

# Digital Learning Survey

StudentVu Survey with CDLRA

**Survey Results**

**October 2024**

# Introduction & Method

## Project Purpose

Academica conducted a survey to better understand perspectives on digital and virtual teaching among Canadian postsecondary students. This survey is aligned with and contains questions adapted from the Canadian Digital Learning Research Association's annual surveys. For more about the CDLRA, please visit <https://cdlra-acrfl.ca/>.

## Method

Current postsecondary students in Canada from Academica's StudentVu panel were invited by email to participate in an online survey between September 27 and October 18, 2024. Two reminders were issued and panelists were incentivized through our internal points system for their time.

A total of **1,192** students qualified for and completed the survey. Findings are weighted by gender from Statistics Canada's 2021/2022 Postsecondary Student Information System (PSIS) data.



# Introduction & Method

## About this Report

**Context:** This survey was designed with the CDLRA's 2024 surveys in mind. We strongly encourage readers to read the CDLRA 2024 Pan-Canadian Report, currently available for download through the CDLRA website, to understand the broader context of this project.

**Data Notes:** The question text and overall n-size for responses for each question are displayed at the bottom of each slide. Data by institution type is displayed throughout the survey results; trades institutions are omitted due to n-size.

**Comments:** Comments displayed in this report were selected for clarity and detail; the background of the speaker was also considered to ensure a variety of perspectives. As such, comments may not be representative of all participants.



# Key Findings: Learning Format



**Experienced formats:** Most students had experienced at least one fully in-person class (69%); many had experienced at least one fully online class (40%) and/or at least one hybrid class (36%).

**Preferences:** When discussing their preferences, over half (58%) of students preferred a learning format where their courses are mostly or entirely in-person/on-campus; however, a sizable proportion (21%) preferred an entirely or mostly online education.

# Key Findings: Technology



**Experiences with Technology:** Most students had taken a course that used an LMS to manage interactions between instructors and students (84%), shared recorded lectures for later viewing (65%), and/or online polling or quizzes (64%). Despite media attention around the use of XR technologies in the classrooms, student rarely experienced these in the classroom (2%).

**Most Helpful Technologies:** LMS platforms for interactions with instructors and students (59%) and recorded lectures (48%).

**Least Helpful Technologies:** Academic integrity tools (11%) and/or online small group activities (9% each for asynchronous and synchronous). Over half of students indicated that “none” of the tools were unhelpful (54%).





# Key Findings: Learning Format



**Course Material Costs:** About half of students said that the cost of course materials prevented them—to at least some degree—from acquiring the materials they needed (5% always, 15% often, 43% sometimes). Some students took to the comments to express their frustration with the cost of digital materials, in particular.

**OERs:** Most students were not at all aware of OERs (64%); of those who were aware of OERs, about half (49%) said they had classes that had assigned OERs.

