

Higher Ed and Technology During the COVID-19 Pandemic

A study by ExamSoft and Hanover Research

March 2021

INSIDE
HIGHER ED

MARKETING
SOLUTIONS



Investing in Digital Transformation & Technology: Download the Special Report

As COVID-19 pushed colleges and universities to online learning and remote assessment, technology became even more critical to day-to-day operations. The Digital Transformation was in full effect. But how much of that technology is here to stay? And how are institutions planning for the future? That's what this new report helps to answer.

ExamSoft partnered with Hanover Research to develop and disseminate a survey to college and university faculty, administrators, and heads of technology to understand how technology has been used during the pandemic and what resources they may continue to use after the pandemic ends.

In this survey of more than 300 higher ed professionals, key themes around online education and investing in technology emerged. Many foresee online courses continuing into the future. While some technologies were already in place, an effective transition to online was challenging for many.



Download the complete report to see what you and your peers had to say about technology for the past, present, and future.

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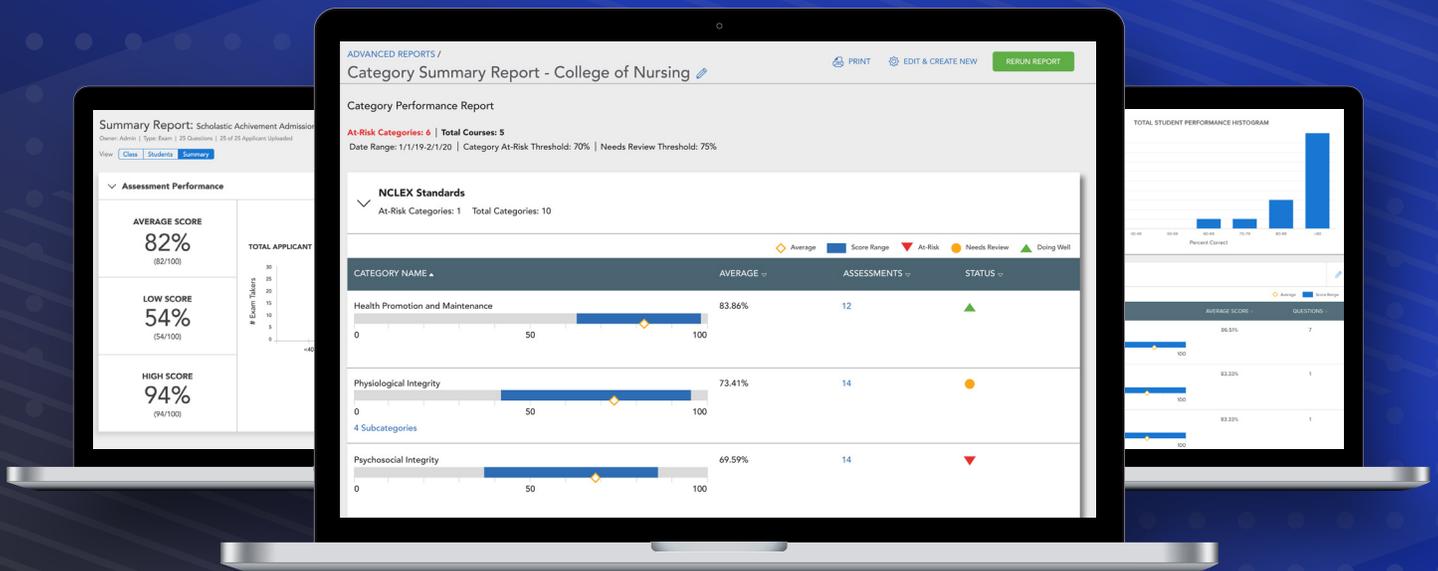
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INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

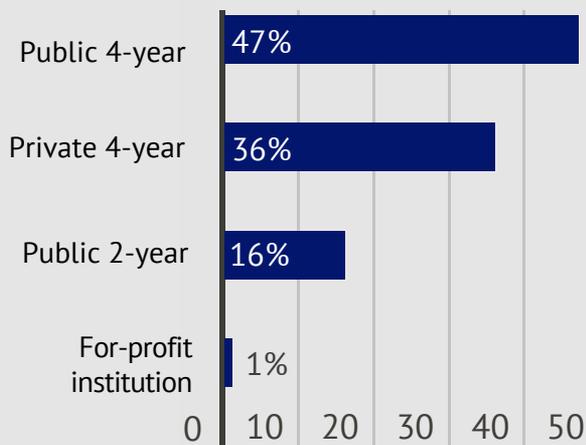
ExamSoft has partnered with Hanover Research to develop and disseminate a survey to college and university faculty, administrators, and heads of technology to understand how technology has been used during the pandemic and what technological resources they may continue to use after the pandemic ends.

The survey was administered online in January and February 2021. The analysis includes a total of 300 respondents, all administrators at either a four-year public, four-year private, two-year public or for-profit institutions.

INSTITUTION TYPE

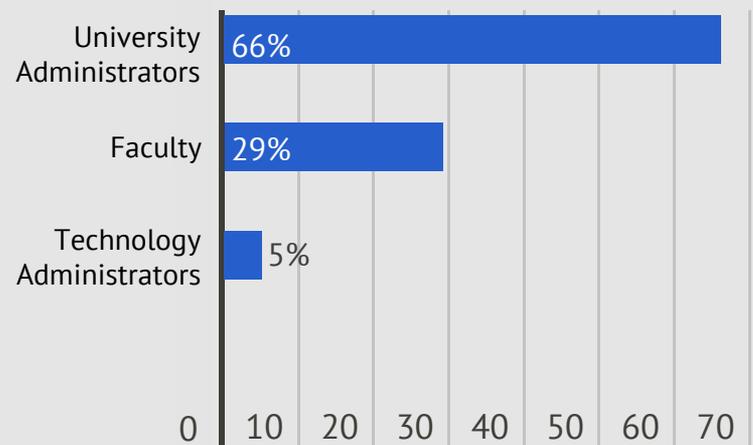
In what type of higher education institution do you work?

