Checklist

Learning effectively with technology

Access to technologies

1. I am aware of the technologies I will be using during my course. Identifying core technologies that will be used will help me to clarify how I will be expected to engage with my fellow learners and with my tutor on my course.

2. I have taken time to familiarise myself with online tools, resources and services provided by the university's library. The university library will provide online tools and services, including access to e-books and online journals. Knowing where and how you can find high quality academic resources will help you progress as a learner.

3. I have access to the hardware and software required for the course. Specific software and hardware may be required to take part in some courses. It is important to identify these requirements early, and to establish what personal hardware and software you need, and what your university can provide.

4. I have considered how the technologies I will use, during my course, will meet my specific access needs. Access needs can include requiring transcripts of audio or video resources, choosing particular colour schemes or the ability to easily enlarge text on your screen. Let your tutor know if any technology you are using does not meet your needs. They might not be aware of any access issues and will have to take action to meet these needs.

Learning to use technologies

5. I have taken the time to explore the technologies offered and supported by my university. An awareness of the tools available, and learning how to use them, will benefit you while you are learning, allowing you to focus on the subject rather than the technologies.

6. I have taken steps to understand technologies that are new to me and how they will be used. Technologies like wikis and e-portfolios are a common part of digital learning, but they do not always relate to technology that is encountered in everyday life. Where you are not familiar with technology being used, it is important to learn why and how the technology is used to support your learning.

7. I have read or watched video guidance on how technology will be used to support and facilitate learning. Technologies could include a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), an e-portfolio platform and online library systems. Engaging with information sources that provide support and advise on effective use of these systems will help you get the most out of them.

8. If I am given the opportunity to choose the technology I can use for learning, I will consider how and why I will use it. You should consider if the technology is fit for purpose and if it will meet your requirements. When using non-institutional tools you will also have to consider online security and data protection guidelines.

9. I am familiar with the university's guidelines and policies on the use of social media. Most universities will have policies on the use of social media. Familiarising yourself with these policies will let you know how you can use social media as part of your studies and give you guidance on activities and behaviour to avoid.

Learning and assessment needs

10. I know how to use self-tests or self-assessments to track my progress. Some courses will allow you to use online self-tests or activities to track your progress. These can identify areas of strength as well as areas that you need to develop further.

11. I am aware how to use technology to submit my assessment. The submission of assessments in the correct format and ahead of deadlines is important in any learning situation. If technology is going to play a part in the submission of assessments it is important to understand the requirements ahead of time so you can factor in extra time before deadlines in case there are technical problems.

Learning and studying

12. I have considered how the available technologies can help me prepare for my course. Online learning provides flexibility, allowing you to engage at the time, pace and location that works for you. Engaging fully with these opportunities can help you prepare in advance and explore the subject in more depth.

13. I have developed an understanding of what my tutor is hoping to achieve from the use of technologies. Understanding why a technology is being used to support your learning can shape how you engage with it. Understanding the intended learning outcomes associated with a technology use should lead to you getting the most out of the learning experience.

14. I know how to make effective use of a discussion board or a wiki in a learning context. Discussion boards and wikis are popular tools for learning, and it is important to know how to use them in this context. Discussion boards provide an opportunity to engage critically with ideas and reflect on what you have learned in an asynchronous way i.e. in your own time. Wikis provide an opportunity to collaborate and co-create knowledge. This could be synchronously (in real time) or asynchronously (in your own time).

15. I know how to view, read or engage with online learning resources effectively. Online learning resources are increasingly being used to supplement or replace traditional lectures. When watching or reading online learning resources as part of a course it is important to actively engage with the material, identifying key aspects and areas you have to investigate further. Take the time to interact with it purposely and actively. Do not just watch/read them; engage with them and learn.

Top tips

Being able to use technologies is not the same as understanding and being comfortable with how to use technologies effectively as an online learner.

Focus on why the technology is being used rather than the technology.

Engage effectively with online learning resources. Note taking can be a particularly effective for this.

Follow Netiquette guidelines when communicating with tutors and fellow students online.

Make sure to back-up your work. Keeping copies of your work in more than one location can protect you in situations where there are problems with technology and vital work is lost. Options for backup locations include offline copies, external drives, and cloud storage services.