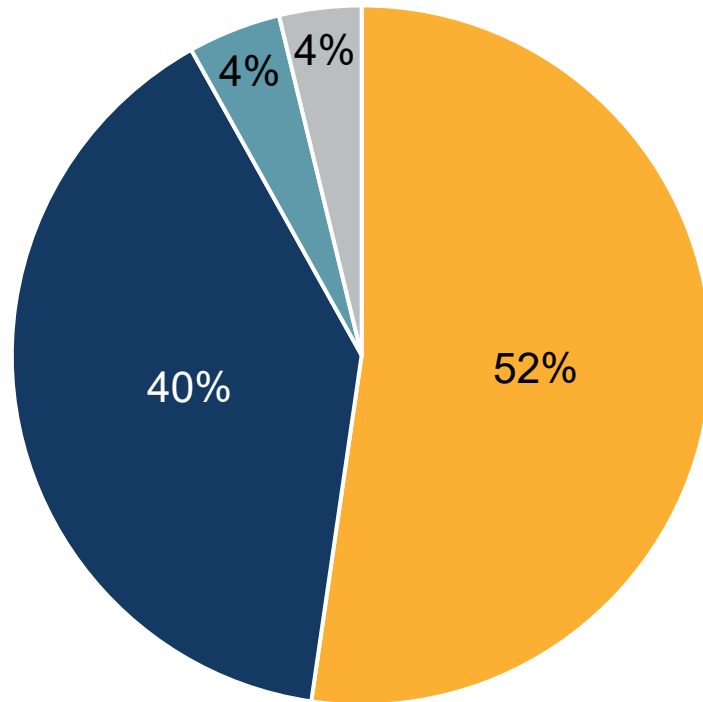
# Respondent Profile



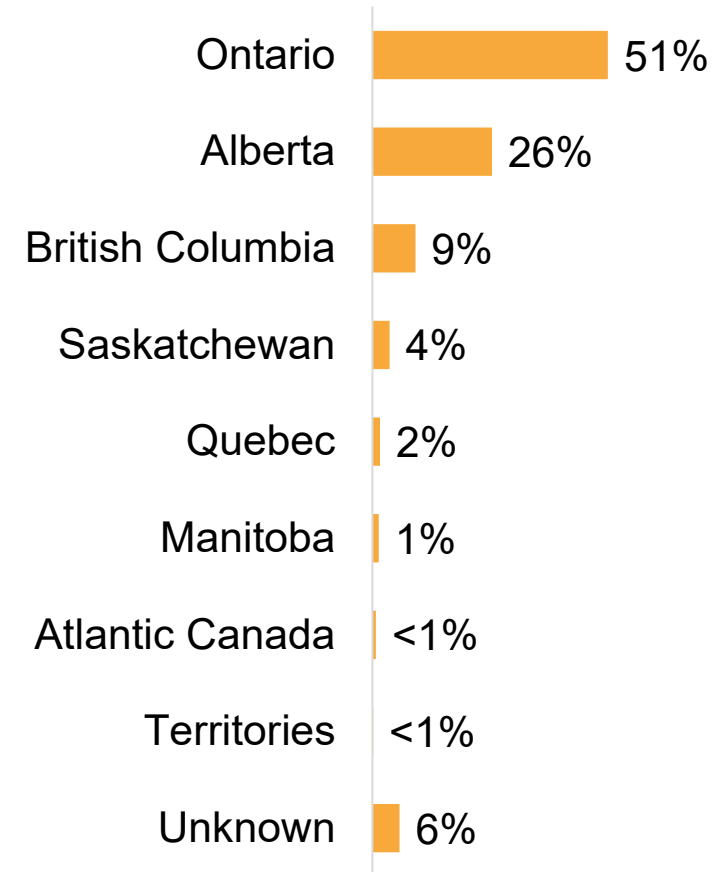
# Demographics

## Gender\*

■ Woman ■ Man ■ Other ■ Prefer not to answer



## Province or Territory of Residence



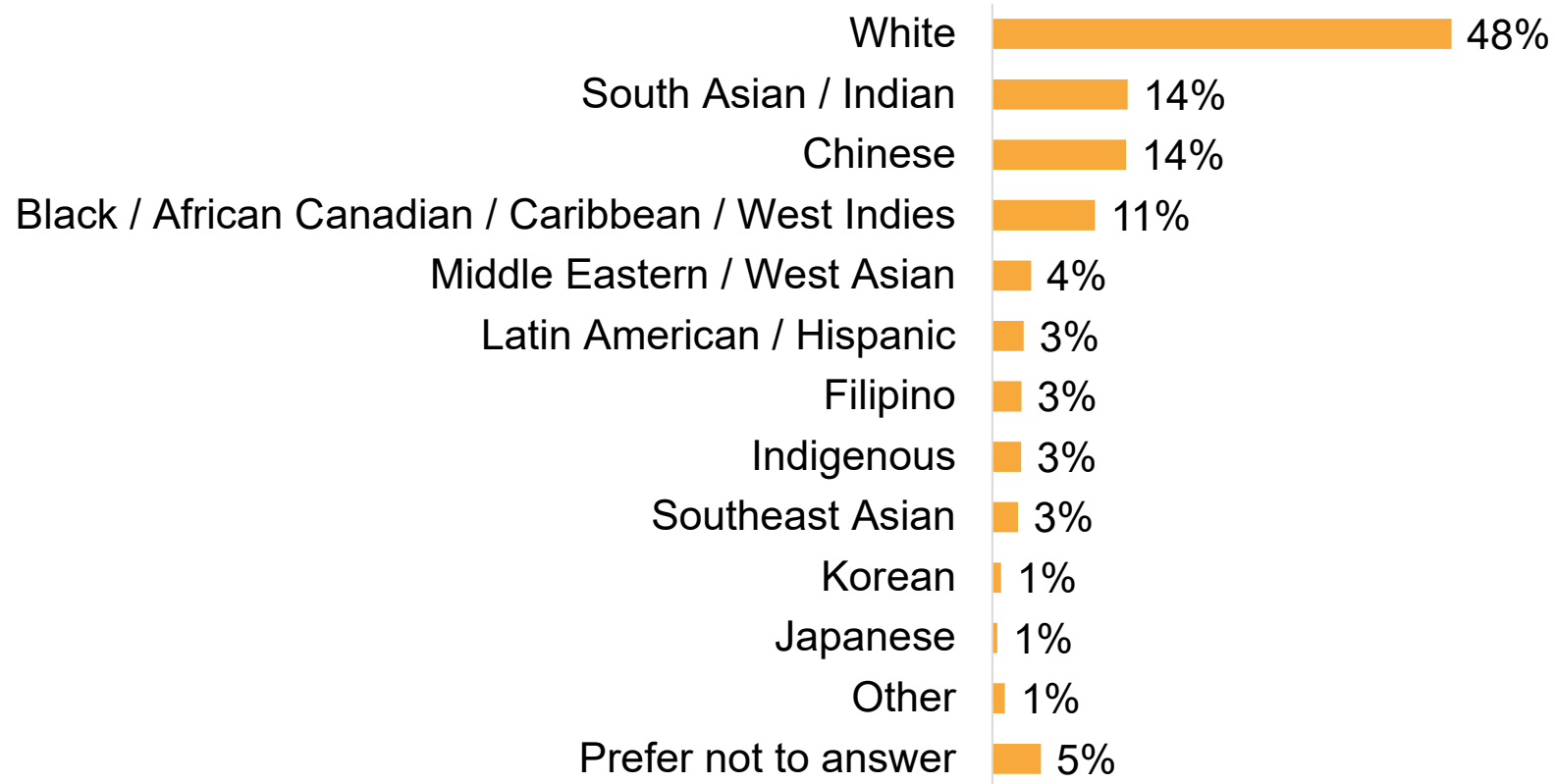
What is your gender? [\*Gender used for weights, see method] | Total n-size=1,192  
Province or territory of residence [Determined from FSA] | Total n-size=1,192





# Demographics

## Ethnicity

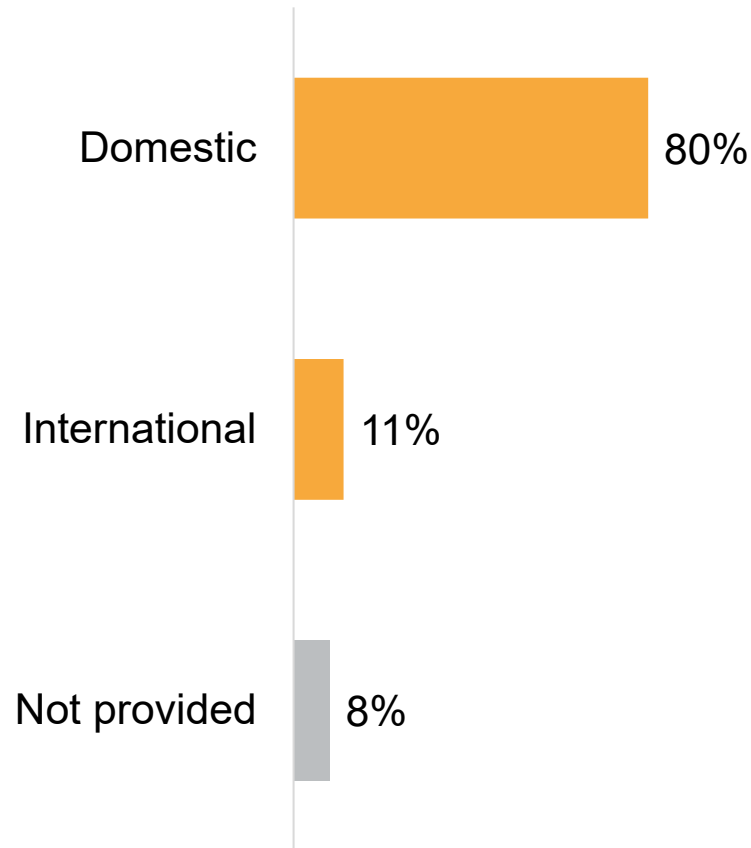


Which of the following best describe(s) your race or ethnicity? Select all that apply. | Total n-size=1,192