(n=300)



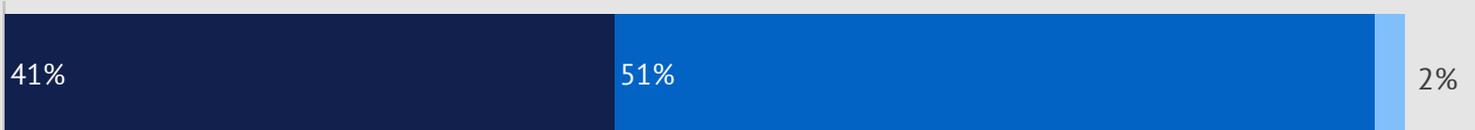
Role

(n=300)



Do your responsibilities while working at your higher education institution include supporting Medical/Nursing/Healthcare programs?

Yes No Unsure



Note: Forty-one percent of respondents support medical/nursing/healthcare programs in some way as part of their role while 51 percent do not. A remaining two percent of respondents were unsure, while six percent did not respond.

HIGH-LEVEL KEY FINDINGS

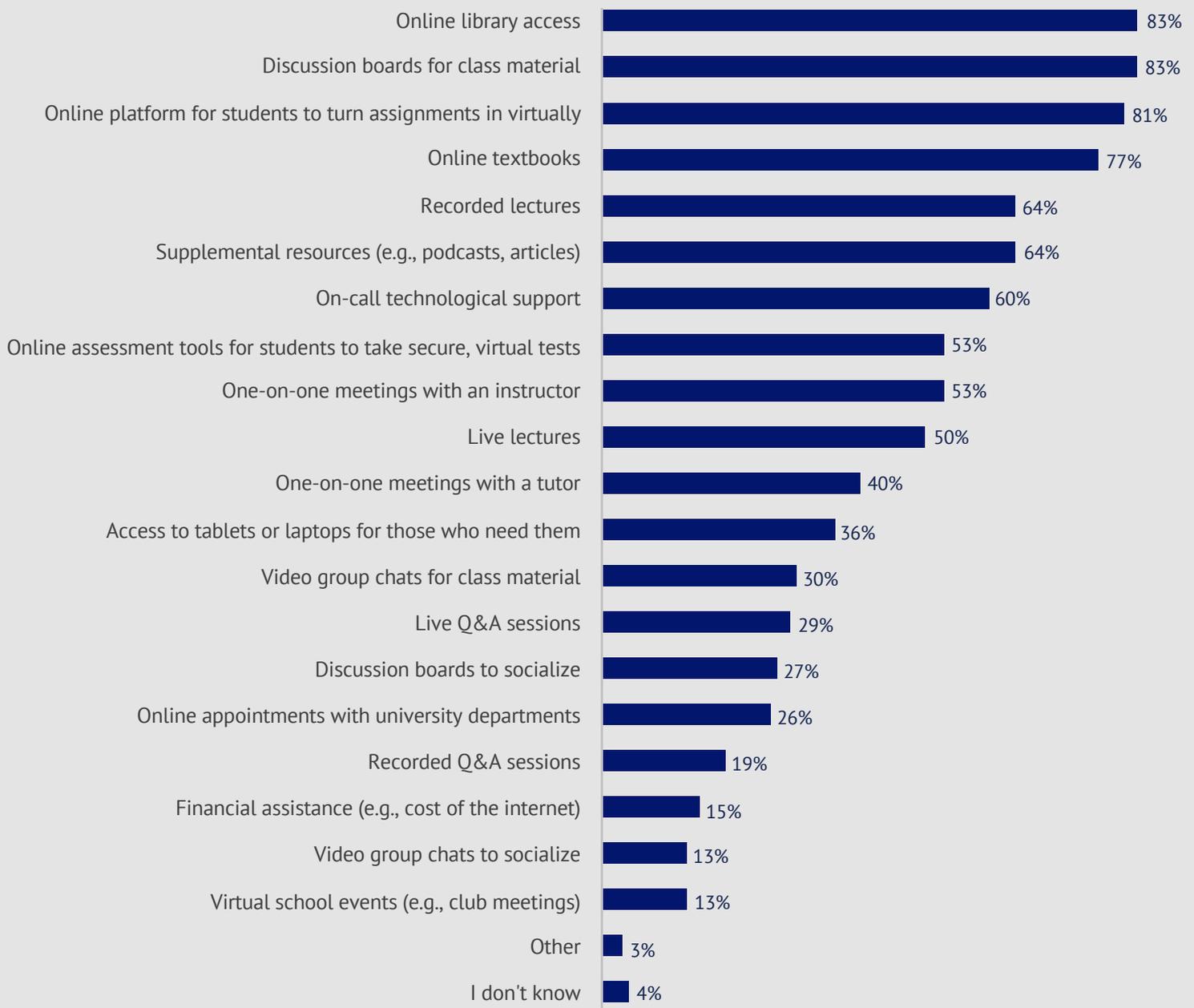
- Respondents believe that higher education institutions will continue to invest in online education even after the pandemic ends. They also believe that their institution will offer more online classes in the future than it did before the pandemic. Ninety-six percent of respondents believe that higher education institutions in general will continue to invest in online education, and 88 percent report that they believe that their institution will offer more classes online than it did before the pandemic. Many, but fewer, believe that faculty (81 percent) and students (67 percent) will be more interested in online teaching and learning after the pandemic than they were before.
- In general, respondent institutions already had online library access and discussion boards for class materials before the pandemic, and implemented events and online appointments after the pandemic began. Before the pandemic, 83 percent of respondents indicated that their institutions had both online library access as well as discussion boards for class materials. The most common resources adopted by respondent institutions after the pandemic began (that they did not already have) are virtual school events (72 percent) as well as online appointments with university departments (65 percent).
- Many indicate that their institutions struggled in some ways to effectively transition to an online setting. Less than half of respondents report that their institution was able to very or extremely effectively deliver exams remotely (48 percent), ensure that academic standards remained high (47 percent), and ensure equitable access to virtual instruction to students (45 percent). And while 52 percent believe that faculty accessibility improved during the move to online learning, 70 percent feel that student engagement worsened.
- In some instances, those who support medical or nursing programs indicate that their institutions used more technology in the past and will use more in the future than those who do not support medical or nursing programs. Significantly more respondents associated with medical programs (74 percent) report having had on-call technological support before the pandemic as compared to those not associated with these programs (59 percent). Additionally, significantly more respondents associated with medical programs (73 percent) believe that their institution will use technology for remote exams more frequently than before the pandemic as compared to those who do not support medical or nursing programs (53 percent).

ONLINE LEARNING FEATURES BEFORE COVID-19

Online learning features that were most common before the pandemic are those associated with library access and classroom discussion. Least common before the pandemic include virtual school events (13 percent), video group chats to socialize (13 percent), and financial assistance for online resources (15 percent).

