learners who had no learning difficulty.

However, where learners with learning difficulties were also more likely to agree that they learnt better through face-to-face contact with the tutor and other learners than using a computer (79% compared with 73%), this finding highlights the benefits of traditional teaching for these learners.

Perceived impact of learning by ethnicity

Learners in minority ethnic groups were more likely than white learners to agree with a wide range of statements relating to the benefits of using IT and computers. They were more inclined to agree or agree strongly that:

- they understood the subject they were studying better because the way computers are used on their course (75% of black learners, 72% of mixed ethnic background and 69% of Asian learners compared with 56% of white learners).
- the use of computers gave them more choice of where and when to study (75% of Asian and 74% of black learners compared with 65% of white learners).
- the way computers were used on their course motivated them to study (69% of black learners and 64% of Asian learners compared with 51% of white learners).
- the use of computers improved their assignments (77% of Asians and 75% of black and mixed ethnicity learners compared with 63% of white learners)

White learners were less likely than learners in ethnic minorities to be using IT to communicate with other learners. Only 37% *disagreed or disagreed strongly* that

they do *not* use rely on IT to keep in touch with other learners compared with 44% of Asian learners.

Notably, white learners were more likely than Asian learners to agree that they preferred learning through a variety of media compared with just reading or listening to the tutor (74% compared with 69%). However, the same trend did not exist among black and mixed ethnicity learners, as a larger proportion of them agreed with these statements compared with white learners (75% and 79% respectively).

Summary

- Almost three-quarters of learners (74%) said they preferred to learn through a variety of media rather than just reading books.
- Two-thirds of learners recognised the benefits of using computers because they did better in assignments (65%) and had more choices about where and when to study (66%).
- The majority felt they understood their subject better because computers were used on their course (59%) and using computers on their courses motivated them (53%).
- Around the same proportion (56%) *disagreed or disagreed strongly* that they learnt *less* well in classes where the tutor uses computer technology to teach the subject.
- However, IT and computers were not seen as a replacement for face-to-face contact or printed material. Almost three-quarters of learners (74%) preferred face-to-face contact with other learners and the tutor to using a computer and over half of learners (53%) agreed that they preferred to read from a book or handout rather than a computer screen.
- It is clear that computers were still not seen as essential to everyone for keeping in touch with other learners. Only 38% of learners *disagreed or disagreed strongly* that they do *not* rely on computers and IT to keep in touch with other learners on the course.
- Men, learners aged 16-18, full-time learners and learners from ethnic minorities were more inclined to recognise the perceived benefits of using computers than other learners.
- Learners with a disability or learning difficulty were more likely than those with who did not to agree that computers gave them more choice about where and when to study.

Learner satisfaction with computer facilities provision and quality of teaching with technology

This chapter considers learners' overall attitudes to technology use on their courses. In addition, it investigates whether prior expectations of using computers at college have been met and examines the reasons where expectations have not been met. Finally, it covers learners' opinions of the quality of teaching with technology received.

Enjoyment of using technology on course

All learners were asked how much they enjoy using technology on their current programme of study. Learners were able to choose from the following four responses:

- I enjoy using technology – I'd like more of it on the course
- It's OK – the current level is about right
- I don't really like it, and I want less of it on the course
- I really dislike it, and I want as little of it as possible on the course

Overall attitude to technology use on course
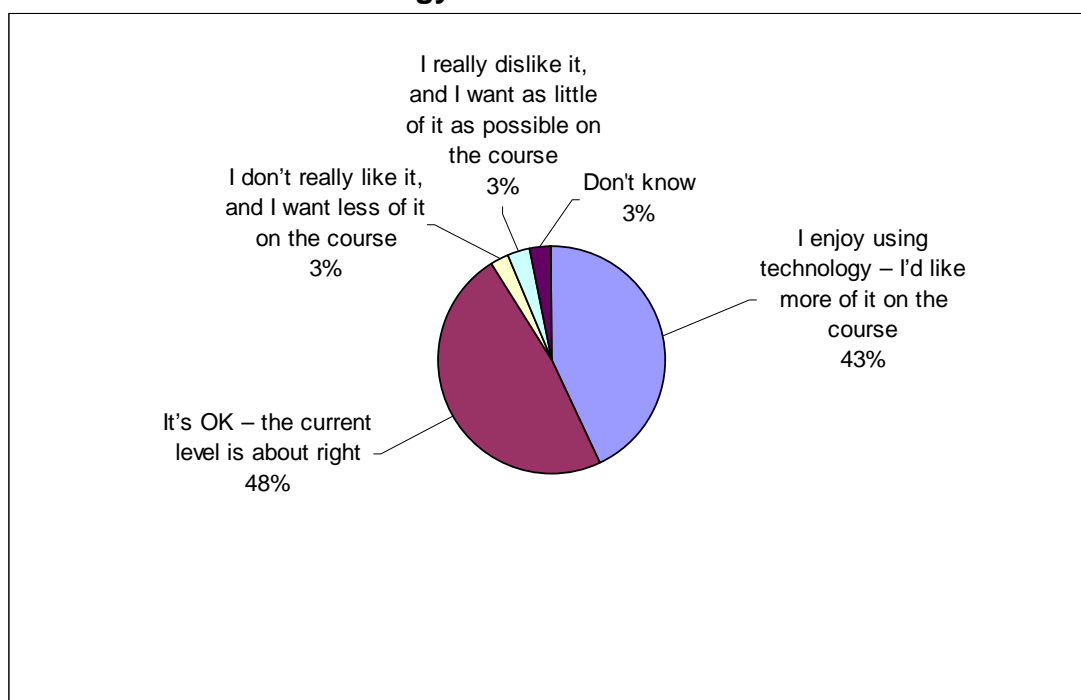
Wtd Base: all respondents (4001)

Overall, learners were extremely positive towards using technology:

- 43% answered that they enjoy using technology and would like more of it on the course;
- a further 48% felt that the current level of technology use is about right.

Just 6% felt negatively about their technology use for learning, with 3% stating that they don't really like it and want less of it on the course, and 3% really disliking it and wanting as little of it as possible.

Men were significantly more likely to state that they enjoyed using technology and would like more of it (50% compared with 38% of women). However, as more than half of women responded that the current level is about right (52% compared with 44% of men), attitudes can still be seen to be generally very positive for both men and women.

Learners aged under 35 were found to enjoy using technology more than learners aged 35+. Almost half (45% of 16-18 year olds and 47% of 19-24 year olds) answered that they would like more technology on their course, compared with four in ten (39%) aged 35-44 and 35% of learners aged 45+. Learners aged 35+ were more likely to say they really disliked using technology for learning (5% compared with 1% of learning under 35) although this is still very low.

Learners on full-time courses were significantly more likely than part-time learners to say they enjoyed using technology and would like to use it more (46% compared with 41%) whilst part-time learners were more likely to say they really disliked it or they didn't know.

Overall attitude to technology use on course, by gender and age

Wtd Base: All respondents (4001)		Gender		Age					Mode of Study	
	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25-34	35-44	45+	Full-time	Part-time
	4001	1623	2378	1253	643	546	751	809	1593	2218
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
I enjoy using technology – I'd like more of it on the course	43	50	38	45	47	50	39	35	46	41
It's OK – the current level is about right	48	44	52	50	48	45	49	49	48	49
I don't really like it, and I want less of it on the course	3	2	4	3	3	2	3	3	3	3

I really dislike it, and I want as little of it as possible on the course	3	2	3	2	1	1	5	5	1	3
Don't know	3	3	3	1	1	3	4	7	1	4

There were also some significant differences between ethnic groups. Ethnic minorities were considerably more likely than white learners to state they enjoyed using technology and would like to use more of it on their course (61% of black learners; 59% of mixed ethnicity learners and 56% of Asian learners compared with 40% of white learners). White learners were a little less enthusiastic with the majority stating the use of technology is OK – the current level is about right (51% compared with 32% of Black learners).

As seen in previous sections, learners who used a computer at home for their course and those that described themselves as 'very confident' with computers were more enthusiastic and positive about the use of computers on their course. Almost six out ten (58%) of learners who described themselves as 'very confident' with computers said they enjoyed using technology compared with 29% of those who described themselves as 'not confident at all'.

There were no differences between colleges of different types of e-enablement.