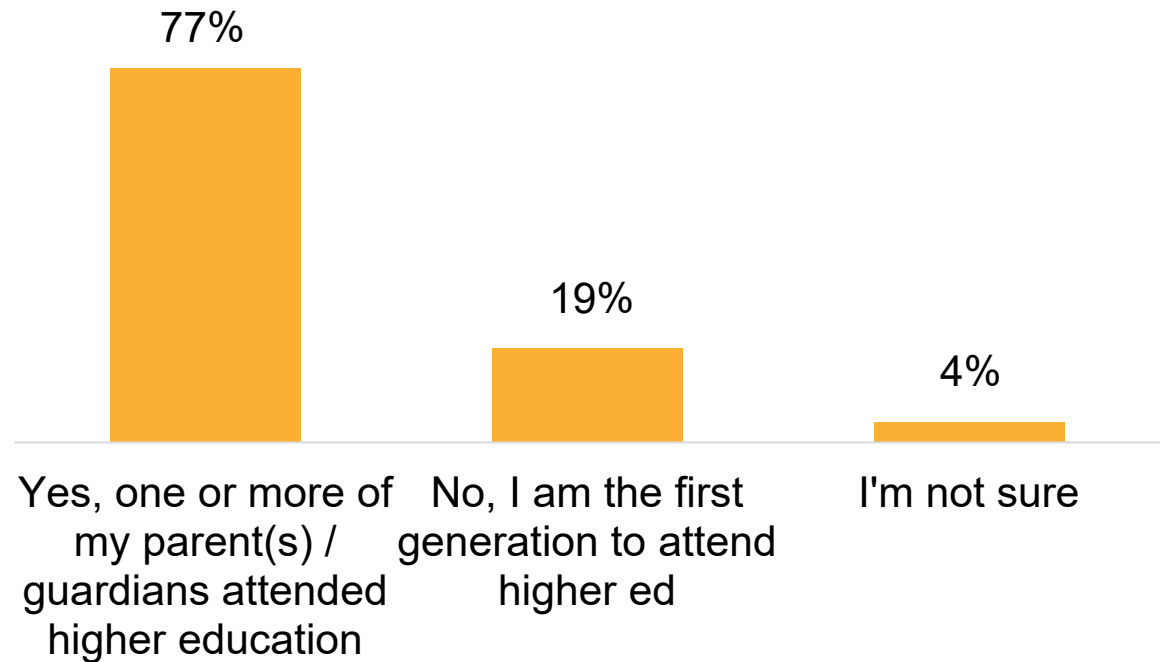


# Academic Characteristics

## Student Type



## Parents/Guardians Attended PSE



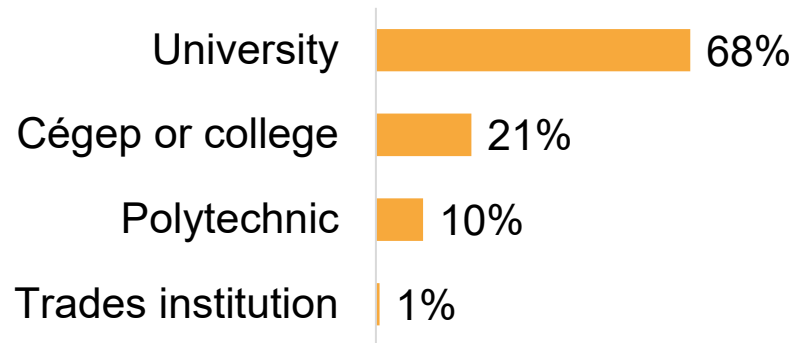
Student Type [Coded from panelist profile information]

Did your parent(s)/guardian(s) attend postsecondary education? | Total n-size=1,192