Before the pandemic, which of the following online learning features were used at your institution? Please select all that apply.

(n=300)



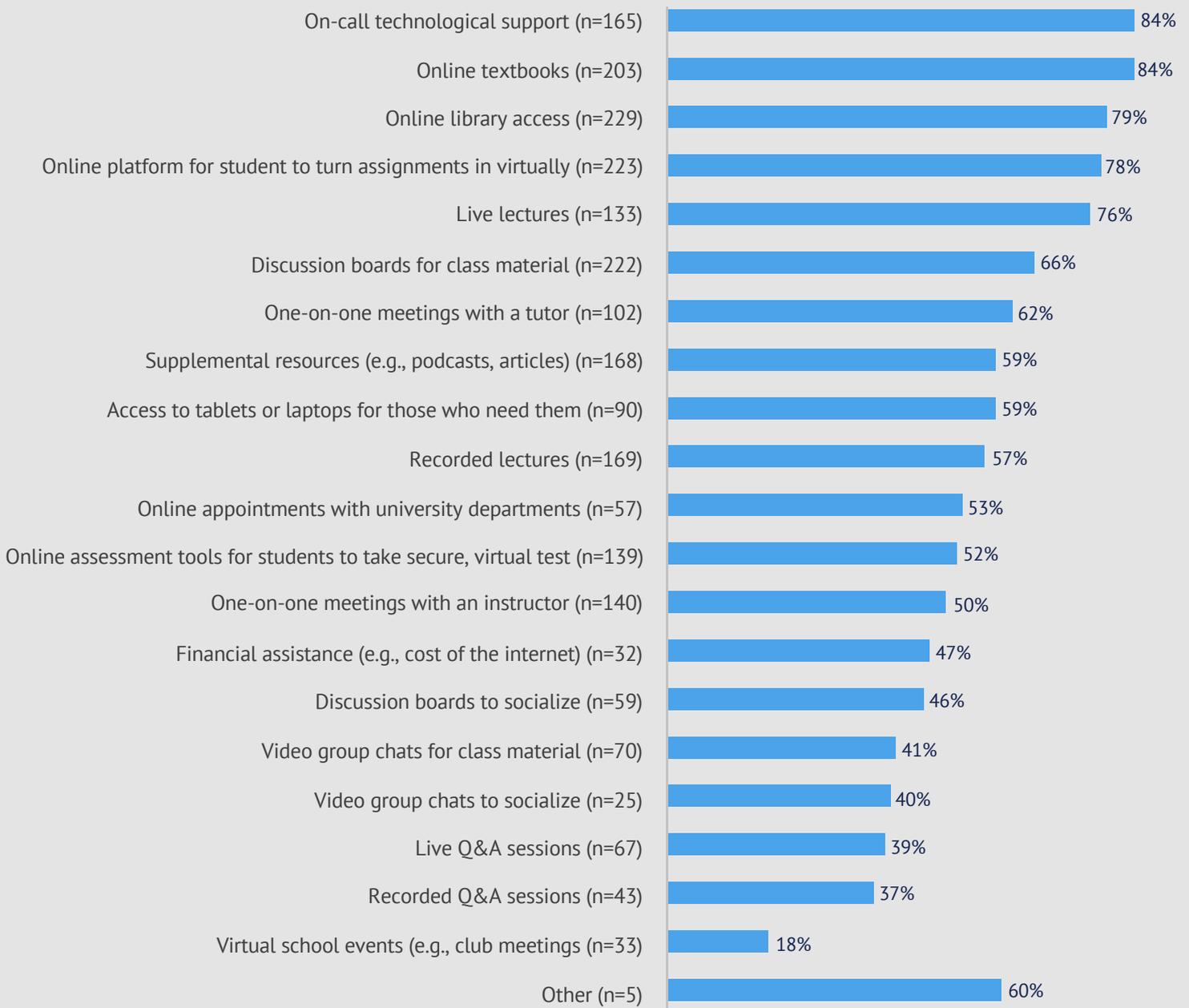
Note: Values sum to more than 100 percent because respondents could select all that apply.

FREQUENCY OF ONLINE TOOL USE BEFORE COVID-19

Prior to the pandemic, respondents indicate that the most common online tools used daily or 2 to 3 times a week were support services and online textbook or library access. Least used with this frequency were virtual school events (18 percent), followed by recorded (37 percent) or live (39 percent) Q&A sessions.

How often do you believe the following were used prior to the pandemic?

% Daily + % 2-3 times a week



Note: The percentages of daily and 2-3 times a week feature usage combined data in the chart below/above reflects responses only from those who chose the respective online features as being used pre-pandemic. They were asked the follow-up question about usage rate/frequency of usage of each feature they selected only if they chose that they were using them pre-pandemic.

ONLINE SUPPORT TOOLS FOR INSTRUCTORS BEFORE COVID-19

In terms of existing online support for instructors before the pandemic, respondents report that their institutions most commonly provided instructors with access to instructions on how to use online platforms as well as on-call technological support.

- Perceptions of access to on-call technological support vary based on program support and role. Significantly more respondents who support medical or nursing programs (74 percent) indicate that instructors at their institution had on-call technological support as compared to those who do not support medical or nursing programs (59 percent). Additionally, significantly fewer faculty members indicate that on-call technological support (53 percent) was available to them as compared to technology administrators (86 percent) and university administrators (69 percent).

Before the pandemic, which of the following online supports for instructors did your institution have access to? Please select all that apply.
(n=300)



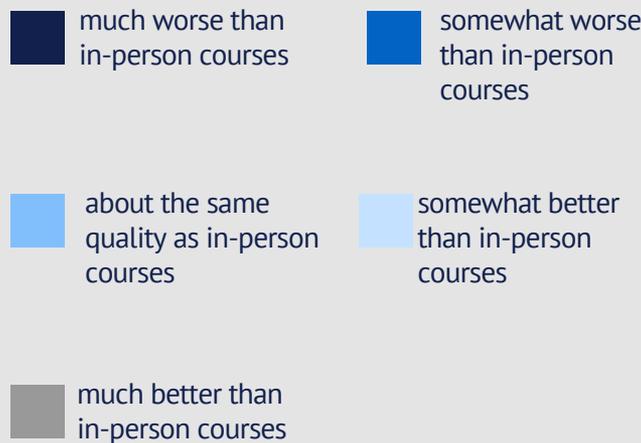
Note: Values sum to more than 100 percent because respondents could select all that apply.