Reflective activity

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Please complete this activity individually, with access to the Internet. The results are for your personal use. Start by reading the Introduction and then proceed with the activities. You might wish to refer to the video, checklist and further resources while taking this activity. In total the activity should take about 20 minutes. If, after completing the activity, you have further queries, please contact your tutor and support available at your university. Remember to save your completed activity as it will be useful to return to later in your course.

Introduction

You may be comfortable with using technologies and interacting online in your day-to-day lives. You will probably have some experiences of using technologies in your studies. However, being able to use technologies is not the same as understanding how to use technologies effectively as an online learner.

In online courses, you will be presented with a range of online resources and technologies that have a specific role to play in supporting your individual and collaborative learning. Many of these resources and technologies will be available within your university's Virtual Learning Environment and might include online reading materials, video clips, podcasts, discussion boards, and tools for collaborative writing such as wikis. It is important for you to understand what the different online resources and technologies offer in terms of supporting your learning, so you can then make the best use of them in your studies.

In this reflective activity, you are encouraged to explore the online resources and technologies that are available in your own online course. Identify how you can use each of these to support your learning and rate your current confidence with each one. You might also like to think about asking your tutors about their expectations of how you will use these resources and technologies and what help is available to you.

This activity is designed to get you thinking about technologies in your learning, and how you can ensure they are beneficial to you (and others).

Activity: Using online resources and technologies for my learning (20 mins)

Log into your Virtual Learning Environment, or equivalent, for your online course. Take time to identify each of the online resources and technologies you have been provided with. List each kind of resource or technology in the table below, alongside your own thoughts on how it will benefit your learning and your current confidence in using that particular resource or

technology. Note any questions you have for your tutors especially about how they want you to use the resources and technologies.

You will see that a few illustrative examples have been provided to get you started, although you should feel free to delete or amend these.

Resources or technologies	How will it support my learning?	My current confidence in using this feature (Low/Medium/High) including any additional thoughts	Queries for my tutors relating to how these resources/technologies are supposed to be used on my course
Online course materials (e.g. text-based study units or readings)	I can access these at any time, so can read and study the materials at times that best suit my own learning and in advance of particular activities and deadlines.	High – However it will be important to be organised in studying course content and not leave it until the last minute.	
Video clips and animations	It may be easier and quicker to understand concepts and ideas from videos and animations than just from reading the course materials.	Medium – I can easily play the video clips and animations but will need to focus on their content and what they are there to explain rather than just watching the clips.	
Wiki	I can see that we have been given a Wiki to use for a group project, to be used as a shared space that everyone can write within.	Low – Although I understand the point of the Wiki, I have no experience of using Wikis and don't know how the various features work.	

Further resources

Learning effectively with technology

General

Jisc Digital Student - Learner Stories. These stories share the experiences of participants in a recent research conducted by Jisc on students' experiences with digital technology:
https://digitalstudent.jiscinvolve.org/wp/digital-learner-stories/

Jisc Digital Student - Key themes from the Digital Learner Stories. Key themes that emerged from recent research carried out by Jisc on students' experiences with digital technology:
https://digitalstudent.jiscinvolve.org/wp/2017/03/28/key-themes-from-the-digital-learner-stories-now-available/

23 Things. These resources from the University of Edinburgh introduce different technologies that you may encounter as a student. The guidance here will help you engage effectively with these technologies:
http://www.23things.ed.ac.uk/

Pedagogical approaches to Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL). Resource from Bournemouth University that provides information about different approaches to Technology Enhanced Learning that you may encounter as a student, including blended learning and the flipped classroom:
https://www1.bournemouth.ac.uk/about/centre-excellence-learning/tel-toolkit/pedagogical-approaches-technology-enhanced-learning-tel

Technology and tools for online learning: Although targeted at university staff, this guide introduces you to a range of learning technologies and how they may be used to support your learning:
https://www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/technology-and-tools-for-online-learning

Student guide to evaluating information technology on campus. Educause (US) guide for students to investigate their university's IT provision including support services, and how to manage your personal information:
https://library.educause.edu/~/media/files/library/2006/1/pub2301-pdf.pdf

University of Exeter iTest: A short quiz from the University of Exeter to find out how you can improve the way you use technology to make you more effective in your studies:
http://wip.exeter.ac.uk/collaborate/itest/