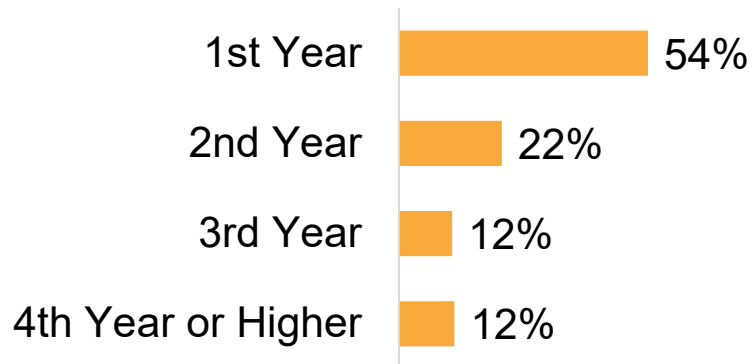


# Academic Characteristics

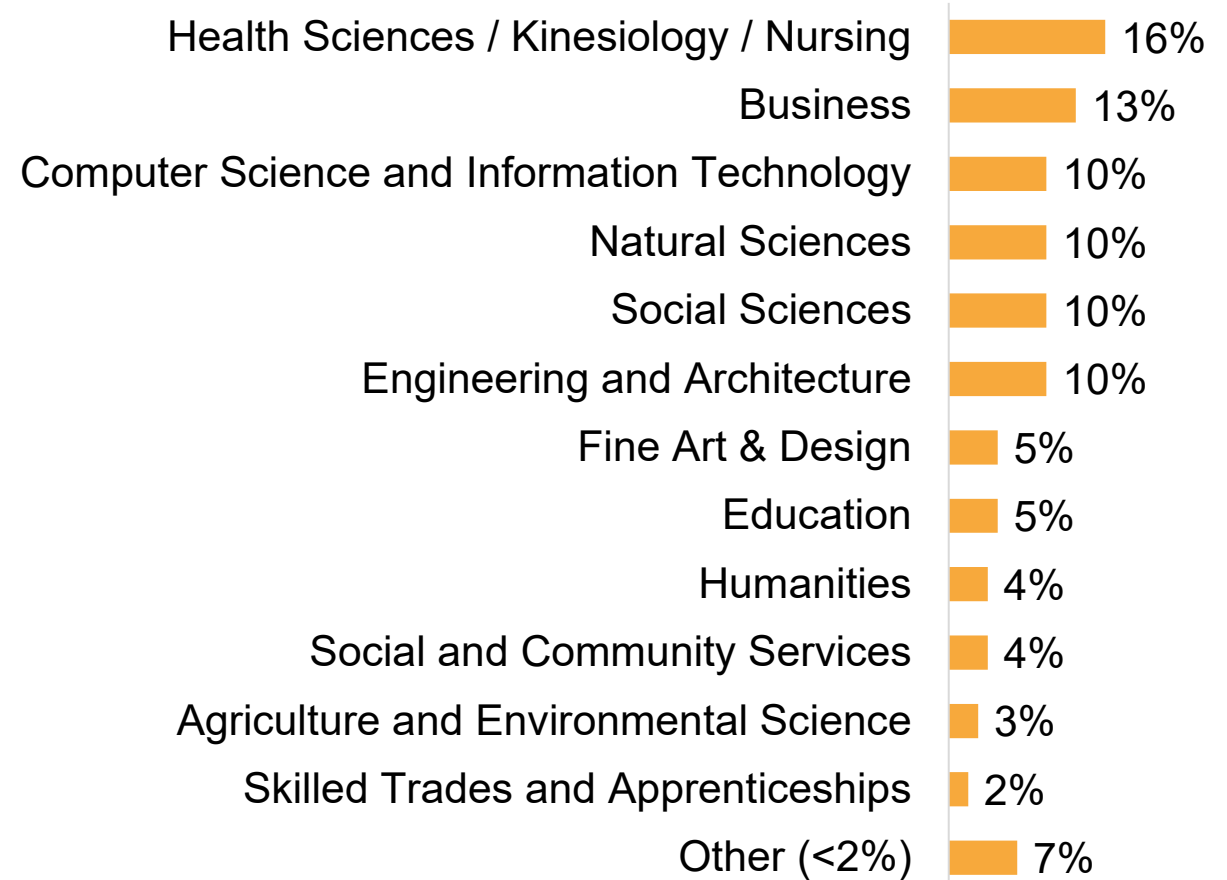
## Institution Type



## Year of Study



## Program of Study



Are you enrolled in a program at a Canadian postsecondary institution this academic year (2024-25)? | Total n-size=1,192

What year did you begin your current program in? [Calculated] | Total n-size=1,192

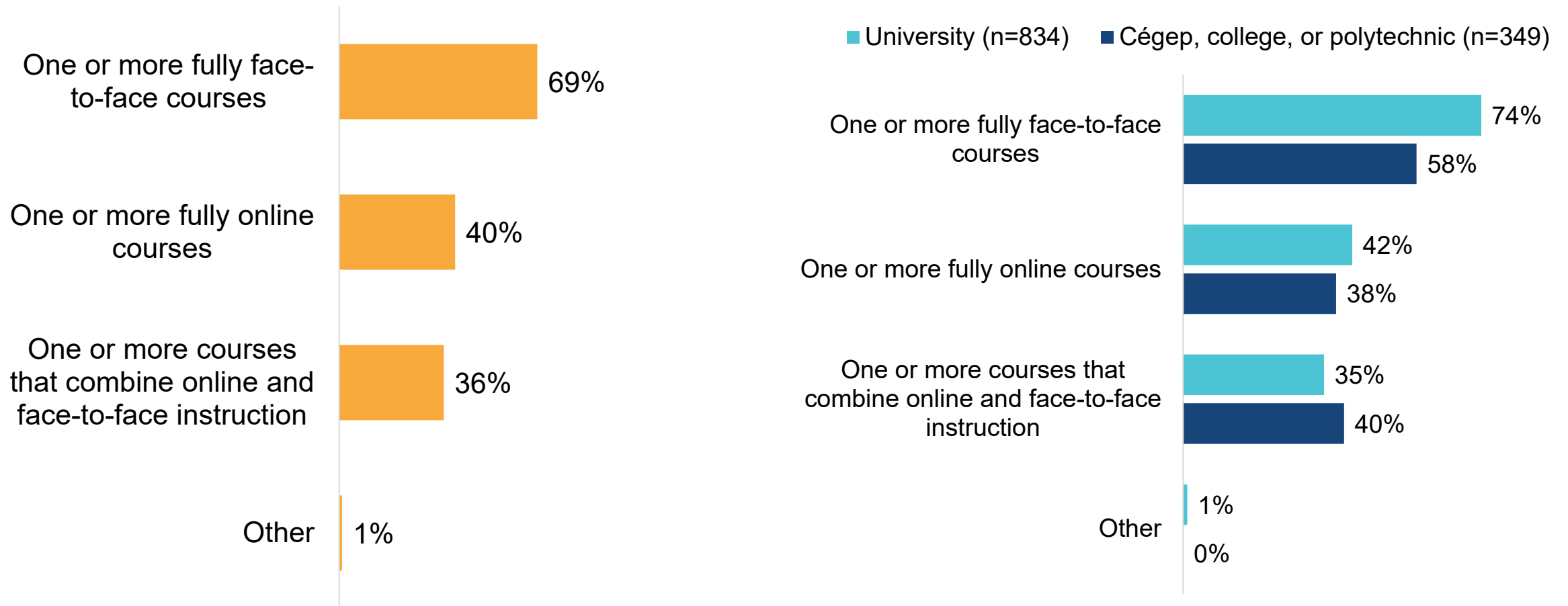
What type of program are you enrolled in? | Total n-size=1,192