PERCEPTION OF ONLINE COURSES BEFORE COVID-19

Before the pandemic, most perceived the quality of online courses to be worse than or of about the same quality as in-person courses. Forty-seven percent report that they believed online courses to be at least somewhat worse than in-person courses before the pandemic, while 45 percent believed them to be of about the same quality.

- Significantly more respondents who support medical or nursing programs (55 percent) find that online and in-person courses are of about the same quality as compared to those who do not support medical and nursing programs (38 percent).

Before the pandemic, how did you perceive the quality of online courses as compared to in-person courses? I believe online courses were...
(n=300)



Note: Values sum to more than 100 percent because respondents could select all that apply.

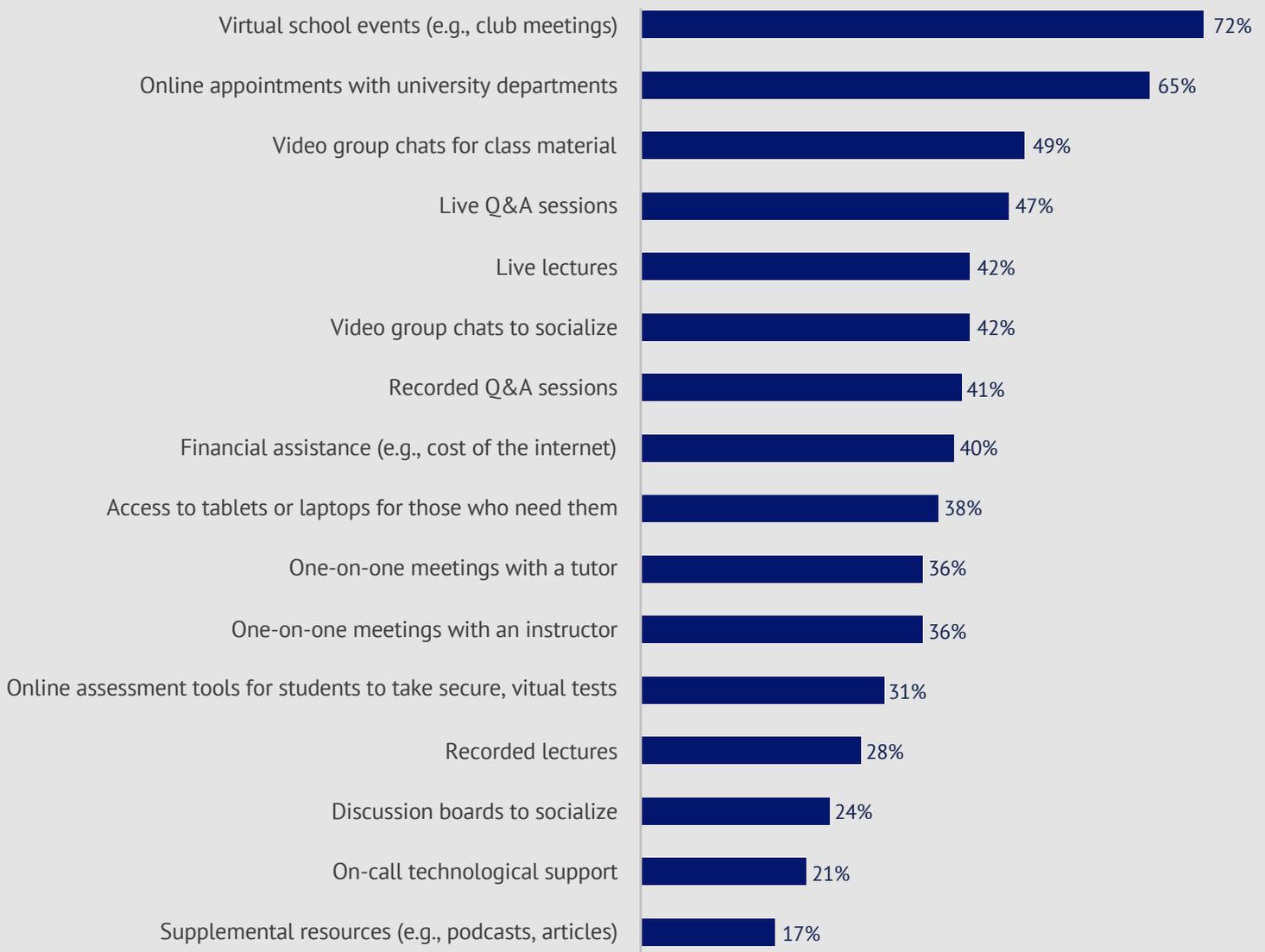
ONLINE RESOURCES IMPLEMENTED DURING THE PANDEMIC

Of the resources that institutions did not have before the pandemic, respondents report that their institution started using online resources during the pandemic for: virtual school events (72 percent) and online appointments with university departments (65 percent).

- Significantly more respondents who support a medical or nursing program (82 percent) report that their institution started using technology for virtual school events as compared to those who do not support a medical or nursing program (66 percent).

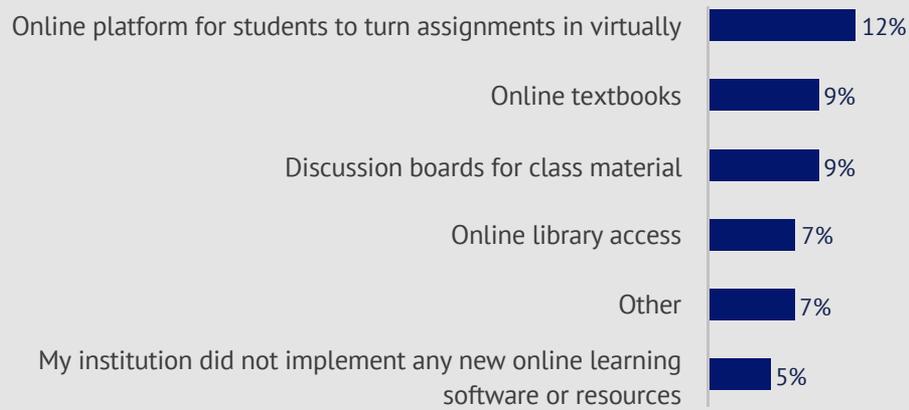
Which of the following online learning resources did your institution starting using after the pandemic began? Please select all that apply.

(n=278)



Note: Values sum to more than 100 percent because respondents could select all that apply.

