Freshers’ Survey 2012 Report

March 2013
1 Summary

OUCS and now IT Services have run a survey at Freshers Fair since 2004. The aim is to capture the prior experiences, and more recently, wishes of freshers to inform IT Services’ strategy, focus and resources. For example, the IT Learning Programme use the data to help them plan courses.

The survey also provides a wealth of data for divisions and others to use as they see fit, for example, to explore the support requirements or students or assess what proportion would own the appropriate technology to access facilities they might provide.

This is the 9th annual Freshers’ Survey and gives considerable amount of historical and trend data.

Highlights:
- 92% of freshers brought laptops, the highest percentage seen so far.
- In 2012, 10% of undergraduates and 21% of postgraduates brought a tablet computer, up from 4% and 5% respectively in 2011.
- This year saw the highest percentage of Mac OS use (32%) and the lowest percentage of Windows OS use (63%) so far.
- Unix/Linux systems are most popular with MPLS students. 14% use them regularly.
- Around 4% of students use some kind of assistive technology. This is consistent across all student categories and divisions.
- The proportion of students with no anti-virus protection is 9%. In some divisions, the percentage of freshers with no protection rises to 12%. Most divisions have seen an increase in the proportion of students who are not protected from viruses.
- 69% of students brought a smartphone with them, up from just over 50% in 2011.
- Smartphone OS is fairly equally split between Android (39%) and iOS (39%) but the percentage of students with access to an iOS phone has increased more than the percentage of students with an Android phone.
- Awareness and use of Mobile Oxford is highest in Social Sciences.
- Data for internet use over time goes back to 2004 and includes trend data for emailing, banking, research, using virtual worlds, shopping and more.
- Postgraduate students are the most enthusiastic category when looking at online activities.
• Use of the internet for social networking declined for the third year running but Twitter use has increased.
• Reading email on a phone has climbed from 3% in 2010 to almost 50% in 2012.
• Facebook is the most popular source if information for UG freshers but PGs prefer to look at college websites.
• Wi-fi access everywhere was rated “very” or “fairly” important by the greatest number of freshers. Access to online handouts after lectures came second. Access to online handouts before lectures was third.

2 Introduction

The 2012 Freshers’ Survey was the largest yet with 942 usable responses collected during the 3 days of Freshers’ Fair. Following a major overhaul in 2009 and smaller updates in 2011 and 2012, few questions survive unchanged from the very early days trend, however data has been analysed where possible.

2010 was the first year any attempt had been made to categorise results by division. In 2011, additional questions made this clearer and allowed comparison by student category (undergraduate, postgraduate). For 2012, granularity was further refined by dividing postgraduates into taught postgraduates (TPG) and research postgraduate (RPG) students. This is was important to do as the Thema project had shown that taught postgraduate students have distinctive needs and preferences from both undergraduates and research postgraduates. As the TPG/RPG split was not done in previous years, trend data will use the combined postgraduate result. We greatly appreciate the help and advice from staff working on the DIGE project in clarifying, updating, ordering and presenting the questions in the most effective manner.

Questions also continue to be refined in light of changing hardware (e.g. tablet computers, smart phones) and trends (e.g. in social media use)

Note: A parallel analysis of the data was carried out by Liz Masterman, lead researcher on the DIGE project. Her additional findings and comments in the light of the DIGE project have been included in this report.
Liz’s calculations differ from the data reported here in these respects:
• Six additional “rogue” respondents were identified, reducing the total usable responses to 936.
• Percentages for visiting students have been computed, for possible interest if this group becomes the focus of attention.
• The contents of “Other” free-text responses have been analysed. They are reported in this document where they shed light on the quantitative data.

The percentages computed from these data are unlikely to differ substantially from the data presented here, but are available on request.