# Survey Results



# Types of Courses Enrolled in

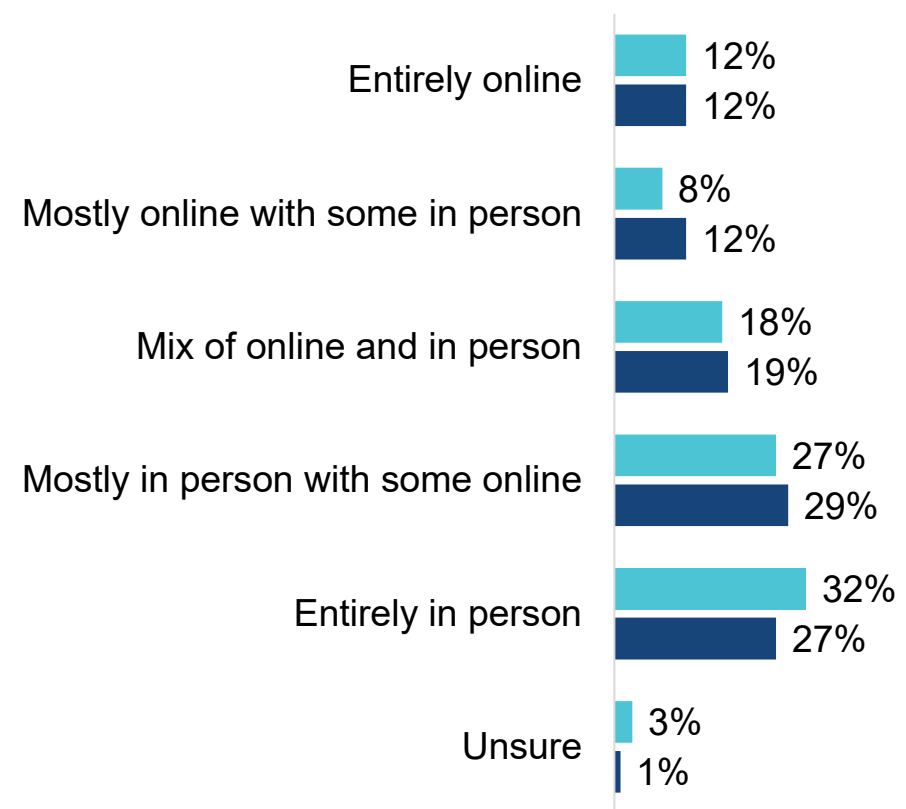
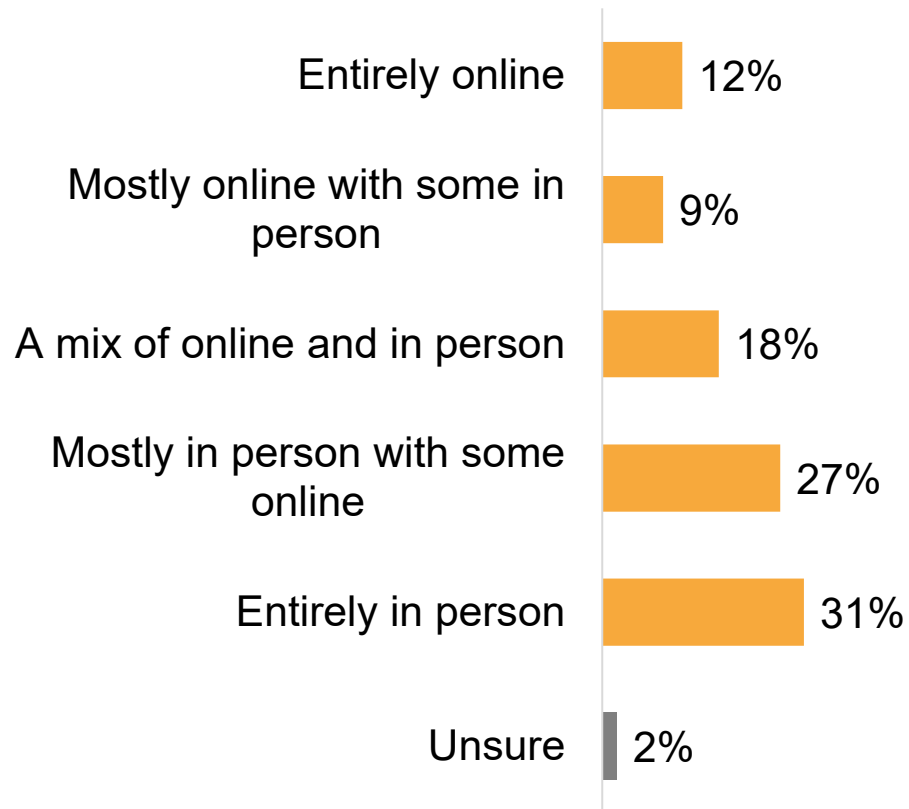


What types of courses have you been enrolled in in the last 12 months? Include courses you're enrolled in this term. | Total n-size=1,192



# Preferred Learning Format

■ University (n=834) ■ Cégep, college, or polytechnic (n=349)