ONLINE RESOURCES IMPLEMENTED DURING THE PANDEMIC (cont.)



Note: Values sum to more than 100 percent because respondents could select all that apply.

EFFECTIVENESS OF INSTITUTIONS MOVING TO REMOTE LEARNING

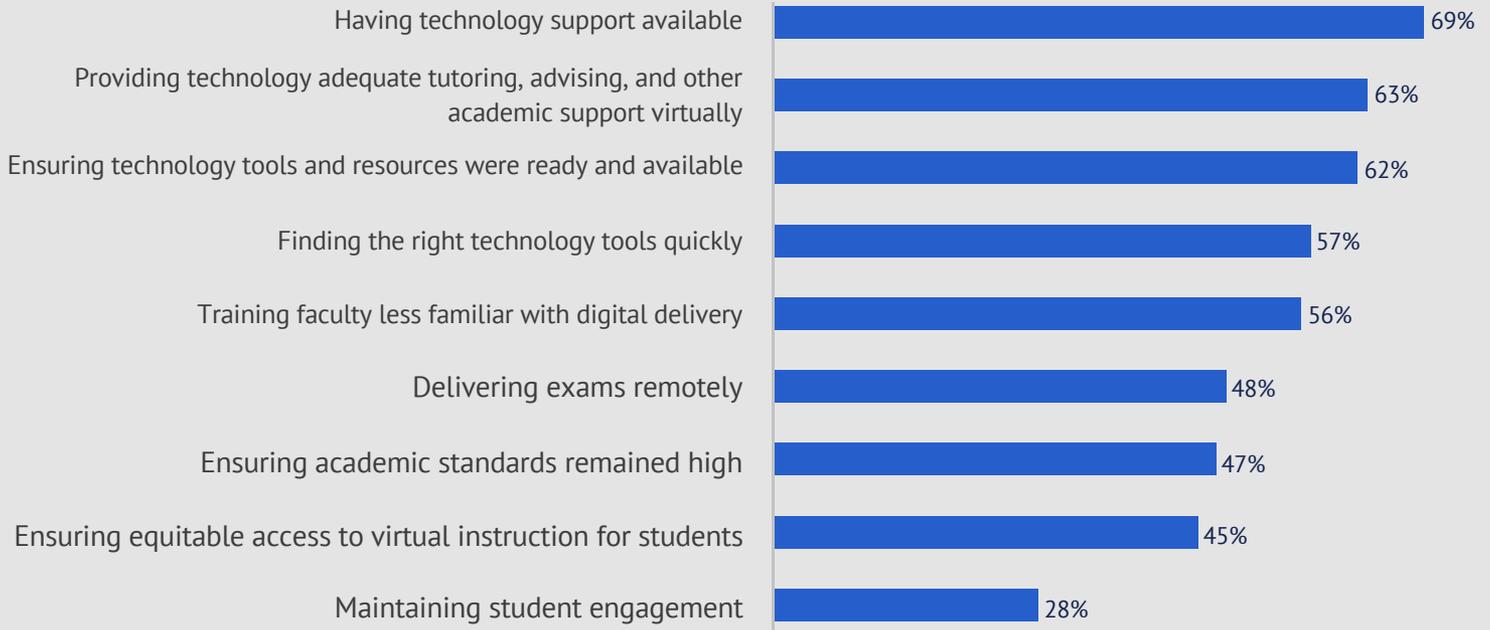
Less than half of respondents indicate that their institutions were able to either extremely or very effectively transition a variety of activities to an online setting. Only 28 percent indicate that they were able to maintain student engagement effectively. Further, few report that their institution was able to very or extremely effectively deliver exams remotely (48 percent), ensure academic standards remained high (47 percent), and ensure equitable access to virtual instruction to students (45 percent).

- Faculty, university administrators, and technology administrators have varying opinions on how effective their institution's transition was. For example, significantly fewer faculty members indicate that their institution was able to deliver exams remotely extremely or very effectively as compared to technology administrators (77 percent) or university administrators (51 percent).

How effective was your institution at the following when moving in-person classes to a remote or online setting?

% Extremely Effective + % Very Effective

(n=286)