Overall attitude to technology use on course, by disability, learning difficulty and ethnicity

Wtd Base: All respondents (4001)		Disability and learning difficulty		Ethnicity			
	Total	Disability	Learning difficulty	White	Asian	Black	Mixed
	4001	277	261	3311	280	233	**85
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
I enjoy using technology – I'd like more of it on the course	43	47	48	40	56	61	59
It's OK – the current level is about right	48	44	43	51	40	33	32
I don't really like it,	3	2	2	3	3	2	4

and I want less of it on the course						
I really dislike it, and I want as little of it as possible on the course	3	4	4	3	1	1	2

 **Note: double star denotes small base (less than 100)

Expectations of computer use on course

Learners were asked to consider how their experience of using computers in their college course compared with their expectations before starting the course. For the majority of learners, expectations were either met or exceeded, where:

- Three in ten learners (30%) considered it to be better than expected
- More than half of all learners (55%) felt it was about the same as they had expected
- Just 6% thought it was not as good as they had expected
- A further 8% answered that they didn't know or didn't have any prior expectations

Expectations of using computers on course
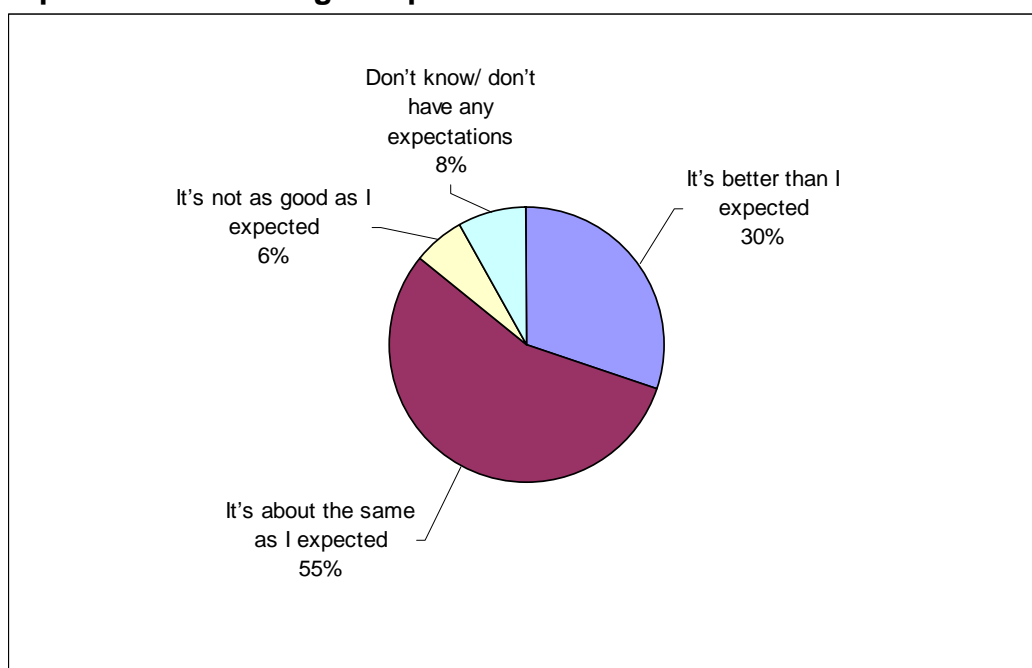
Wtd Base: all respondents (4001)

Younger learners were more inclined to say their experience of using computers was the same as they expected (62% of 16-18 year olds compared with 58% of 19-24 year olds and only 45% of learners aged 45+). In contrast, a larger proportion of older learners said they didn't know or did not have any expectations (17% of

learners aged 45+ and 12% of 35-44 year olds compared with 1% of 16-18 year olds).

Full-time learners were more likely than part-time learners to say their course was better than expected (33% and 28%) or about the same as expected (58% and 53%). However, this difference is likely to be due to higher proportions of part-time learners who had no expectations (12% compared with 2% of full-time learners) as the proportion who felt their course did not meet their expectations was the same for both full and part-time learners (6%).

Expectations of using computers on course, by gender and age

Wtd Base: All respondents (4001)		Gender		Age					Mode of study	
	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25-34	35-44	45+	Full-time	Part-time
	4001	1623	2378	1253	643	546	751	809	1593	2218
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
It's better than I expected	30	32	30	30	32	29	28	33	33	28
It's about the same as I expected	55	56	55	62	58	55	53	45	58	53
It's not as good as I expected	6	6	6	7	6	6	8	5	6	6
Don't know/ don't have any expectations	8	6	10	1	4	10	12	17	2	12

Black learners were more likely to consider the use of computers to be better than they expected than learners in other ethnic groups (42% compared with 29% of white learners).

Expectations of using computers on course, by disability, learning difficulty and ethnicity

Wtd Base: All respondents (4001)		Disability and learning difficulty		Ethnicity			
	Total	Disability	Learning difficulty	White	Asian	Black	Mixed
	4001	277	261	3311	280	233	**85
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
It's better than I expected	30	34	33	29	30	42	36
It's about the same as I expected	55	49	54	56	54	46	56
It's not as good as I expected	6	10	6	6	8	7	3
Don't know/ don't have any expectations	8	7	6	8	7	5	5

**Note: double star denotes small base (less than 100)

Learners who had found their experience of using computers to not be as good as they had expected prior to commencing their course were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statements to determine why this was the case.

- I haven't used computers as much as I thought I would
- I don't like the ways I've been required to use computers on the course
- The quality of the computers isn't good
- The quality of the computer-based learning resources isn't good
- I don't have good access to the computers and programs I need to do my college work
- The college doesn't allow me to use all the types of software or websites that I am used to using
- The tutors aren't good at using computers to teach us

Reasons why expectations of using computers were not met

%

Reason	%
The tutors aren't good at using computers to teach us	32
The college doesn't allow me to use all the types of software or websites that I am used to using	33
I don't have good access to the computers and programs I need to do my college work	36
The quality of the computer-based learning resources isn't good	35
The quality of the computers isn't good	38
I don't like the ways I've been required to use computers on the course	37
I haven't used computers as much as I thought I would	54

Wtd Base: all respondents whose expectations were not met (249)

The main reason, mentioned by just over half of learners whose expectations had not been met (54%) was they had not used computers as much as they expected. Among these learners, there was clearly an expectation to use computers far more than they had for their course and the proportion of learners who agreed with this statement was higher than the proportion who disagreed (44%).

The quality of the computers available at college was also a problem with just under 4 out of ten (38%) stating the quality was not good.

- Learners aged 16-18 were more likely to say this (52%) compared with learners aged 25 (29%).

There was also a feeling that the quality of computer based learning was not as good as they expected. Just over a third (35%) said the quality was not good.

- Again learners aged 16-18 were most likely to agree (50% compared with 38% of 19-24 year olds and 24% of learners aged 25+).

There were some differences between learners on full and part-time courses. Full-time learners were more inclined to say they did not like the way I've been required to use computers on the course, the quality of computers and computer-based learning isn't good, they don't have access to the computers and programs they need and the college doesn't allow them to use the software and websites they need. They were also more likely to say that the tutors were not good at teaching them. In contrast, part-time learners were more likely to say that they haven't used computers as much as they thought.

Sample sizes were too small to breakdown responses for those within the 25+ age category.

Reasons why expectations of using computers were not met, by gender and age

Wtd Base: All respondents whose expectations were not met (249)		Gender		Age					Mode of study	
% agreeing	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25-34	35-44	45+	Full-time	Part-time
	249	104	146	**84	**36	**33	**58	**39	94	141
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
I haven't used computers as much as I thought I would	54	57	52	54	47	71	51	52	51	57
I don't like the ways I've been required to use computers on the course	37	39	36	54	34	41	25	17	48	30
The quality of the computers isn't good	38	42	35	52	39	18	43	17	47	33
The quality of the computer-based learning resources isn't good	35	39	32	50	38	14	33	20	50	25
I don't have good access to the computers and programs I need to do	36	38	35	41	47	29	35	24	47	28

my college work										
The college doesn't allow me to use all the types of software or websites that I am used to using	33	37	30	56	48	13	15	14	51	21
The tutors aren't good at using computers to teach us	32	33	32	41	27	46	14	35	41	27

**Note: double star denotes small base (less than 100)

Just over a third of learners (37%) whose expectations were not met did not like the ways they had been required to use computers on the course.

- Again, younger learners were more likely to agree (54% of 16-18 year olds compared with 34% of 19-24 year olds and 27% of learners aged 25+).
- Notably, almost half of learners studying Information and Communication Technology who said their expectations had not been met, did not like the way they had used computers on their course (49%).