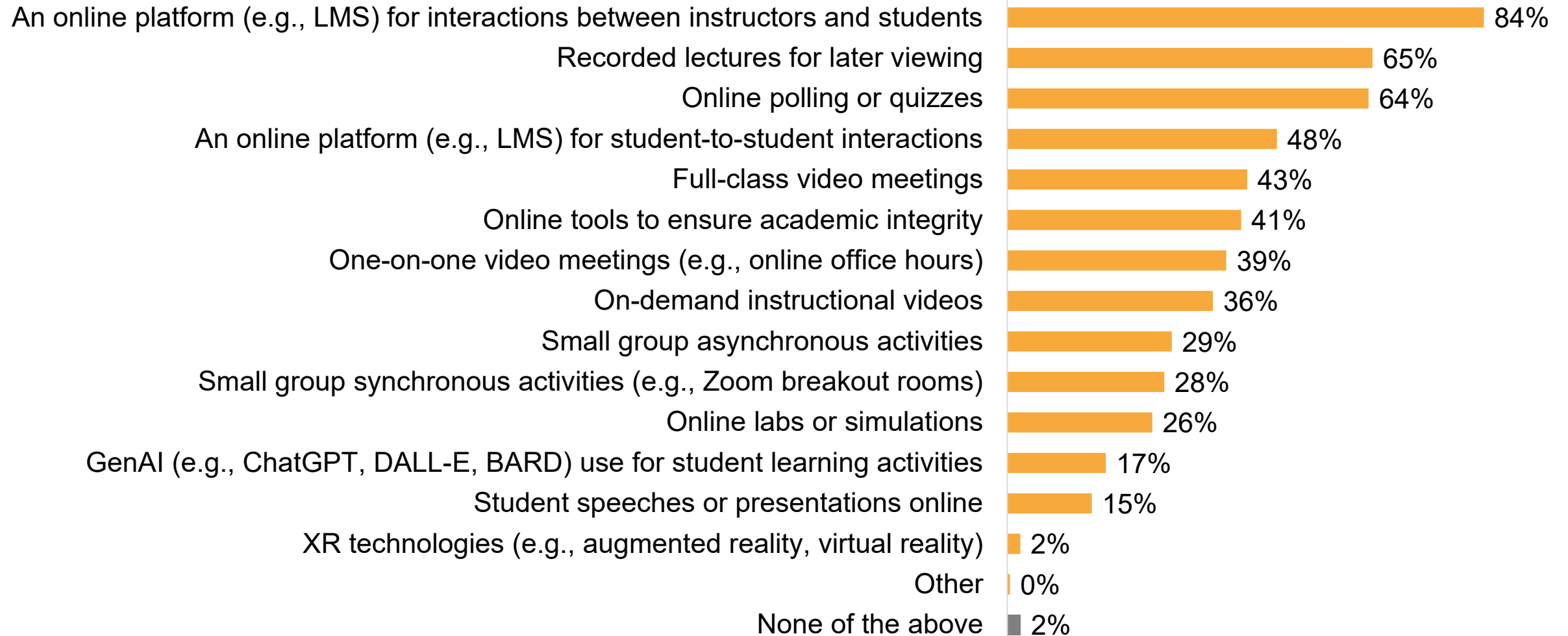


How would you describe your preferred format of learning? | Total n-size=1,192

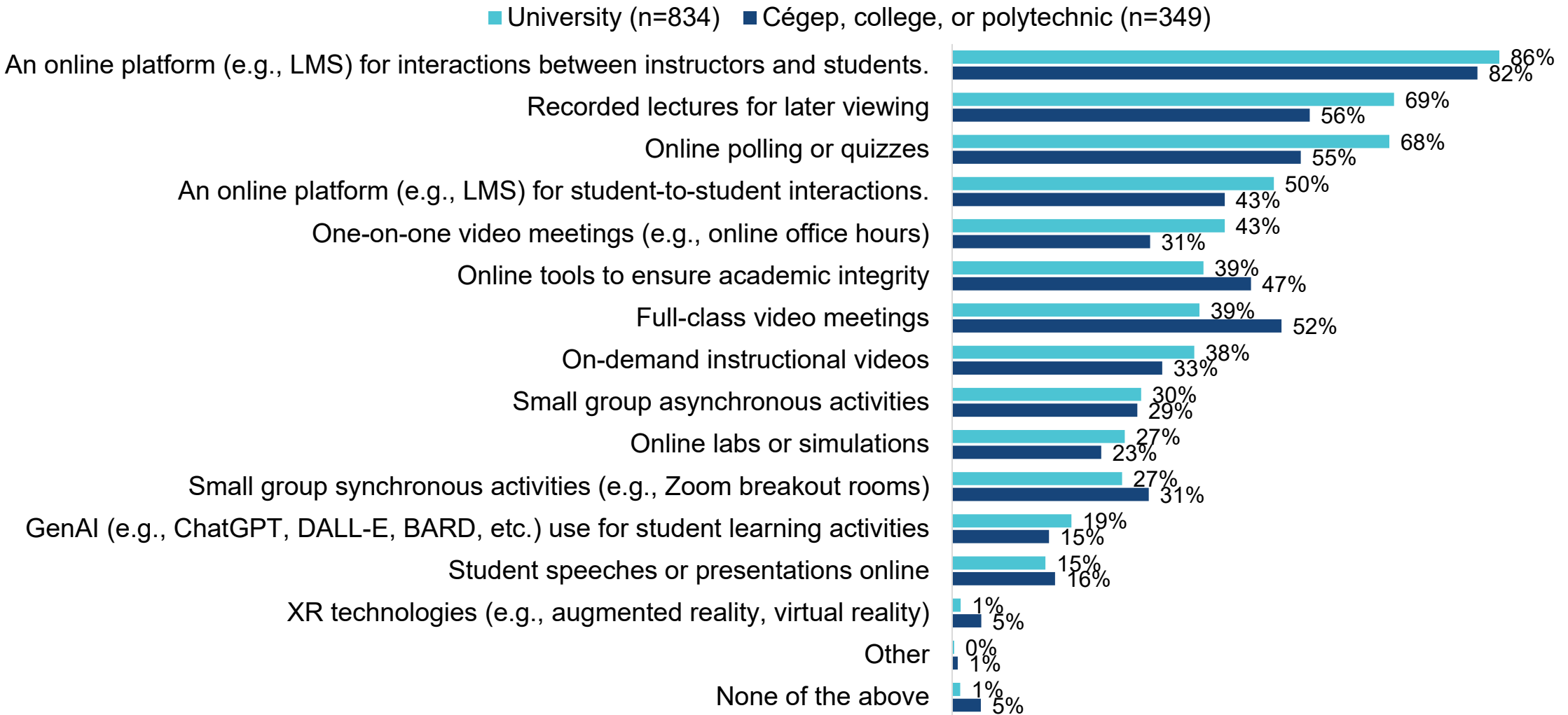




# Technologies Used in Courses



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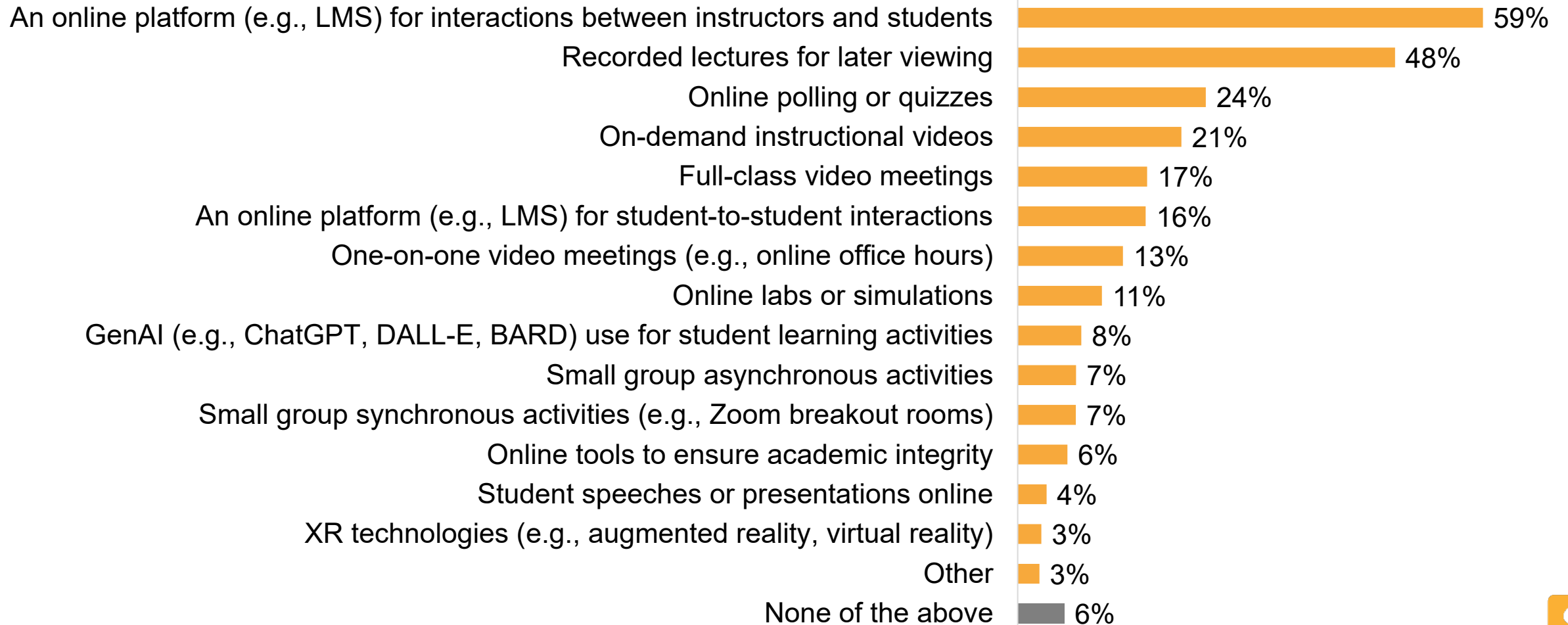


Please check all of the technologies that you have used in any of your courses over the past 12 months. | n = 1,183



# Most Helpful Technologies Used

Note: Respondents only saw technologies they had previously used and were permitted to select up to 3.