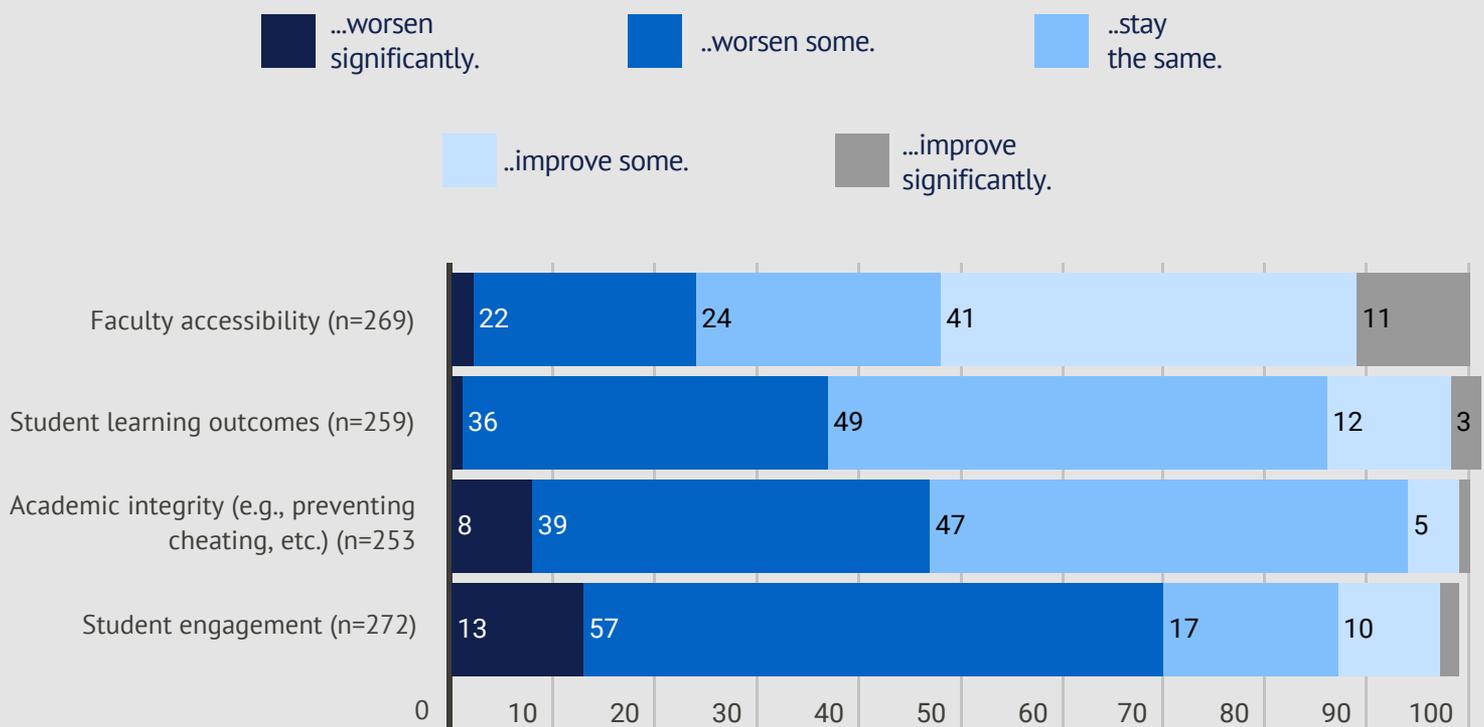


Note: Values sum to more than 100 percent because respondents could select all that apply.

EFFECTS OF ONLINE LEARNING

While respondents indicate that online learning helped improve faculty accessibility, in general they find other measures to have stayed the same or have worsened during remote learning. About half report that the move to remote learning actually improved faculty accessibility (52 percent), and that student learning outcomes (49 percent) and academic integrity (47 percent) have stayed about the same. Respondents find that student engagement notably got worse during online learning, with 70 percent indicating that this is the case.

How do you think the move to online learning has affected each of the following at your institution? Online learning, as compared to in-person learning, has caused the following to...



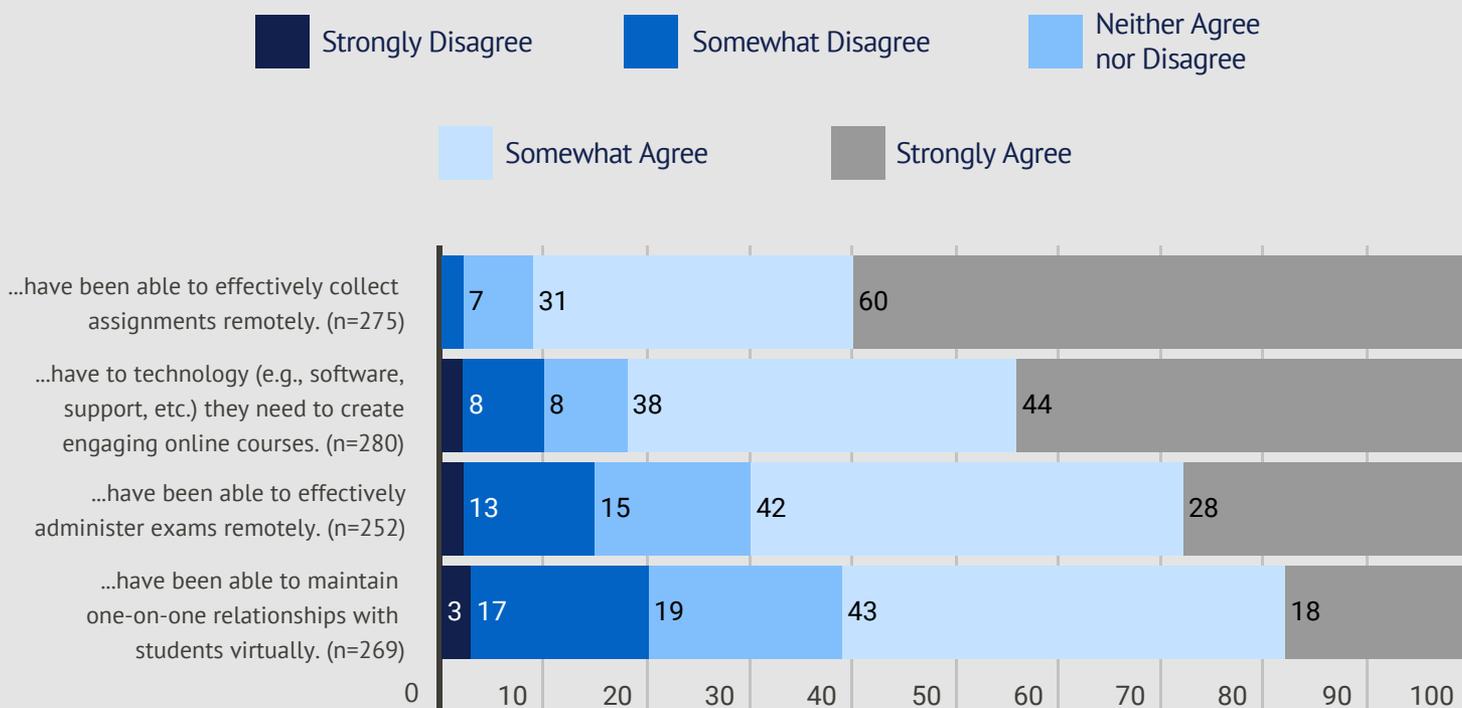
Note: Values sum to more than 100 percent because respondents could select all that apply.

FACULTY ACTIONS DURING THE PANDEMIC

In general, respondents agree that faculty have been able to effectively shift their responsibilities to a remote setting. In particular, they note that faculty have been able to effectively collect assignments remotely (90 percent) and have the technology they need to create engaging online courses (82 percent). Additionally, 71 percent indicate that they have been able to administer exams remotely. Still, there is room for improvement when it comes to maintaining one-on-one relationships with students virtually (61 percent).

- Those who support medical or nursing programs indicate that their faculty had more success in some areas when shifting to online learning than those respondents who do not support medical or nursing programs. For example, significantly fewer respondents who do not support medical or nursing programs report that they have been able to effectively administer exams remotely (62 percent) as compared to those who do support a medical or nursing program (80 percent).

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Faculty at my institution...