Access to computers was also found to be a problem by these learners. Over a third (36%) felt they did not have good access to computers or programs needed to do their college work.

- Surprisingly almost a fifth of learners (19%) who did not have the use of a computer at home did not know if access was a problem, which suggests they were making limited usage of computers at the college.
- More than a tenth of learners aged 25+ (14%) also said they did not know if they did not have good access to computers.

A third of these learners (33%) complained that the college did not allow them to use all the types of software and website they were used to using.

- Younger learners were more likely to find this an issue (56% of 16-18 year olds compared with 48% of 19-24 year olds and 14% of learners aged over 25). Almost a third of learners aged 25+ (30%) said they did not know.

A third of learners (32%) whose expectations had not been met felt that the tutors were not good as using computers to teach them. However, more than a tenth (14% of 19-24 year olds and 12% of learners aged 25+) did not know whether the tutors were good at using computers to teach them.

These findings suggest that younger learners had higher expectations and more of a fixed idea than older learners of the way they would use technology and the standard of equipment and teaching they would encounter. They were therefore more likely to be disappointed or not have their expectations met.

Related to this, all learners were asked how good the tutors were in using computer technology to teach them. Overall, tutors were considered to be good at using computer technology to teach by four out of five learners (79% answering either very or fairly good). Just 3% thought their tutors were poor (very or fairly poor) with a further 7% stating neither good nor poor.

How good the tutors were on your course at using computer technology to teach
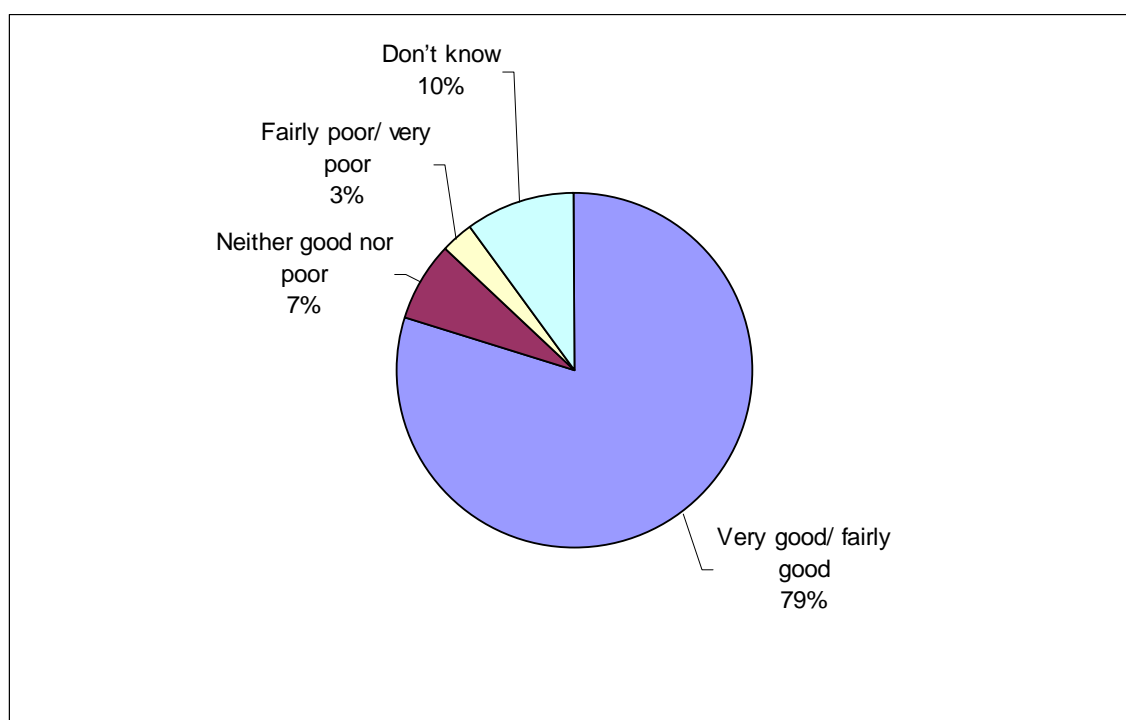
Wtd Base: All respondents (4001)

More detailed analysis revealed:

- Men were more likely than women to rate their tutor as good at using computers to teach (82% compared with 77%).
- A larger proportion of younger learners rated their tutor as good compared with learners aged 25+ (89% of 16-18 year olds compared with 82% of 19-24 year olds and 72% of learners aged 35+).

How good the tutors were on your course at using computer technology to teach, by age and gender and mode of study

Wtd Base: All respondents (4001)		Gender		Age					Mode of study	
% agreeing	Total	Male	Female	16-18	19-24	25-34	35-44	45+	Full-time	Part-time
	4001	1623	2378	1253	643	546	751	809	1593	2218
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very good/ fairly good	79	82	77	89	82	76	73	71	89	73
Neither good nor poor	7	6	8	6	8	8	8	8	6	8
Fairly poor/ very poor	3	3	3	4	4	2	4	2	3	4
Don't know	10	8	11	2	6	14	15	19	2	15

- Over half of learners with a disability considered their tutor to be 'very good' (54%) compared with 4 out of 10 of learners with no disability (42%).
- Half of black learners felt their tutor was 'very good' compared with 43% of white learners and 35% of mixed ethnicity. A tenth of white learners (11%) said they did not know.
- Almost 9 out of 10 (89%) full-time learners said their tutor was very or fairly good at using computers compared with just under three-quarters (73%) of part-time learners. Part-time learners were far more likely to say they didn't know (15% compared with 2% of full-time learners).
- Those at e-enabled colleges were more likely than learners at ambivalent and late adopter colleges to rate their tutor to be good at teaching using computers (83% compared with 78% and 76% respectively)
- A higher proportion of learners with use of a computer at home rated their tutor as good (81% compared with 72% with no use of a computer at home)
- Learners who described themselves as confident using computers rated their tutors more positively than those who considered themselves to be not confident at all (81% and 71% respectively). Almost a quarter (23%) of those who felt they were not confident did not know if their tutor was good at teaching with a computer or not.

How good the tutors were on your course at using computer technology to teach, by ethnicity, disability and learning difficulty

Wtd Base: All respondents (4001)		Disability & learning difficulty		Ethnicity			
% agreeing	Total	Disability	Leaning difficulty	White	Asian	Black	Mixed
	4001	277	261	3311	280	233	**85
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very good/ fairly good	79	84	83	78	83	89	88
Neither good nor poor	7	7	6	7	8	4	5
Fairly poor/ very poor	3	1	4	4	3	1	2
Don't know	10	7	7	11	6	6	4

**Note: double star denotes small base (less than 100)

Summary

- Just over 4 in 10 (43%) of learners said they enjoyed using technology and would like to use it more on their course, while a further 48% said the current level of technology use was about right.
- Men were more likely to state they enjoyed using technology than women (50% and 38% respectively) however as more women said the level of technology use was about right (52% compared with 44% of men), attitudes were generally positive for both.
- Learners aged under 25 typically enjoyed using technology more than learners aged 25+ (47% of 19-24 year olds compared with 40% of learners aged 25+)
- Full-time learners were more inclined to say their expectations had been met whilst part-time learners were likely to have had no expectations. Almost all full-time learners rated their tutor as very or fairly good at using computers whilst part-time learners were far more likely to say they didn't know.
- Learners from ethnic minorities were more likely than their white counterparts to enjoy using technology (61% of black learners compared with 40% of white learners).
- Three in ten learners (30%) felt their experience of using computers at college was better than they expected, while 55% said it was the same as expected.
- Learners aged 16-18 were more inclined to say their experience was the same as expected (61%) while learners aged 25+ were more likely to say they didn't know or didn't have any expectations (13%).

- Among learners whose expectations had not been met, the most common reasons were they had not used computers as much as they expected (mentioned by 54%), the quality of computers was not as good (38%), they didn't like the way they had been required to use computers (37%) and they did not have good access to computers or programs at college (36%)
- Overall, four fifths (79%) of learners felt tutors were very good or fairly good at using computer technology to teach.
- Men, younger learners, black learners and those with a disability were more likely than other learners to rate their tutor as good at using computers to teach.

Technical appendix

Sampling

The sample for the FE Learners survey was sourced from the Individual Learner Records (ILR). When learners' details are added to ILR, they are asked if they are willing to have their names passed on to a third party for research purposes; only individuals who had agreed to follow up were included in the sample.