3 Demographic Profile of Students

The data reported below was captured from students distributed across divisions and levels of study as follows. All values are percentages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>UG</th>
<th>TPG</th>
<th>RPG</th>
<th>VS</th>
<th>Total by division</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>18.38</td>
<td>8.44</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>30.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPLS</td>
<td>24.47</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>6.30</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>33.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Sciences</td>
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<td>2.03</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>10.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
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<td>15.71</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>26.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total by degree</td>
<td>54.91</td>
<td>28.31</td>
<td>13.35</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 Type of Computer

The percentage of people bringing laptops to the University reached its highest ever level (by 1%) in 2012 as it reached 92%. The percentage of students bringing notebooks dropped, perhaps offset by the increase in laptops and the trend for smaller, lighter equipment or due to the rise in tablet use, particularly if notebooks were seen as an “extra” or as a smaller, convenient device for carrying around – a niche that tablets ably fill. Only one person appeared to have a tablet but no other type of computer. All the rest additionally had either a laptop or a notebook/netbook or, in one case, a desktop computer.
Only 1% of students bring no computing device with them. This should not be taken as 1% of students not owning a computer during their time at Oxford, as anecdotal evidence shows that many expect to purchase one after they have arrived at Oxford. Figure 1 shows the data for all respondents for the last 4 years. The purple line shows a marked increase in the number of tablet computers brought by students, This option was first included in 2011.

Figure 1 Percentage of respondents bringing each type of device over time

Figure 2 below shows the percentage of devices brought over the last 2 years broken down by type of student. The abbreviations are undergraduate (UG), taught postgraduate (TPG) and research postgraduate (RPG). It shows that taught postgraduates have the highest ownership of iPads and of other tablets. More research postgraduates than other groups bring notebooks whereas fewer research postgraduates than other groups bring laptops, and fewer undergraduates own a desktop computer than other groups.

This is the first year we have asked about Kindle and other e-book ownership, with the results showing that over 10% of all categories of student have access to these devices. However, since students may also use e-reader applications on tablets and laptops as well, the actual number of students who read e-books is probably higher than this.

Figure 2 Percentage of each type of student bringing each device in 2012
Historical data (Figure 3) mainly duplicates the trends shown in Figure 1 but highlights some interesting details, shown more clearly in Figure 4 which removes the increasing figures for laptops to zoom in on the results for other devices.

Here the increase in tablet usage, particularly within the postgraduate community is more marked. From similar figures in 2011 (4% for UG, 5% for PG), figures for tablet ownership has increased to 10% (UG) and 21% (PG). Note: 2011 figures did not discriminate between iPads and other tablets so results have been combined for 2012 to give the comparison¹.

Analysis was also performed by division with historical data available from 2011.

¹ In any case, only about three students owned both an iPad and another tablet, so it is safe to add the two figures together in the 2012 data.
The overview chart for 2012 (Figure 5) shows that students from the Humanities division have lowest desktop ownership but highest laptop and Kindle/e-book reader ownership. Social Science students like ebook readers, notebook computers and tablets. All Medical Science and Social Science students brought a computer of some kind. We revisit the importance to students of reading materials online later in this report.
Figure 6 Percentage ownership of devices by division over time

Figure 6 showing ownership broken down by division over time holds no major surprises. Across the divisions, laptop ownership has increased marginally while notebook and desktop usage has decreased. Also, tablet ownership has increased, particularly in Social Sciences.

Further analysis showed that ownership in Social Sciences was highest with taught postgraduates where 34% of taught postgraduates owned a tablet computer. This was made up from 30% owning iPads, 4% other tablets. This level of detail was not pursued with other divisions but provides an example of the kind of data provided by the Freshers’ Survey and which can be extracted on request. In relation to Social Sciences, we should note that students on the taught MPP programme at the Blavatnik School of Government were given an iPad at the start of their studies this year, but it is not clear whether this has had an impact on the data recorded in the survey.

The mean number of devices brought by students to Oxford was 1.3, with 5 the maximum number. Adding in smartphone ownership from a subsequent question raises the mean to 2.3 and the maximum to 6.

5 Operating System

This year showed the highest percentage of Mac OS (32%) and the lowest percentage of Windows OS (63%) since this question was first included in the survey in 2006. These percentages are as a proportion of the total number of computers recorded in the survey. Figure 7 shows this trend data. Unix or Linux devices make up 6% of the total. Note that this question asks "What computer operating system(s) do you mostly use?" and does not differentiate between desktop, laptop, notebook or tablet computers.

Further analysis looks at the percentage of respondents who have owned a device running each type of OS (Figure 8) and gives a slightly different picture as it takes into account people owning more than one device. Here, 35% of respondents use a Mac OS and 69% Windows. In both cases, the gap between Windows and Mac OS is narrowing with Unix/Linux use remaining relatively constant.
The same data is further categorised in Figure 9 where figures for undergraduate and postgraduate devices are shown. An additional detail from Figure 9 is that more undergraduates than postgraduates have brought a Windows computer, more postgraduates than undergraduates have brought a Mac and Unix/Linux use is roughly even. Fluctuations in the type of OS used is more prominent with postgraduates (square markers) than undergraduates (diamond markers).