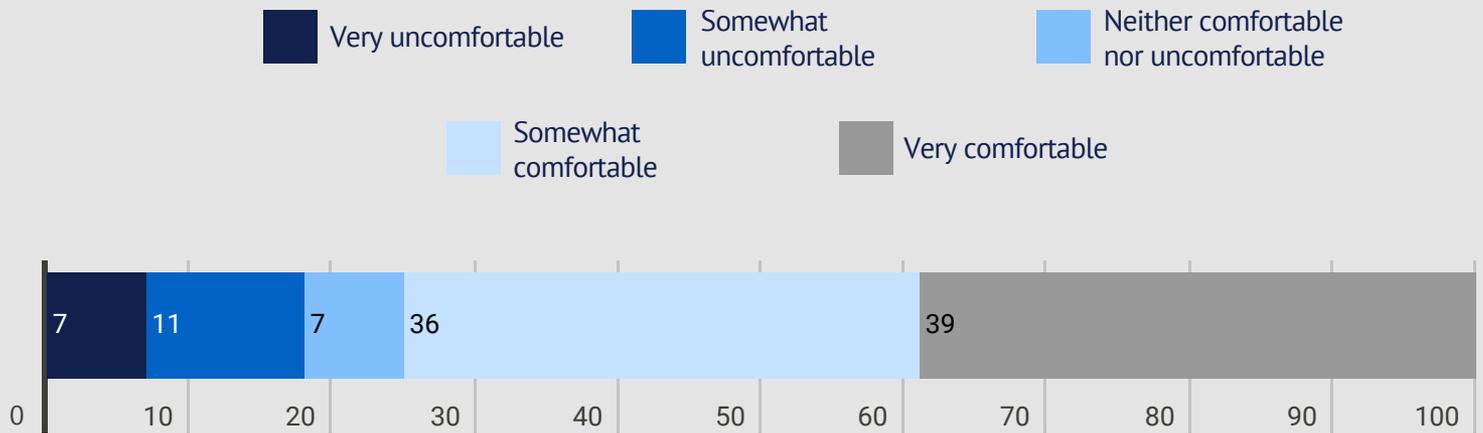
Note: Values sum to more than 100 percent because respondents could select all that apply.

COMFORT TEACHING CLASSES ONLINE

Three-fourths of faculty indicate that they feel comfortable teaching classes online. Still, 18 percent report that they are still uncomfortable to some degree teaching their courses online.

How comfortable do you currently feel teaching classes online?

(n=84)



Note: Values sum to more than 100 percent because respondents could select all that apply.

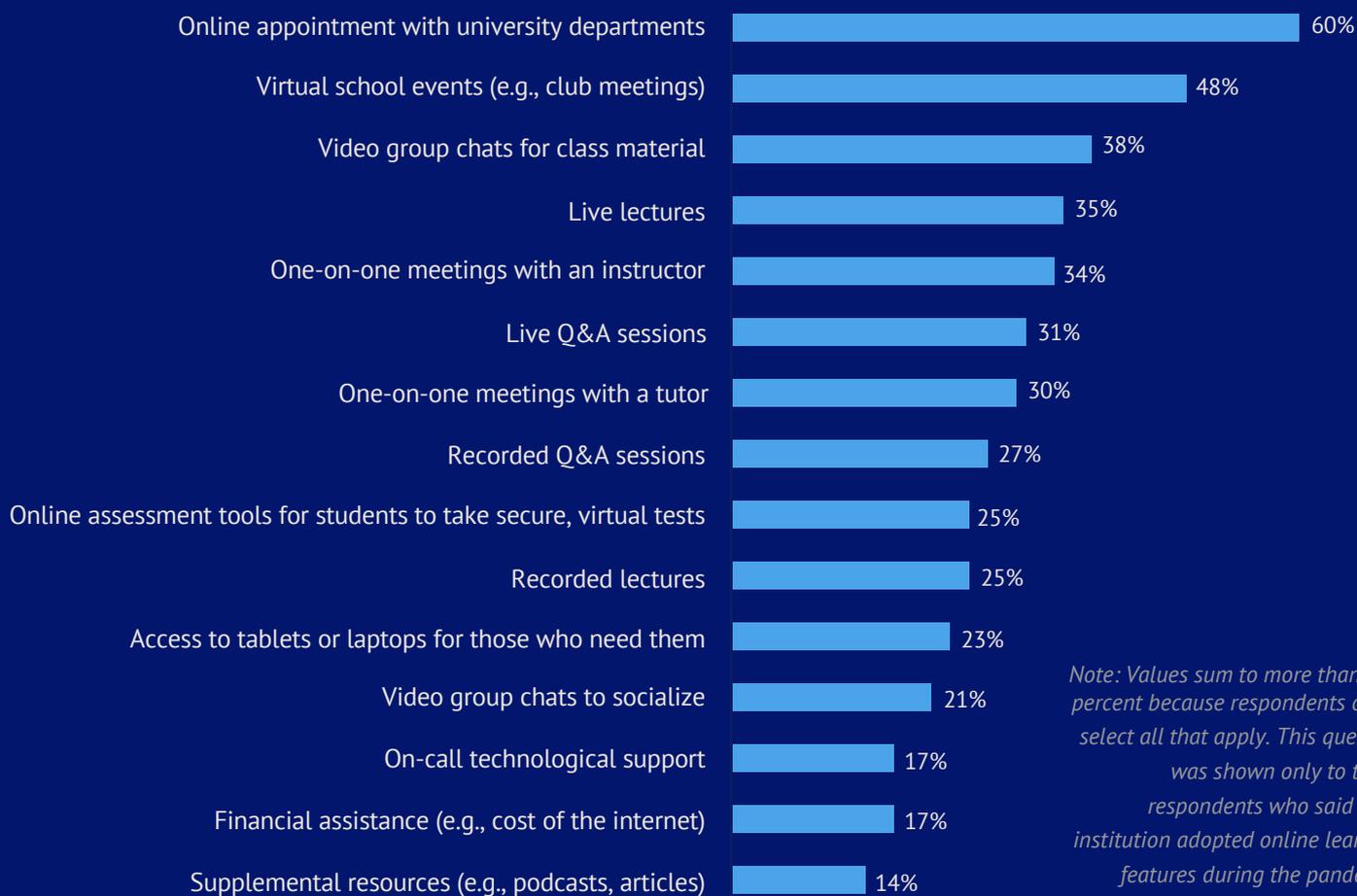
TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES THEIR INSTITUTION WILL CONTINUE TO USE

When asked which technological resources their institution will continue to use after the pandemic is over (that they did not already indicate having had before), respondents report that their institution will most likely keep using online appointments with university departments and virtual school events. As many respondents indicated that their institution already had online library access, discussion boards for class material, and online textbooks, a smaller percent indicates that they will keep using these resources.