The universe for the survey was the July 2007 ILR freeze for the academic year 2006/07 taken for statistical purposes by the Learning and Skills Council. Only individuals aged 16 and above at March 2007 were included in the universe.

In some instances, individuals appeared more than once in the universe (where individuals were studying more than one course at the same time). In such cases, the first entry was retained and all others deleted in order that all leavers had an equal chance of selection.

Before the records were selected the following steps were taken:

- Removed all learners who did not give permission to be contacted for research purposes
- Removed all learners without a telephone number
- Removed learners identified as deceased or seriously injured
- Removed learners under the age of 16

Therefore, all of the records drawn for the sample were learners aged 16+ with a telephone number who had agreed to be re-contacted.

In total, 18,000 records were selected, stratified by the following variables:

- Type of institution (general FE and tertiary/sixth form colleges/specialist designate colleges)
- Local LSC region
- Age
- Sex
- Ethnicity
- Learning difficulty/Disability
- Mode of Study
- Course Type

Fieldwork and Response Rates

The surveys were carried out via telephone interviews, lasting 20 minutes on average. The interviewing team was thoroughly briefed by researchers working on the project prior to starting data collection. The briefing provided an opportunity for

interviewers to ask questions about the survey and to be given background information about the reasons for the research and the types of respondent they might encounter.

Telephone interviewing took place between 24th of April and the 24th of May 2007.

Response rates

The following table shows the response rates.

Response rates

Outcome	Number
Completed interviews	4001
Soft and hard appointments	1170
Stopped/Quit Interviews	277
Moved House	228
Refusals	1425
Referred elsewhere	26
No eligible respondent	403
Course lasted less than 2 days	446
Respondent under age of 16	2
Business number	139
Claimed duplicate interview	39
Ex directory number	18
Respondent not available during fieldwork	35
Others	325
TOTAL CONTACTS	8534
Unused	10
No answer/Engaged	4630
Voice Mail	1898
TOTAL LIVE BUT NO CONTACT	6538
Number not in service	1977
Computer/ fax/ modem line	51
Tried 8 times	285
Incomplete/Wrong Number	615
TOTAL DEAD SAMPLE	2928
TOTAL ALL SAMPLE	18000
RESPONSE RATE ON CONTACTED SAMPLE	47%

RESPONSE RATE ON CONTACTED AND LIVE SAMPLE	27%
RESPONSE RATE ON TOTAL SAMPLE	22%

Questionnaire Design

The survey questionnaires were developed by Becta in consultation with GfK NOP Social Research.

The questionnaire was piloted prior to the main stage of data collection, both to test the interview length and the question wording. In all, 32 pilot interviews were completed. Following the pilot, recommendations for amendments were made and these were agreed with Becta.

Copies of the final questionnaires are provided in Appendix B.

Management of Telephone Interviewing

Interviewer Quality Control Scheme (IQCS)

The quality of work undertaken by GfK NOP's Telephone Interviewing Services is in accordance with the standards laid down by the IQCS. All member companies of the IQCS are inspected annually by an independent inspector appointed by the IQCS Council. The inspector assesses the company's performance and this is submitted to the IQCS Council of Management for approval.

It is a condition for membership of the IQCS that:

- on appointment, each interviewer is issued with a current copy of the Market Research Society (MRS) Code Of Conduct, covering at least the sections relating to the following:
- responsibilities to informants
- responsibilities to the general public and the business community
- the words "Conducted within the Code of Conduct of the Market Research Society" are, wherever practical, included on the screen at the start and end of every interview or shift, requiring the interviewer to confirm compliance at that time or covered in a separate sheet, identifying a specified period of time on a specific job and signed by the interviewer.
- interviewers are made aware of the MRS Freephone facility, which verifies the bona fides of companies conducting genuine market research work.
- interviewers receive a minimum of 2 days basic training covering quality related issues such as:
- the importance of accurate & ethical interviewing
- the MRS Code of Conduct
- special care when interviewing children, OAPs etc.

- assurance of respondent confidentiality and anonymity
- interviewer courtesy / manner
- interviewing technique

Between 5 and 10% of all completed interviews are monitored via remote listening-in and on-screen verification.

Verbatim answers are scanned by the Team Leaders on a session-by-session basis to ensure that the quality of these open-ended answers reaches the standard required for each project.

Miscodes are reviewed and corrected at the interviewing centre where possible to ensure the data is as accurate as possible prior to leaving the centre.

Weighting the data

The data were weighted to reflect the profile of learners within the ILR by age within gender, FE college sector and mode of study.

Distribution of interviews – unweighted and weighted data

	Number of interviews		Weighted data	
	Number	%	Number	%
Age within gender				
Male 16-18	976	24	623	16
Female 16-18	967	24	629	16
Male 19-24	372	9	301	7
Female 19-24	298	7	342	9
Male 25-44	257	6	430	11
Female 25-44	580	15	866	22
Male 45+	189	5	268	7
Female 45+	362	9	540	13
Provider type				
General FE	3399	85	3521	88
Sixth form	547	14	332	8
Other	55	1	148	4
Mode of study				
Part time	1586	40	2218	55
Full time	2319	58	1593	40
Not known	96	2	190	5

Appendix A: A discussion of key findings from the FE learner survey in relation to recent FE college and practitioner-level survey data

Introduction

The findings of the survey provide insight into the experiences and attitudes of FE learners in relation to technology, and help in building up the picture of ICT/e-learning provision, practice and impact within the FE college sector. The GfK NOP learner survey covers a number of issues that have also been addressed, from different perspectives, in two recent research studies – the Becta 2006 survey of ICT/e-learning in FE colleges, which gathered data at institution level; and the DfES/NFER 2005 survey of FE college tutors, which had a practitioner-level focus. For example, all three studies covered college ICT provision in different ways – the FE college survey asked about the capacity of the institution to cater for current levels of demand for computers and the internet; the FE practitioner survey asked about the sufficiency of tutors' access to ICT to support different activities; and the FE learner survey asked about the ease with which learners could access a computer at college. It is useful to consider and triangulate the findings from the three research studies on this and other issues, in order to establish a clearer picture of what the priorities for development should be.

The common themes addressed by the three surveys mentioned above (Becta, NFER and GfK NOP) are:

- uses of ICT by learners and tutors
- levels of ICT confidence
- variations by subject area
- access to college ICT resources
- perceived impacts of ICT

Uses of ICT by learners and tutors

In the FE learner survey, nearly two-thirds of respondents (62%) report that it is essential to use a computer on their college course in order to learn about the subject. This suggests that the use of technology for learning is embedded in the experience of most learners currently in FE – a finding that seems in line with the FE tutor survey, which found that the vast majority of practitioners use technology in some way to support their students' learning. However, it is very important to take account of the nature of ICT use by learners and tutors before concluding that e-learning is fully integrated into teaching and learning processes.

The FE learner and tutor surveys gathered data on the type and frequency of ICT use by students and practitioners respectively. It is notable that learners and tutors tend to use technology in similar ways for college-related purposes. Learners most commonly use ICT to present written work (44% report doing this all the time) and to

research topics (41%). Tutors also tend to use technology most often for research and production purposes – for example, preparing schemes of work (40% do this all the time) and researching and creating teaching materials (32-34%) - and also to make course materials available to learners (e.g. presenting information in front of the class (18%)). What might be termed more 'advanced' uses of technology to support student learning – such as online communication and computer-based assessment - are less widespread, according to both learners and tutors. For example, only 11% of learners use ICT all of the time to support collaborative work with other learners, face-to-face or online - and 29% never do this. Around 13% of learners said they use ICT all the time to communicate with the lecturer or other learners (31% not ever doing this) – closely mirroring what tutors reported (9% used ICT all the time for this purpose, with 22% doing this frequently and 28% not at all). The situation is very similar with technology-based assessment – only 7% of tutors and 15% of learners use technology all the time for this purpose, with 24% of tutors never utilising ICT to test learners' understanding. Overall these findings indicate that technology *is* being used by both tutors and learners to develop understanding of course topics, but in a fairly narrow way – for example, enabling learners to access a wider range of learning resources via the internet. The potential for using technology in more interactive and advanced ways (e.g. delivering differentiated lessons; supporting one-to-one learning in the classroom) is currently under-exploited.