Figure 10 highlights the variation in OS use by category in 2012. More taught postgraduates brought devices running Mac OS than other groups whilst undergraduates mainly brought Windows devices. The figures show that Unix/Linux use by research postgraduates is considerably higher than that the other groups, and is probably reflected in the use of these operating systems among MPLS students (Figure 11). In the overall PG figures, this is masked by the low proportion of taught postgraduates bringing devices using Unix/Linux.
A similar breakdown to Figure 10 is shown in Figure 11 with the breakdown being by division rather than student category. A higher proportion of MPLS students than other groups favour Unix/Linux. This also holds for Windows devices.

In Figure 12, the divisional data is shown over time. It is interesting to note that use of Windows computers by Social Science students appears to go against the overall trend and to have increased (circle markers). Medical Science students (triangle markers) have moved towards Macs and away from Windows or Unix/Linux while Unix/Linux devices have increased in popularity for MPLS students (square markers) compared to other divisions.
6 Assistive Technology

This is a new “yes or no” question for 2012 which whether a student used any assistive technology. The results were consistent across student groups and divisions with 3.5% to 5.5% using such technologies. No investigation into the type of assistive technologies used was done.

7 Anti-Virus Software

Many people have more than one computer so may use more than one type of anti-virus software. The first chart, Figure 13, shows the proportion of each type of AV software used in the University.
There is a fairly even split between AVG, MacAfee, Widows Security, Norton and Sophos.

When analysed by student category (Figure 14), the picture is different with research postgraduates favouring Sophos over McAfee, for example. A key figure in all of this is the results for “No protection” – 9% overall, and up to 14% for research postgraduates. It is probably worth noting that 79% of the total number of students without anti-virus protection were Mac users. Indeed, in responses in the “Other” box, it was clear that some people felt they did not need anti-virus protection as they consider their operating systems to be robust enough; e.g.:

“An effectively immune system”
“No need for [anti-virus protection for] Ubuntu”
“I have a Mac. It dual boots Gentoo. Windows lives in a VM and gets reset to known good after use.”

Figure 14 Anti-virus software choice by student category, 2012 data
Figure 15 shows the data analysed by division. “No protection” is lowest in Humanities (6%) rising to 12% in the Social Science Division.

Historically, the data is somewhat confusing with different flavours of software falling into and out of favour, possibly due to cost and convenience. What is clearer is the increase this year in the numbers of students who acknowledge they have no AV protection. In undergraduates, this has risen from 5% to 7%, for postgraduates the rise is from 8% to 12%.

The data laid out in Figure 16 may initially look complicated, however by focussing on each colour, trends and exceptions can be seen. The black lines show no anti-virus software – an increasing trend for all divisions except Humanities. Windows Security is on the up in Medical Sciences and Social Sciences, but decreasing in Humanities and MPLS. Norton is similarly split with 2 up and 2 down. Medical Sciences students show a significant increase in the use of Sophos (yellow line, triangle markers) while other divisions show reducing use. This appears to be at the expense of McAfee (green line, triangle markers) where use by Medical Sciences student has decreased but increased for all other divisions.

Looking at the position of the different colours within the chart, Sophos (yellow) is unsurprisingly the most popular, appearing highest, and Avast (pink) the least popular. The tools most frequently listed in the “Other” box of this question were Kaspersky and Avira, and so these might merit inclusion as answer choices in next year’s survey.
Figure 16 Anti-virus software choice by division over time

8 Mobile Phones

The question on mobile phone ownership was simplified this year into three choices – smartphone, other phone and no phone. Figure 17 shows the proportion of phones of each type brought by freshers, with smartphones clearly dominant. A very small proportion of respondents – 3.63% in total – reported having phones of both types.
Figure 17 Mobile Phones brought by freshers, 2012

Figure 18 shows a different take on the data. Here, the percentage of each student category who brought each type of phone is shown. These percentages would sum to over 100% as one individual could have multiple phones. Over 99% of undergraduate respondents had a mobile phone of some kind, usually a smartphone. Nevertheless, we need to remain aware that mobile phone ownership is still not universal, and therefore the small “unconnected” minority need to be acknowledged and catered for. Otherwise put, it would be unwise to assume that phone ownership is the “default” situation, still less to implement administrative and pedagogic policy on the basis of that assumption.