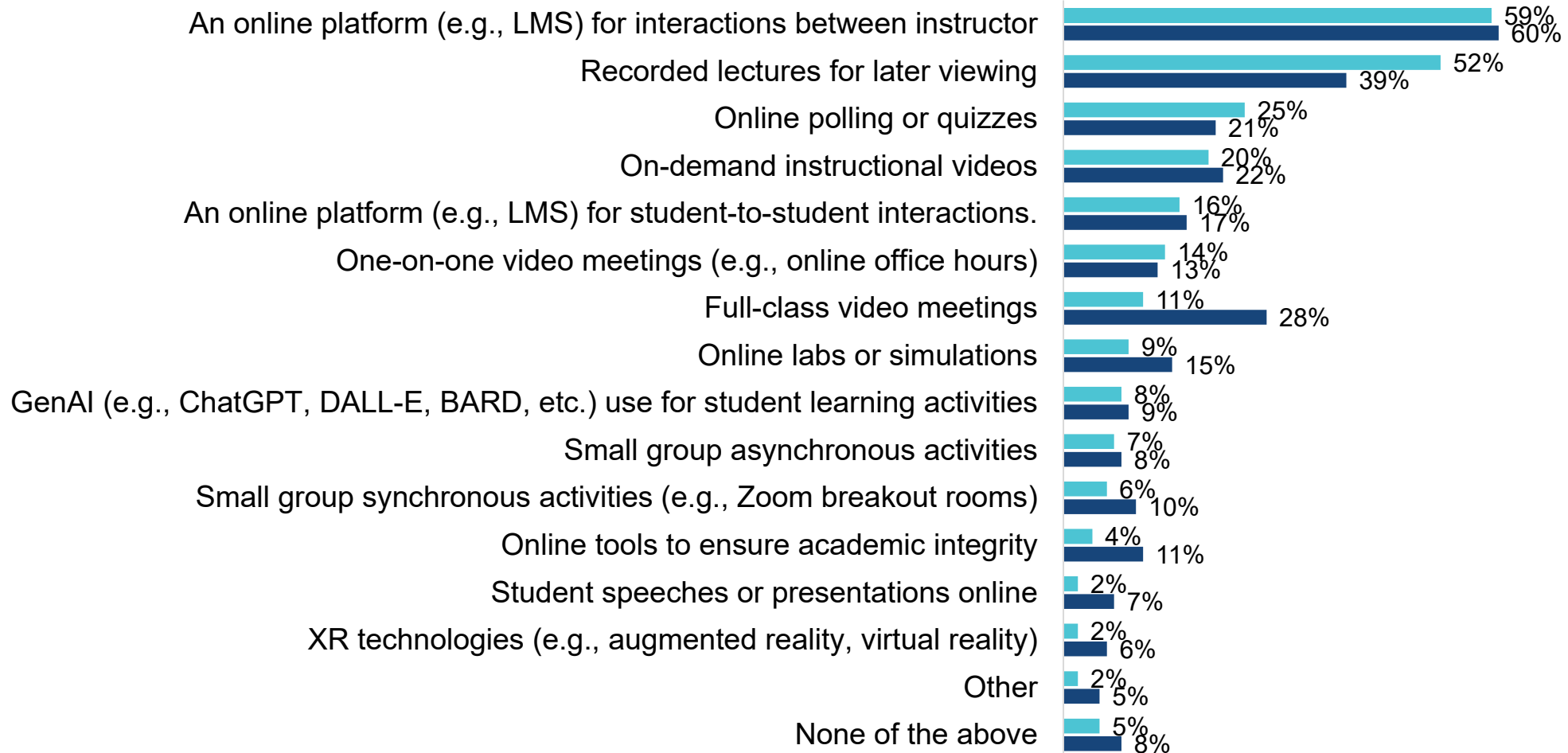
Which of these technologies, if any, would you say were the most helpful in terms of helping you learn or understand the course material? Please select up to 3. | Previously reported using the technology . | n = 1,183



# Most Helpful Technologies Used

Note: Respondents only saw technologies they had previously used and were permitted to select up to 3.

■ University      ■ Cégep, college, or polytechnic



Which of these technologies, if any, would you say were the most helpful in terms of helping you learn or understand the course material? Please select up to 3. | Previously reported using the technology . | n = 1,183