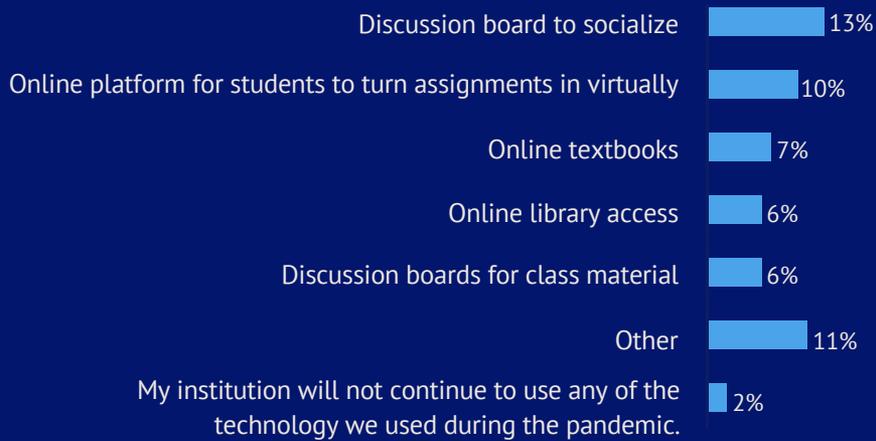
- Significantly more respondents who support medical or nursing programs (68 percent) indicate that they will keep using online appointments with university departments as compared to those who do not support a medical or nursing program (53 percent).

When the pandemic is over, which of the following technological supports and resources do you think your institution will continue to use? Please select all that apply.

(n=257)



TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES THEIR INSTITUTION WILL CONTINUE TO USE (cont.)



Note: Values sum to more than 100 percent because respondents could select all that apply.

PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR INSTITUTION POST-PANDEMIC

Most indicate that their institution will offer more online classes than it did before the pandemic. While 88 percent say that they will offer more online courses, only 62 percent report that they will use technology for students to take exams remotely. Still, respondents report that they believe that their institution will record more live lectures (82 percent) and use technology to turn in assignments (82 percent) more than it did before the pandemic.

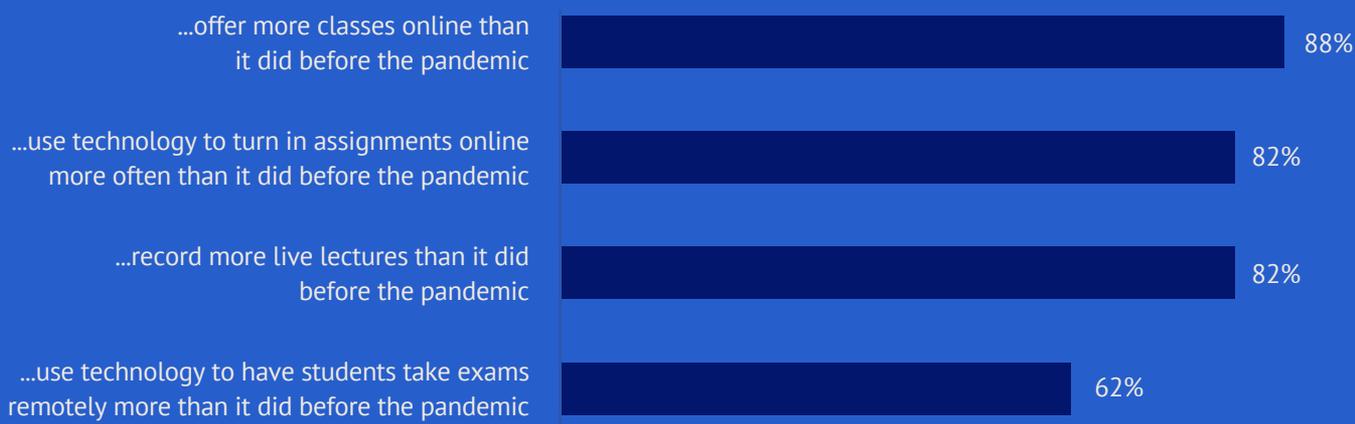
- Perceptions of the future use of technology to take exams remotely differ based on institution type and support of a program. Significantly more respondents from 2-year institutions (80 percent) than 4-year institutions (58 percent) indicate that they believe their institution will use more technology for students to take exams remotely than before the pandemic. Additionally, significantly more respondents who support medical and nursing programs (73 percent) also believe that their institution will use technology for remote exams more frequently than before the pandemic as compared to those who do not support medical or nursing programs (53 percent).

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

After the pandemic ends, I believe my institution will...

% Strongly Agree + % Somewhat Agree

(n=279)



Note: Values sum to more than 100 percent because respondents could select all that apply.

PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR HIGHER ED INSTITUTION POST-PANDEMIC

While almost all believe that higher education institutions will continue to invest in online education, fewer believe that faculty and students are interested in online teaching and learning. Though respondents believe that institutions will continue investing in online education (96 percent), only two-thirds think that more students will be interested in online learning after the pandemic than they were before the pandemic.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

% Strongly Agree + % Somewhat Agree

(n=281)



Note: Values sum to more than 100 percent because respondents could select all that apply.

ABOUT EXAMSOFT

ExamSoft is the leading provider of educational assessment technology. Our secure assessment platform allows educators to more efficiently create, administer, grade, and analyze assessments with the goal of improving student performance and streamlining curricular design and accreditation reviews. ExamSoft offers unparalleled exam security combined with comprehensive and customizable data reporting to deliver a holistic view of course and student performance, from an entire class to individual students. With ExamSoft, faculty, staff, and administrators at every level get access to the in-depth learning analytics needed to make data-driven decisions—making a powerful and lasting impact on student learning, engagement, and retention. For more than 20 years, we've partnered with academic, certification, and licensing institutions around the world. Our proven history of delivering both high- and low-stakes exams in a secure and stable environment supports clients in their mission of ensuring student success. With over 2,000 current clients and more than 75 million exams delivered to date, ExamSoft is a trusted leader in computer-based testing and assessment technology. ExamSoft is headquartered in Dallas, Texas.

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Founded in 2003, Hanover Research is a global research and analytics firm that delivers market intelligence through a unique, fixed-fee model to more than 1,200 clients. Headquartered in Arlington, Virginia, Hanover employs high-caliber market researchers, analysts, and account executives to provide a service that is revolutionary in its combination of flexibility and affordability. Hanover was named a Top 50 Market Research Firm by the American Marketing Association in 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018, and has also been twice named a Washington Business Journal Fastest Growing Company.

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