Figure 18 Mobile phone ownership by student category

When looking at a similar graph for divisions (Figure 19), all MPLS students brought a phone. Medical Science students were highest for smartphone ownership but the variation is relatively small – 67% in Humanities, 74% in Medical Sciences.
The graphs over time show a striking picture.

While the data for student category and by division only go back to 2011, the increase in the number of smartphones being brought to the University is very clear.
9 Mobile Operating System

Figure 23 shows the range of mobile phone operating system brought to the University. Android (39%) and iOS (38%) are the most popular.

The change over time, shown in Figure 24, shows the rise of iOS and slower increase in Android devices, at the expense of Blackberry.
A similar picture is revealed when analysing by student category, Figure 25. In both 2011 and 2012, a greater proportion of postgraduates than undergraduates owned an iOS device (red line, square markers), and the increase is slightly steeper for postgraduates. Note that despite the steep rise in ownership of iOS devices by undergraduates, there are still more UGs with Android devices (43%, blue line, diamond marker) than with iOS devices (34%, red line, diamond markers).
In Figure 26, the data is analysed by division. Android and iOS are still the most popular; however, a greater proportion of students in MPLS have Android phones (50%, blue bar). Humanities also appear to show more of a preference for Blackberries than other divisions (21% compared to 10–14%).

The change over time for divisions is shown in Figure 27. This shows that the preference for Android phones in MPLS division has been sustained over the last 2 years (blue line, square markers). However, Android devices have declined slightly among Humanities students over these 2 years (34% to 31%, blue line, diamond marker), contrary to the general trend.
The freshers were asked whether they had heard of Mobile Oxford and used it, whether they had heard of it but not used it, or whether they had not heard of it at all. 68% had never heard of it. This is an increase from 61% in 2011. However, the percentage of people who had used it has increased marginally from 7% to 10%. This pattern was repeated when the data was analysed by student category and by division (Figure 29). In interpreting this data, however, we need to bear in mind that many students have only been in Oxford for a week or so, and so cannot be expected to have tried out every tool or website that has been brought to their attention. So the fact that 30% of students had heard of the service may actually be an encouraging result.
11 Podcasting

Awareness of the University’s podcasting service is shown in Figure 30. Whilst awareness of iTunes U is less than in previous years, that of the podcasting web page and of the University’s presence on You Tube is higher. This pattern is repeated when looking at a breakdown by student category and by division. The only difference is with Social Sciences where awareness of iTunes U is has slightly increased (Figure 32, blue line, circle markers).
Figure 30: Awareness of University podcasting channels over time.

Figure 31: Awareness of University podcasting channels by student category over time.

Figure 32: Awareness of podcasting channels by division over time.
The number of students who watched or listened to podcasts before they came has risen very slightly from 27% in 2011 to 31% in 2012. They are accessed most by undergraduates - 35% in 2012, compared with 29% for taught postgraduates and only 19% for research postgraduates.

As in 2011, the category of podcast most accessed was “Lectures and talks on particular subjects for my own interest”. Also, more students are accessing general introductions to the University than previously.

It is worth noting that the figures on accessing podcasts may tell us more about comparisons between the three channels than they do about students’ general awareness, since it is not possible to distinguish in the data between respondents who had not heard of any of the channel and non-respondents.

### 12 Internet Use

A question on uses of the internet has been included in the survey for many years, with a number of additions over time.

Emailing is increasing after a dip last year. Learning/studying and research use is also increasing as is chat, downloading files and music, and most other activities with the exception of contributing to a wiki. Listening to music and watching TV online were both included for the first time and 82% and 71% of respondents respectively participate in these. However, the figure for social networking sites is low when compared with Figure 46. This may be because some respondents may not have been aware that a “social networking site” means Facebook, etc.
Figure 33 Internet use over time
Figure 34 Internet use by student category, 2012 data

Figure 34 shows a breakdown of this year’s data by student category. It can be seen that for most uses, a higher percentage of research postgraduates use the internet in that way compared to undergraduates and taught postgraduates.