The apparent connection between tutor and learner uses of technology is confirmed by the learner survey, which found that most learners (62%) use computers on their course because they have been directed to do so by the tutor. A relatively small proportion (21%) initiated the use of technology themselves. Furthermore, learners who had not used computers for certain course-related tasks most frequently attributed this to the tutor not requiring them to do so, rather than their not having the appropriate facilities or abilities needed. Although tutor practice in using ICT to support learning will be affected by the availability of up-to-date and reliable technology in colleges, this is not necessarily the main issue preventing the adoption and development of 'deeper' approaches to e-learning. For example, the Becta college survey found that in 2006, 82% of FE colleges had a virtual learning environment (which served as the main learning platform in the largest proportion of colleges). Yet only 27% of learners surveyed said that they had been required to use a virtual learning environment as part of their course. It is known that there are skills and confidence gaps among tutors in relation to particular uses of ICT, which impede adoption. For example, the tutor survey found that while 83% of tutors classed themselves as confident in using e-learning in teaching and learning, a lower proportion (53%) claimed to be confident in using technology to track and monitor learners' progress. Unsurprisingly, the survey also found that only just over a quarter felt they were more effective in tracking progress through using ICT, and only 13% did this all the time and 16% frequently. According to the tutor survey, the key barrier to skills development is not the provision of training opportunities by the college but rather time: the majority of respondents (51%) were dissatisfied with the amount of time the college provided them to experiment with new technologies and approaches

and to embed these within their practice. This is a major issue that needs to be addressed, since it is clear that practitioners' competence in using technology and their understanding of its potential are both key to the extent that learners are exposed to (and thus benefit from) ICT in their activities at college.

On a more positive note, there clearly is some demand among FE learners for the use of technology in teaching and learning – and this demand is possibly stronger than tutors estimate. In the tutor survey, 56% of respondents agreed that students expect them to use e-learning (although the biggest driver for tutor take-up of e-learning was college senior management). The learner survey found that although 74% of students say they learn better through face-to-face contact with tutors, the same proportion prefer to learn through a variety of media as opposed to just reading books and listening to the tutor. Moreover, 43% want more use of computers on their course with only 3% wanting technology to feature less. In addition, 66% of students agree that computers give them more choice over when and where they learn, and 65% believe they perform better in their assessments as a result of using computers. Collectively these findings suggest that learners perceive technology more as a beneficial tool rather than the basis of a whole approach to teaching and learning - but a tool which they do expect to be used. This reflects the views of tutors, among whom there was a strong consensus that e-learning is just one valuable tool for FE practitioners to use.

Learner and tutor ICT confidence

In 2006, the Becta college-level survey found that 78% of lecturers were estimated to be competent or advanced in their personal IT skills (e.g. word processing, spreadsheets) and 62% competent or advanced in using ICT with learners (i.e. their e-learning skills). These figures have been rising steadily since 2000, but the disparity between the proportion of staff with ICT skills and e-learning skills has persisted. In the FE learner survey it emerged that 79% of learners consider themselves advanced or intermediate at using word processing, and 84% in using the internet – very similar to the proportion of lecturers rating themselves as competent in using ICT to plan and prepare lessons (83%). Together these findings suggest that FE learners are not on the whole massively more skilled and capable than their tutors in using ICT. This is further confirmed by the finding that 79% of learners feel that their tutors are very or fairly good in using computers to teach them - a figure in line with the proportion of tutors confident in using e-learning with learners in the classroom (73%). Overall this suggests that tutors are not, in general, dramatically under-equipped with the skills and abilities required to meet current student demand for technology use. However, the fact cannot be ignored that low-level uses of e-learning do predominate in the sector and learners do not seem to have particularly strong expectations of the kind of technology experience they want to receive on their courses. This situation may well change as new technologies and practices emerge, particularly those which are becoming more commonplace outside of education (e.g. use of mobile devices; Web 2.0 'social networking' applications). At present it is not known if learners are more confident and competent than their

tutors in using these technologies, although the probability is that age is a significant factor here. The FE learner survey indicates that younger learners are more likely than older learners to use a wide range of computer-based/digital tools and applications in their leisure time. This in turn suggests that the ICT skill and confidence gap between learners and tutors may become more of an issue as the types of technology available to support teaching and learning within FE environments start to diversify.

Variations by subject area

The FE tutor survey covered practitioners from 3 subject areas only – Business, Science, and Health & Social Care. It found that technology was being used as a medium for facilitating and managing learning more frequently in Business courses; and that Health and Social Care tutors were generally less likely to use technology for certain purposes, such as presenting information to the class and making course materials available to learners. This same pattern is evident in the learner survey: for example, those studying courses in Science and in Business are more likely to have been required to use a virtual learning environment as part of their studies (47% and 36% respectively, compared to 27% of all learners).

What is particularly interesting is the relationship between learner ICT confidence and the extent to which e-learning is embedded in the subject area. The tutor survey found that those teaching on Business courses were more likely to have integrated technology into their pedagogic practice - and interestingly, the FE learner survey identified that the greatest proportion of respondents who describe themselves as very confident computer users are those studying Business Administration, Management and Professional subjects (47% of learners on these courses were 'very confident', compared to 35% of all learners). Similarly, the FE tutor survey found that of the 3 subjects the respondents taught in, Health and Social Care tutors used e-learning the least - and the FE learner survey found some of the least ICT confident learners were on courses in Health, Social Care and Public Services. So there appears to be some relationship between the requirement for learners to use technology on their courses and their personal ICT confidence. However, the situation is slightly more complex than this. The FE learner survey found that 60% of Health, Social Care and Public Services students use computers to produce assignments, compared with an average of 51% of students on all courses, so clearly there is not a lack of required technology-based activity among these learners. It may be that the nature of the assignments produced affects confidence levels: for example, a Health and Social Care student may be producing a relatively basic word-processed document as opposed to a complicated spreadsheet with formulae that a Business student might produce, thereby affecting self-perceptions of ability. Interestingly too, tutors perceived learners in Science subjects to use e-learning to a lesser extent than Business students do, and the FE learner survey found fewer Science and Maths students use computers a lot to learn about the subject (32% compared with 40% of learners on all courses). Yet this learner group was among the most technologically self-assured, with 43% rating themselves as

very confident. It is possible that learners on Science courses use ICT for highly specific, complex technical purposes (such as running simulations and analysing experimental data) rather than as a 'standard' feature of their studies (e.g. to word process assignments), so increasing their self-ratings of ability.

Although the surveys indicate a relationship between levels and types of use of ICT on particular courses and student ICT confidence, the direction of this relationship is not clear from the survey data alone. It may be the case that the active (and supported) use of e-learning within courses results in more ICT confident learners. Yet it is also possible that learners who are more ICT confident are attracted to particular subjects of study, and that the tutors teaching those subjects make greater use of technology within the learning experience because they believe that the learners will engage actively with and benefit from e-learning due to their stronger orientation towards ICT. Additional qualitative research is necessary to explore this issue further.

Learner and tutor access to ICT

The FE learner survey suggests there is no significant problem for learners regarding their access to computer equipment at college: only 7% say it is difficult or impossible to get onto a computer at college, with the largest proportion (41%) saying it is always possible. However, the 2006 institution-level survey identified that 30% of colleges had difficulty meeting student demand for computers and the same number could not cope with the current demand for internet access. This highlights a disparity between college and learner perceptions of access. (Interestingly, 23% of students in the learner survey said they did not know what computer availability is like in college as they do not use the equipment. As much computer use for the course takes place outside of scheduled lessons (42% of learners use computers at college more in their own study time than in classes), this suggests that a significant proportion of students are using computers at home – thereby raising the question of whether colleges actually need the level of computers they perceive they require.)

Sixty-four percent of tutors surveyed stated they have insufficient or no access to e-learning resources in the classroom, and 66% also stated that resources are insufficient to allow their learners to access e-learning in the classroom when required. This is interesting since, as mentioned above, FE learners do not feel there are any issues with their being able to access computers. However, the question in the FE learner survey relates to access outside of timetabled lessons, whilst the lecturer survey refers to access within the classroom. These findings can be interpreted as indicating that colleges have enough computers in certain locations (such as computer suites and learning centres) to enable ICT to be used by learners for preparing and presenting work; but that ICT provision in teaching spaces is inadequate and prevents deeper uses of technology as a 'learning' tool.

Learners and tutors are both positive about technical support available to them within the college. Eighty-eight per cent of FE learners find it easy to get help with

computers from staff (such as a course tutor or IT technician), and lecturers were more likely to be satisfied with the technical assistance on offer than with other types of support in using e-learning (e.g. the time provided for incorporating e-learning into their teaching and learning).