13 Communications

The specific use of the internet for communication was explored in an additional question. Email remains the most popular method with social networks second. The use of Twitter as a means of communication has only been included for 2 years and shows an increase in that time. Use of IRC and newsgroups remains low but relatively steady.
Below (Figure 36), the communications data has been broken down by student category with trends generally following those for all respondents combine. The only real point of note is that postgraduates make more use of mailing lists than undergraduates (pink lines, square and diamond markers respectively).
The divisional split in Figure 37 shows a large drop in social networking use by Medical Science students, compared to an increase in use by respondents from other divisions. It also shows that, while increasing, Humanities students show a lower use of telephony (Skype, etc.). Use of newsgroups and IRC are not included on this chart as their use across all divisions is less than 10% and generally declining.
14 Blogs and Twitter

The proportion of respondents who engage with blogging – whether reading other people’s or writing their own – has increased, reversing the trend of the past few years. In contrast, the proportion of respondents who engage with Twitter has maintained its rise, although it remains a minority pursuit (approximately 40%). See Figure 38, Figure 39 and Figure 40.

In Figure 39, more postgraduates regularly read blogs than neither read nor write them (green and blue lines, square markers). However, reading blogs is declining. Again, use of Twitter is increasing.
Figure 38 Use of blogs (L) and Twitter (R) over time

Figure 39 Use of blogs (L) and Twitter (R) by student category over time

Figure 40 Use of Blogs (L) and Twitter (R) by division over time
15 Email Provider

Of all the email accounts recorded, 47% of them are provided by Gmail with Hotmail second at 32%. This dominance is not new; Figure 41 (R) shows how email provider has changed over the last few years.

There is almost no change over the last 2 years when the data is analysed by student category and by division (no chart shown).

Below is a different view of the data than above; here the percentage of students having each kind of account is analysed. E.g. 65% of undergraduates have a Google Mail account, rather than 47% of all accounts recorded are provided by Google Mail. Apart from Hotmail being slightly more common among undergraduates and slightly less common among Social Science students, the picture is relatively stable.

Closer analysis of the data showed that, on average, incoming students have 1.6 email accounts (other than their Oxford accounts), with a maximum of 4. Some students were continuing to use their email accounts at their previous institutions, including school.

16 Email Clients

The Freshers’ survey has been asking respondents how they read their email for several years. "On the web" has always been popular and is still the most common access method. However, as can be seen in Figure 43, it has
dropped this year while reading mail on a phone continues to increase; in 2009 it was 1%. Outlook and MacMail also show an increase (the latter in line with rising Mac ownership). These charts all show the percentage of respondents who use a particular method so allow for people using more than one.

On average, students accessed their email using 1.7 of these clients, with 5 being the highest number of clients used.

Figure 43 Methods of accessing email
When looking at the breakdown of email access method by student category or by divisions (L), the same trends are seen. Some lines may start at different points, for example members of Medical Sciences accessing mail via phone (R chart, orange line, triangle markers), or have different gradients, but the trends are consistent with the one exception of Thunderbird use in Social Sciences (R chart, dark blue line, circle markers).

17 Social Networking

The percentage of respondents with Facebook accounts (Figure 45) continues to increase after a drop in 2009. Google+, launched in 2011 and initially used by 18% of the respondents has dropped to 8%, and has yet to gain any kind of purchase. Twitter is continuing its steady increase, although the extent to which it can be classed as a social network in the same way as the others is debatable.
The analyses by student category and by division (Figure 46) show a similar picture when trends are considered and also highlight differences in overall popularity by different groups. 95% of undergraduates and 90% of postgraduates have Facebook accounts. Unsurprisingly, LinkedIn (a professional network) is more popular with postgraduates than undergraduates (red lines, left chart) and with Social Science respondents (red line, circle markers, right chart) than people from other divisions.

The social networks mentioned most in the "Other" box were Academia.edu, RenRen (a Chinese social network: www.renren.com), Tumblr and Weibo, with Academia and RenRen particularly mentioned by postgraduates.
18 Use of VLE in Previous Studies

Students’ familiarity with a virtual learning environment was first investigated at the request of the DIGE project. This year’s data showed that approximately 53% of undergraduate respondents had used an online learning platform (the term used in the survey question, as we were unsure whether they would be familiar with the abbreviation “VLE”). Taken at face value, it would appear that VLEs are not yet widespread in UK secondary education, and so many students are encountering one for the first time when they come to Oxford. In contrast, 73% of taught postgraduate respondents had used a VLE before, and 67% of research postgraduates (although the previous experience of the latter group is of less interest unless they will be teaching undergraduates).

19 Information Sources Prior to Arriving in Oxford

Respondents were asked which, if any, of a number of popular websites they had accessed for information before coming to Oxford. The sites were the “Student Gateway” on the main University website, their college’s website, introductory podcasts produced by the University, Facebook and The Student Room (www.thestudentroom.co.uk).

The overall view (Figure 47) clearly shows Facebook and college websites as the most common source of information. Once this is broken down by student category, it can be seen that a greater proportion of undergraduates use Facebook while more postgraduates look at college websites. Postgraduates also refer to the Student Gateway more than undergraduates and more undergraduates than postgraduates use The Student Room.

Figure 47 Information resources used overall (L) and by student category (R), 2012 data

20 Digital Support for Students’ Learning

Students were asked to think ahead to their lives at Oxford and to rate how important it would be to them to do certain activities online. These activities were:

- Do most of their reading online
- Obtain online copies of handouts to read before each lecture
- Obtain online copies of handouts to review after each lecture
- Listen to/watch a recording of a lecture afterwards
- Take notes on their laptop or tablet during lectures and other classes
- Submit their written assignments online
- Get feedback on their written assignments online
- Have Wi-Fi (wireless) access everywhere in the University
- Watch TV and films on the web in their college room
Online activities considered “very” or “fairly” important by survey respondents, 2012 data

Figure 48 shows the percentage of each student group who rated each feature as “very important” or “fairly important”. For all groups, wi-fi access everywhere was the highest scoring feature, and this is in keeping with one of the key findings (and recommendations) of the DIGE study. Obtaining copies of handouts to review after each lecture was also important to many people, again reflecting data from the DIGE study. Being able to work online – read, submit assignments and receive feedback on those assignments – was rated higher by postgraduates than undergraduates. However, our interest in lecture-related activities lay primarily in the experience of taught students, and so the data from research students is perhaps less meaningful in this respect. In terms of leisure activities, 67% to 74% of respondents felt being able to watch TV on the web in their rooms was very or fairly important.

Figure 49 shows exactly the same data in a different view to more clearly show the top priorities of each group of students and Figure 50 shows the priorities by division. It is interesting to note that a smaller proportion of undergraduates than postgraduates (both groups) consider it important to do most of their reading online. This may reflect the continued prevalence of printed texts in schools.

The fact that just over half of students consider it important to be able to replay a recording of a lecture suggests the continuing value of the “live” lecture as a medium for learning.
Since Humanities students are arguably those who read the most texts, it is interesting that they constitute the smallest percentage who consider it important to read those texts online. This may reflect their continuing preference for being able annotate texts directly onto the page, as observed by a Humanities lecturer interviewed by the DIGE project.

### 21 Relative Importance of Different Digital Technologies

Students were also asked to think ahead to their lives at Oxford and to indicate how important they thought it would be to have each of the following technologies:

- Desktop computer (for their exclusive use)
- Desktop computer in a cluster
- Digital camera (or camera on their phone)
- E-book reader (e.g. Kindle or a tablet with an e-reading app)
- iPad or other tablet
- Laptop
- MP3 player (or music player on their phone)
- Notebook or netbook
- Smartphone

The graphs (Figure 51 and Figure 52) are plotted of the technologies which were classified as “Essential” or “Very important”. All student categories (Figure 51) see a laptop as an essential or very important item (unsurprisingly, given the high proportion bringing this device to Oxford). Second for all groups, but by a considerable margin, was a smartphone, very closely followed by a shared desktop. Research postgraduates valued a desktop for their exclusive use more than undergraduates or taught postgraduates, which may reflect the greater use of desktops for using powerful tools in empirical work and data analysis, particularly among students engaged in scientific research.
Figure 51 “Essential” or “very important” technologies, analysed by student category, 2012 data

Figure 52 displays the data analysed by division and shows a very similar picture.

It is also worth noting that only a minority of students consider tablets and e-readers to be important to their studies (aggregate figures of 19% and 23% respectively), with tablets the more important of the two only among taught postgraduates and Social Sciences students in particular. In line with the recommendations of the DIGE project, these data should be closely monitored for their trends over the next 2–4 years.

22 Conclusion

Once again, the Freshers’ Survey has generated a host of data and it is hoped that this report and the analysis within will to add to the current state of knowledge about IT use and expectation within the University and guide the provision of services and facilities overall and within divisions, colleges and departments.