Perceived impacts of ICT

The FE learner survey found that 59% of students believe they understand their subject better due to the way that computers are used on their course. Similarly, 57% of tutors surveyed felt they were able to develop learners' understanding of a subject more effectively through using ICT. These figures suggest a degree of agreement between lecturers and students around the impact of ICT on learners' subject understanding. (The vast majority of the remaining 43% of tutors thought that ICT had no effect on learner understanding, with very few perceiving a negative effect.)

Interestingly, three-quarters of learners state they prefer learning through a variety of media and not just through books and listening to the tutor, whilst just 47% of lecturers believe they meet the needs of learners' different learning styles more effectively through the use of e-learning. Given that the majority of learners are positive about the way in which their course tutors teach with technology, it may be the case that lecturers do not fully realise the learning preferences that their students have (or the extent to which they are already responding to them).

It is also notable that the proportion of tutors who believe that learners develop their subject understanding more effectively through use of e-learning is slightly larger than the proportion of tutors who feel that they are personally more effective in developing learners' subject understanding through the use of technology (64% compared to 57%). This suggests that a number of tutors believe that learners' independent use of technology has more influence on learner progress than the use of ICT by tutors does. (Tutors and learners agree that ICT positively supports independent study – 56% of tutors say e-learning makes learners more effective in studying on their own, with 66% of learners believing that technology increases their choice over where and when to learn.)

The largest proportion of tutors surveyed (48%) thought that their use of e-learning did not affect rates of learner achievement, although nearly one in three (31%) did feel learner achievement had improved because of ICT use. (There were more positive attitudes amongst tutors who taught in colleges where achievement rates had improved in the previous 3 years – 54% of these tutors perceived e-learning to have had a positive impact on learner attainment.) Learners are generally more positive about the effects of technology use on their course performance, with 65% believing that they do better in their assessments as a result of using computers for learning. The disparity between tutor and learner views points to the need to develop better methods of measuring the impact of technology-enabled learning on academic

performance in FE colleges, moving beyond the subjective perceptions of stakeholders.

Similar proportions of tutors and learners (46% and 53% respectively) believed that the use of technology improved learner motivation, although nothing is known from either survey about the specific pedagogic practices which had the greatest (and least) motivational effect. Again, additional qualitative research is needed on this issue. It remains to be seen if technology use on FE college courses will continue to have a motivational effect on learners, particularly as the use of ICT for leisure purposes becomes more prevalent among all age groups.

Only 16% of tutors surveyed agreed that a Virtual Learning Environment had improved their teaching and learning practice to a great extent, with 52% agreeing that it had to some extent. In comparison, students seem to find VLEs highly useful. Of the 27% of learners who said they used a VLE as part of their course, nearly half (46%) found it very helpful and 44% moderately helpful, leaving just 3% who did find not a VLE helpful to some extent. Again, this suggests that lecturers are perhaps unaware of the how the students are using (and benefitting) from the technology tools they are using in support of their learning.

Becta
November 2007

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Appendix B: Survey of FE learners and e-learning: experiences and attitudes questionnaire

INTRO1

Good MORNING / AFTERNOON / EVENING could I please speak to (NAMED RESPONDENT)

Yes	1	GO TO INTRO2
No - call back later	2	
No - not available in fieldwork	3	
No – refused	4	
Other - cannot continue	5	

INTRO2

Good morning/afternoon/evening my name is (NAME) and I am calling from GfK NOP. We would like to speak to you about your experiences at (FE COLLEGE NAME) of using computers and other kinds of information technology on your course.

 READ OUT FOR ALL The survey is being conducted for the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA), so that college computer facilities and services can be monitored and improved in the way you want them to be. All your answers are confidential and data will be reported back but not with names attached.

ASK ALL
S1

Does your course last more than 2 days in total?

Yes	1	CONTINUE
No	2	GO TO CLOSE

ASK ALL
S2

Can you tell me your age?

IF UNDER 16 THANK AND CLOSE

14 TO 99 _____

ASK IF LATYPE IS NOT STATED OR LATYPE IS CODES 9/10 OR 11.

Q1 What course or programme are you doing/did you do at (FE COLLEGE NAME)? PROBE FOR NAME OF COURSE/PROGRAMME OR QUALIFICATION. CODE

ONE ONLY. IF MORE THAN ONE TYPE OF COURSE PROBE FOR ONE SPENT MOST TIME DOING. DO NOT READ OUT

- HNC (Higher National Certificate)
- HND (Higher National Diploma)
- A Level
- AS Level
- GNVQ/AVCE
- GNVQ precursor
- NVQ
- Access to Higher Education
- GSCE
- Advanced Modern Apprenticeship
- Foundation Modern Apprenticeship
- Life Skills
- Preparatory learning
- Open College Network Accredited Courses
- Foundation Degree
- Degree
- Higher Degree (MA, MSc, PhD)
- Professional qualification (specify)
- Other (specify)
- Don't know
- No name of course/Qualification
- Refused

ASK IF Q1 IS 5, 6, 7, 9 OR 10 (GNVQ, NVQ, ACCESS COURSE, PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION OR OTHER)
Q1B

And what level are you studying? PROBE FOR LEVELS 1 THROUGH TO 5 OR ADVANCED/INTERMEDIATE OR FOUNDATION. USE OTHER SPECIFY IF NECESSARY

1..	1
2 (equivalent to GCSE 2 or NVQ 2)...........	2
3 (equivalent to A level or NVQ 3)..............	3
4 (equivalent to higher education degree)...	4
5...	5
ADVANCED.......................................	6
INTERMEDIATE...................................	7
FOUNDATION.....................................	8
Other (specify)	0

Refused.. {
Don't know..................................... Y

ASK ALL (IF a_aol = 99)
Q2

And what subjects or skills are you studying/training? DO NOT READ OUT. CODE ALL THAT APPLY.

Sciences and Mathematics	1
Land based provision	2
Construction	3
Engineering, Technology and Manufacturing	4
Business administration, Management and Professional	5
Information and Communication Technology	6
Retailing, Customer Service and Transportation	7
Hospitality, Sports, Leisure and Travel	8
Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy	9
Health, Social Care and Public Services	10
Visual and Performing Arts and Media	11
Humanities	12
English, Languages and Communication	13
Foundation programmes	14
Don't know / refusal	99

A. Preliminary section

Many learners in FE colleges are required to use computers (including laptops and handheld computers) and other types of information technology to do particular parts of their course.

1. In your view, how much are you *required* by your tutor to use a computer on your course, in order to do the following

   Would you say it is a lot, some of the time, not much or not at all?
   [READ OUT]

   - learn about the subject you're studying (e.g. reading information about a topic on the internet)
   - produce assignments
   - communicate with your tutor
   - work with other learners

A lot
Some of the time
Not much
Not at all
Don't know

B. Access to ICT/e-learning resources at college

2. Which of the following statements best describes your access to computers within college, outside of timetabled class sessions (that is, during your own independent study time)?

   [READ OUT - CODE ONE ONLY]

   - It is always possible to get onto a computer
   - It is usually possible to get onto a computer but sometimes I have to wait
   - It is often difficult to get onto a computer
   - It is usually impossible to get onto a computer
   - Don't know as I never use computers in college (DO NOT READ OUT) GO TO Q10

3. Have you ever accessed the internet while at college?
   - Yes
   - No

   If **no**, go to question 5

4. How fast is the internet connection, in your experience? (Compare it to speed of access at home, your workplace or any other location)

   [READ OUT – CODE ONE ONLY]

   - It's always fast
   - It's usually fast but sometimes it slows down
   - It's slow most of the time
   - It's always slow

   ALLOW DK

5. Do you have to pay for printing out work at college?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Don't know / Never used printing at college

If yes

- 5 (a) Do you have to pay for printing out all work at college, or do you get some printing for free?
    - I get some printing free, but have to pay for the rest of it
    - I have to pay for all of it

ALLOW DK

6. How would you describe the quality of college computers, in terms of their speed and reliability?

In general, are the computers at college:

[READ OUT – CODE ONE ONLY]

- Good enough to let me do all of my college coursework
- Good enough to let me do some, but not all of my college coursework
- Not good enough to let me do a lot (or any) of my college coursework
- Don't know

ALLOW DK

7. When using computers at college, you may come across problems – for example, the computer appears to be faulty or you don't know how to do something when using a particular computer program. When this happens, which type of staff in the college are you *most likely* to ask for help?

[READ OUT – CODE ONE ONLY]

- One of your course tutors
- A member of IT support staff
- Another member of staff
- Don't know/would never ask a member of staff for help

If **not applicable**, go to question 9.

If course tutor, member of IT support staff or another member of staff:

8. How easy is it to get help with computers from someone who works for the college – for example, when the computer crashes or you need help in using a particular computer program? Would you say that it is:

[READ OUT – CODE ONE ONLY]
- Very easy

- Quite easy
- Quite difficult
- Very difficult

ALLOW DK

9. Does your college provide you with an email address?
- Yes
- No

ALLOW DK

C. Home access to ICT resources

10. Do you have a computer at home that you use for the college course?
- Yes
- No

If **no**, go to question 15

If **yes**,

11. Which of the following statements best describes your situation at home:

[READ OUT – CODE ONE ONLY]
- I have sole access to the computer (i.e. I don't share it with anyone else)
- I share the computer with other people, but I have priority over them
- I have to wait to use the computer, but this doesn't affect the college work I do at home
- I have to wait to use the computer, which makes it hard to do college work at home

ALLOW DK

12. What type of internet access do you have at home?

[READ OUT – CODE ONE ONLY]
- Access via broadband
- Access via dial-up
- No internet access at home

ALLOW DK

13. Thinking about the computer facilities that you have at home, which of the following statements best applies to you?

   The computer facilities that I have at home:
   - Are good enough to let me do all of my college work
   - Are good enough to let me do some, but not all of my college work
   - Are not good enough to let me do a lot (or any) of my college work
   - Don't know

14. Which of the following leisure activities do you do *regularly* at home with your computer? (By regularly we mean once a week or more often)

   [READ OUT – CODE ALL THAT APPLY]

Activity	Yes
Communicate with others (for example, through email or instant messaging,	
Surf the net	
Online shopping	
Play computer games	
Maintain a personal website, blog, online journal, myspace page etc.	
Create things (for example, digital photography/video, music, writing etc)	
Take part in an online community, for example an internet forum or message board; a "virtual world" such as Second Life	
Download music, video, podcasts etc	
Learn about something other than your college course (for example, a foreign language; a musical instrument)	

   If no at q10

15. Do you (or anyone in your household) intend to get a computer in the next 12 months?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Don't know

   If **yes**, go to question 17

   If **no**,

16. What is the main reason for this?

    DO NOT READ OUT, CODE ONLY ONE
    - Too expensive
    - Wouldn't use it
    - Concerned about theft
    - Don't need one as can use computers at college
    - Have got access to a computer at another location (such as at work, a friend or relatives' house)
    - Worried about computer viruses, computer fraud, potential risk to family etc
    - Any other reason

    ALLOW DK

D. Use of computers and other types of information technology within your course of study

17. In the course that you're currently studying, how often do you use computers and other types of information technology for the following purposes? This could be in college (either in class or during your own independent study time); at home; or in any other location.

    Please say whether you use computers and other types of information technology all of the time (once a fortnight or more often), occasionally (once a month or less) or never for the following purposes.

	All the time	Occasionally	Never	n/a
Present written work or data (for example, writing a coursework assignment using a word processor or spreadsheet)				
Research topics (for example, finding information on the Internet)				
Create and deliver presentations (for example, using Powerpoint)				
Create graphics, music, photos or video				
Revise and follow up on what you've learned in taught sessions				
Take a computer-based test or a				

quiz set by the tutor				
Submit assignments or work to your tutor (for example, by email)				
Organise and manage your college workload (for example, knowing when your classes are; what the assignments are on and when they're due in, etc)				
Contact your lecturer/tutor with queries (e.g. via email)				
Catch up on sessions that you've missed (for example, by downloading tutor's notes)				
Communicate with other learners about the course (for example, using email or an online discussion group)				
Work with other students on a group project – using a computer in a face-to-face meeting; collaborating with other learners through email or over the Internet				

If the respondent answers "never" to any of these uses of computers, ask:

- 17 (a) Why do you never do this? Do NOT READ OUT – CODE ALL THAT APPLY
  - o My tutor doesn't require me to do this
  - o I don't have access to the facilities
  - o I don't know how to
  - o I don't think it's important
  - o Any other reason

ALLOW DK, REF and NULL

Not asked if Q2 = 'don't know as I never use computers in college"

18. At college, you may use computers in timetabled class sessions as well as in your independent study time to do your college work. Which of these statements best describes your experience of using computers at college? I use computers...

[READ OUT – CODE ONE ONLY]

- more often in timetabled classes than in my own study time
- more or less equally in class and in my own study time
- more often in my own study time than in timetabled classes

ALLOW DK

19. In general, how good are the tutors on your course in using computer technology to teach you? Would you say they are...

[READ OUT – CODE ONE ONLY]
- Very good
- Fairly good
- Neither good or poor
- Fairly poor
- Very poor

ALLOW DK

20. Please say how much you agree or disagree with the following statement: "When I use computers to study on my course, it's because I've been directed to do so by my tutor" Do you…

[READ OUT – CODE ONE ONLY]
- Agree strongly
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Disagree strongly

ALLOW DK

21. Many college courses support learners through using a computer system called a "virtual learning environment" or a "learning platform" – you might have heard it referred to as "Moodle", "WebCT", "Learnwise" or "Blackboard". It's like a website that you log into, and which lets you read information from your tutor about your course; access notes/handouts from class sessions; send messages to other learners on your course; complete tests/quizzes and so on.

To the best of your knowledge, are you required to use a "virtual learning environment" or "learning platform" as part of your course?
- Yes
- No
- Don't know

If No or DK, go to question 25

22. Which of the following things **have** you actually used the virtual learning environment for?

Options – yes, no

[READ OUT – CODE ALL THAT APPLY]

- To read messages from your tutor(s) about the course
- To access resources about the subject that you're studying (e.g. tutor's notes and handouts; video clips)
- To send messages to other learners on your course
- To take tests or quizzes
- To submit assignments to your tutor
- To check your progress on your course (e.g. the marks you've obtained so far)

ALLOW DK

IF YES AT Q10

23. Do you access the virtual learning environment from home?
- Yes
- No
- Don't know

24. How useful do you think the virtual learning environment is in helping you to do your course?

READ OUT – CODE ONE ONLY
- Very helpful
- Moderately helpful
- Not very helpful
- Not helpful at all
- Don't know

25. Do you have your own laptop computer, or handheld computer/personal digital assistant (PDA)?
- Yes
- No

If **no**, go to question 29

If **yes**,

26. How often do you take it into college to use in your studies?

   [READ OUT – CODE ONE ONLY]
   - once a week or more
   - more than once a month but less than once a week
   - less than once a month
   - Never

   ALLOW DK

27. Do you use your laptop/handheld computer to connect to the college computer network?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Don't know

   If **no** or **don't know**, go to question 29

   If **yes**,

28. Do you connect your computer to the college computer network wirelessly?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Don't know

29. On your course, have you used a mobile phone to do any of the following:
   a. Send a text message to your tutor on an administrative issue (e.g. to say you can't attend the session today)

   b. Send a text message to your tutor about a subject you're studying on your course

   c. Send a text message to another learner about something you're studying on your course

   - Yes
   - No
   - Don't have a mobile phone
   - Don't know / can't remember

30. On some courses, learners are required to maintain a computer-based portfolio of evidence, showing how they've achieved their course objectives. These are known as "e-portfolios". To the best of your knowledge, do you use an e-portfolio

in your course?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

If **no** or **don't know**, go to question 33

If **yes**,

31. Does your e-portfolio count towards the final mark that you get for your course?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

32. For the following statements, please say whether you agree strongly, agree, disagree or disagree strongly:

- My e-portfolio helps me see how well I am meeting my course objectives
- My e-portfolio helps me to plan how to improve the quality of my work

ALLOW DK

33. On your course, have you received any feedback on your work from a tutor electronically (e.g. via email)?

- Yes
- No

ALLOW DK

34. On your course, have you taken a computer-based test or quiz that has counted towards your final mark?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

E. Attitudes towards technology in education

The next section asks about your attitudes towards technology in education.

35. How good do you consider yourself to be in using computers for the following purposes? Please say whether you consider yourself to be an expert, an intermediate or a beginner.

	Expert	Intermediate	Beginner	Don't know
To word-process a coursework assignment				
To create a computer-based presentation (for example, using PowerPoint)				
To analyse numerical information (for example using a spreadsheet package)				
To communicate with other people (for example, using email, Instant Messenger)				
To find information on the internet about the topic you're studying (by doing your own research rather than following web links you've been given by your tutor)				
To record and store evidence of your achievement (for example, as part of a portfolio of evidence)				
To add visual information or decoration to your work (for example, charts and graphs; graphics)				

36. Which of these statements is closest to the way you feel about using computers?

[READ OUT – CODE ONE ONLY]

- I'm not confident at all in using computers
- I'm OK in using computers for a few basic tasks but I'm not confident beyond these
- I'm quite confident in using computers, and will usually have a go at doing things that I've not done before
- I'm very confident in using computers for a wide range of tasks

ALLOW DK

37. How much do you enjoy using technology (for example, computers and the internet) for learning in your current programme of study?

[READ OUT – CODE ONE ONLY]

- I enjoy using technology – I'd like more of it on the course
- It's OK – the current level is about right
- I don't really like it, and I want less of it on the course
- I really dislike it, and I want as little of it as possible on the course
- Don't know

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

Please tell us if you agree strongly, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or disagree strongly.

READ OUT (CODES) AS NECESSARY

	Agree strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree strongly	Don't know/ not applicable
On my course, it's essential to use a computer to learn about the subject						
I understand the subject that I'm studying better because of the way that computers are used on my course						
I do not rely on computers or information technology to keep in touch with other learners on the course						

Because of the way that computers are used in my course, I've got more choice as to where and when I can study						
I learn less well in classes when the tutor uses computer technology to teach the subject						
I prefer to read from a printed source such as a book or a handout rather than from a computer screen						
The way that computers are used on my course motivates me to study						
I believe that I do better in my assessments as a result of using computers for my learning						
I prefer learning through a variety of media (for example, text, video, audio) than by just reading books or listening to the tutor						
I learn better through face-to-face contact with						

tutors and other learners than by using a computer						

38. How does your experience of using computers in your college course compare to your expectations before starting the course? Would you say:

[READ OUT – CODE ONE ONLY]

- It's better than expected
- It's about the same as expected
- It's not as good as I expected
- Don't know/didn't have any expectations (DO NOT READ OUT)

If better than expected, same as expected, or don't know/didn't have any expectations, go to end.

If not as good as expected,

39. Why wasn't it as good as expected? Please say if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

[READ OUT – CODE ALL THAT APPLY]

- I haven't used computers as much as I thought I would
- I don't like the ways I've been required to use computers on the course
- The quality of the computers isn't good
- The quality of the computer-based learning resources isn't good
- I don't have good access to the computers and programs I need to do my college work
- The college doesn't allow me to use all the types of software or websites that I am used to using
- The tutors aren't good at using computers to teach us

  o Agree
  o Disagree

ALLOW DK

DEMOGRAPHIC SECTION

(IF ANY DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES ARE MISSING) READ OUT

READ OUT The last few questions are about yourself. These questions are to help us put your answers in context. None of this information will be passed on with your name.

_____

ASK IF L35 = 99
Q35
What is the highest level of examination or qualification that you now hold, including any that you may have gained since leaving full time education? CODE ONE ONLY – HIGHEST QUALIFICATION

1. No qualification held
2. O level/CSE/Matriculation/School Certificate
3. GCSE grade A-C/SCE Credit Level Standard Grade
4. GCSE grade D-G/SCE Foundation Level Standard Grade
5. A level, A/S Level, S Level, AVCE, Scottish higher
6. RSA/Pitmans
7. City and Guilds
8. Open College Network (OCN) Credit
9. BTEC/SCOTVEC/SCOTEV
10. Diploma in Higher Education (DipHE)
11. Foundation degree
12. Degree
13. Higher Degree (MA, Msc, PHD)
14. Nursing/medical/clinical qualification
15. PGCE or other teaching qualification
16. Apprenticeship/Modern Apprenticeship
17. NVQ/SVQ
18. GNVQ/GSVQ
19. ONC/OND
20. HNC/HND
21. Other qualification (specify)

_____

ASK IF Q35 IS 2
Q35 OLEVEL
How many O level/CSE/Matriculation/School Certificate do you hold? TYPE IN NUMBER

_____

ASK IF Q35 IS 3
Q35 GCSE1
How many GCSE grade A-C/SCE Credit Level Standard Grade do you hold?

_____

ASK IF Q35 IS 4
Q35 GCSE2
How many GCSE grade D-G/SCE Foundation Level Standard Grade do you hold?
TYPE IN NUMBER

_____

ASK IF Q35 IS 5
Q35 ALEVEL
How many A level, A/S Level, S Level, AVCE, Scottish higher do you hold? TYPE IN
NUMBER

_____

ASK IF Q35 IS 6
Q35 PITMAN
What is the highest level of RSA/Pitman you hold? CODE ONE ONLY

1. Higher diploma
2. Advanced Diploma or Certificate
3. First Diploma
4. Certificate
5. Other

_____

ASK IF Q35 IS 9
Q35 BTEC
What is the highest level of BTEC/SCOTVEC/SCOTEC you hold? CODE ONE
ONLY

1. Higher Certificate Diploma
2. National Certificate Diploma
3. First/general Diploma
4. First/general Certificate
5. Other

_____

ASK IF Q35 IS 7, 16,17,18, 19,20, 21
Q35
You said ANSWER FROM Q35 What level did you achieve? PROBE FOR LEVELS
1
THROUGH TO 5 OR ADVANCED/INTERMEDIATE OR FOUNDATION. USE
OTHER
SPECIFY IF NECESSARY CODE ONE ONLY

1	1
2 (equivalent to GCSE 2 or NVQ 2)….	2
3 (equivalent to A level or NVQ 3).......	3

4 (equivalent to higher education degree)...	4
5	5
ADVANCED..............................	6
INTERMEDIATE.......................	7
FOUNDATION..........................	8
Other (specify)	0
Refused....................................	{
Don't know................................	Y

_____

ASK IF L12 = 99
Q36
Can you say to which ethnic group do you consider you belong? DO NOT READ OUT.
CODE ONE ONLY - PROBE TO PRECODES

Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	11
Asian or Asian British - Indian	12
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	13
Asian or Asian British - any other Asian background	14
Black or Black British - African	15
Black or Black British - Caribbean	16
Black or Black British - any other Black background	17
Chinese	18
Mixed - White and Asian	19
Mixed - White and Black African	20
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	21
Mixed - any other Mixed background	22
White - British	23
White - Irish	24
White - any other White background	25
any other	98
not known/not provided	99

_____

ASK IF L15 = 99
Q37
Do you consider yourself to a have a disability?

Yes..1	
No...	2
Refused.....................................{	

Don't know................................. Y

IF YES TO 37,
Q38
Do you consider yourself to have any of the following?

INTERVIEWER - READ OUT. IF MORE THAN ONE, RECORD AS 90.

Visual impairment	01
Hearing impairment	02
Disability affecting mobility	03
Other physical disability	04
Other medical condition (for example epilepsy, asthma, diabetes)	05
	06
Emotional/behavioural difficulties	07
Mental ill health	08
Temporary disability after illness (for example post-viral) or accident	09
	90
Profound complex disabilities	97
Multiple disabilities (DO NOT READ OUT)	99
Other	
Don't know / refused	

_____

ASK IF L16 = 99
Q39
Do you consider yourself to have learning difficulties?

Yes...1
No.. 2
Refused......................................{
Don't know................................. Y

IF YES TO Q39
Q40
Do you consider yourself to have any of the following?

INTERVIEWER - READ OUT. IF MORE THAN ONE, RECORD AS 90.

Moderate learning difficulty	01
Severe learning difficulty	02
Dyslexia	10
Dyscalculia	11
Other specific learning difficulty	19
Multiple learning difficulties	90
Other specify	97
Don't know/ refused	99

_____

Ask if disabled (If Q37 is a 1 or if L15 is 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 90 or 97)

Finally, I have a couple of questions regarding your disability.

Q41

Do you make use of any other type of computer technology that relates to your particular disability, to help you in studying your course? For example, software that converts text on the computer screen to speech (if you're visually impaired); screen overlays (if you are dyslexic); a modified keyboard and mouse.

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	3
Refused	4

_____

IF YES

Q42

Please state what technology or technologies you use

_____

Q43

Please state how much you agree or disagree with the following statement. Do you Agree strongly, agree, Neither agree no disagree, disagree, disagree strongly

Because of the way that computers and other types of information technology are used on my course, I am able to participate in my course more fully than I would be otherwise.

Agree strongly	1
Agree	2
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Disagree	4
Disagree strongly	5
Don't know	6
Refused	7