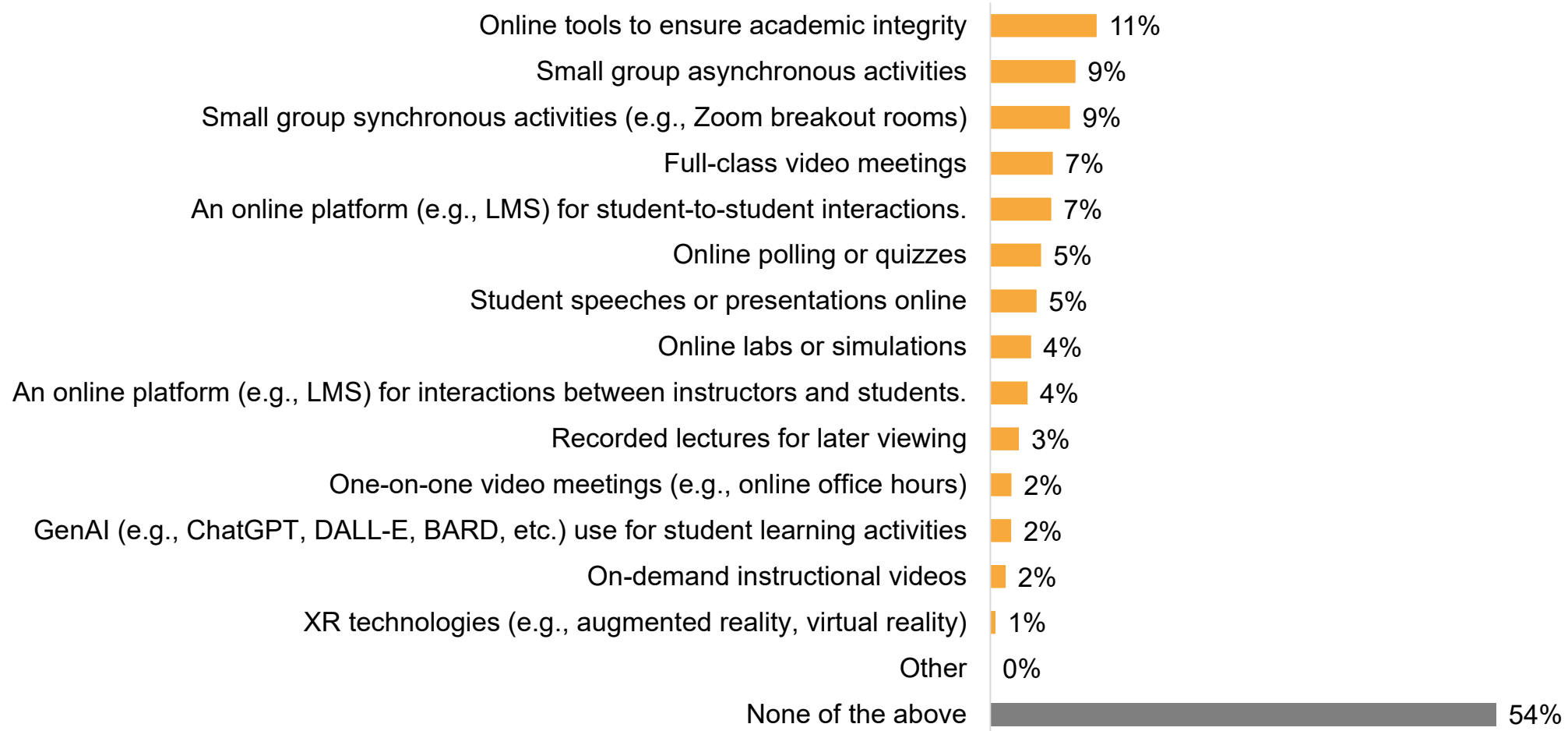


# Student Comment: Most Helpful Technologies

- “Anything for later viewing whether that be a **video or saved chat logs** helps a lot when studying that topic.” - *Domestic university student in British Columbia*
- “I really like how my teacher has a live class, then posts the **recording** and has **mini lectures** that live on the site at all times. Different ways of learning and I’m able to go back to the lecture if I missed something or want to slow it down.” - *Domestic university student in Alberta*
- “**On-demand lectures** are by far my most preferred way to study. I got an A- in a statistics class and I never attended a lecture, I taught myself everything I needed through **on-demand videos online.**” - *International university student in Alberta*
- “I find that being able to progress at my own pace renders my education more effective and efficient.” - *Domestic university student in Ontario*
- “How helpful **instructor-to-student interactions** are depends on the instructor. There are some instructors who respond quickly, and others who don’t.” - *Domestic college student in Ontario*
- “**Video simulations** are super useful for nursing clinical labs. It's easy to forget steps and the videos make an excellent reference tool.” - *Domestic college student in Ontario*

# Least Helpful Technologies Used

Note: Respondents only saw technologies they had previously used and were permitted to select up to 3.



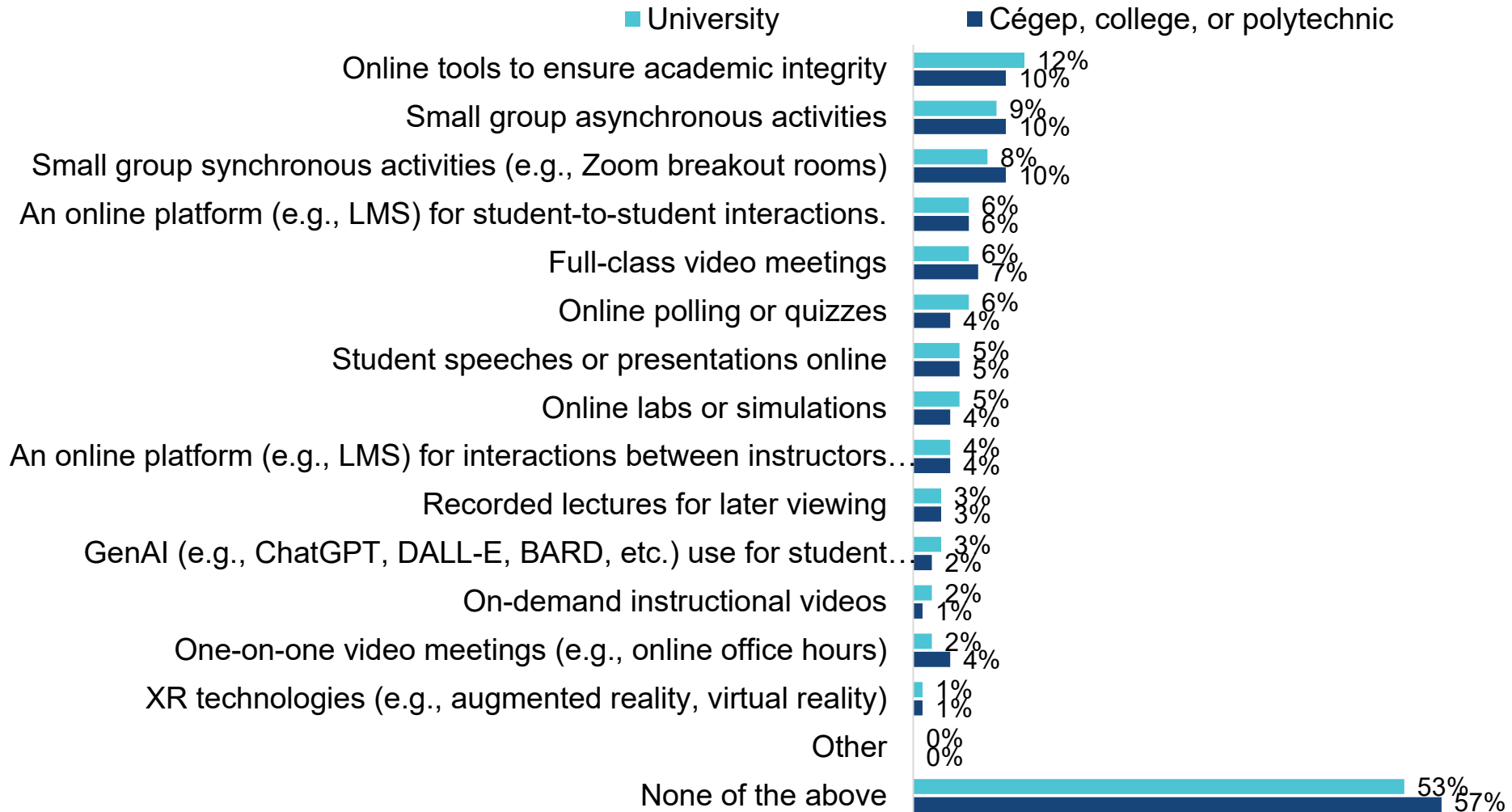
Which of the technologies, if any, were NOT helpful for learning or understanding the course material? | Previously reported using the technology. | n = 1,183





# Least Helpful Technologies Used

Note: Respondents only saw technologies they had previously used and were permitted to select up to 3.



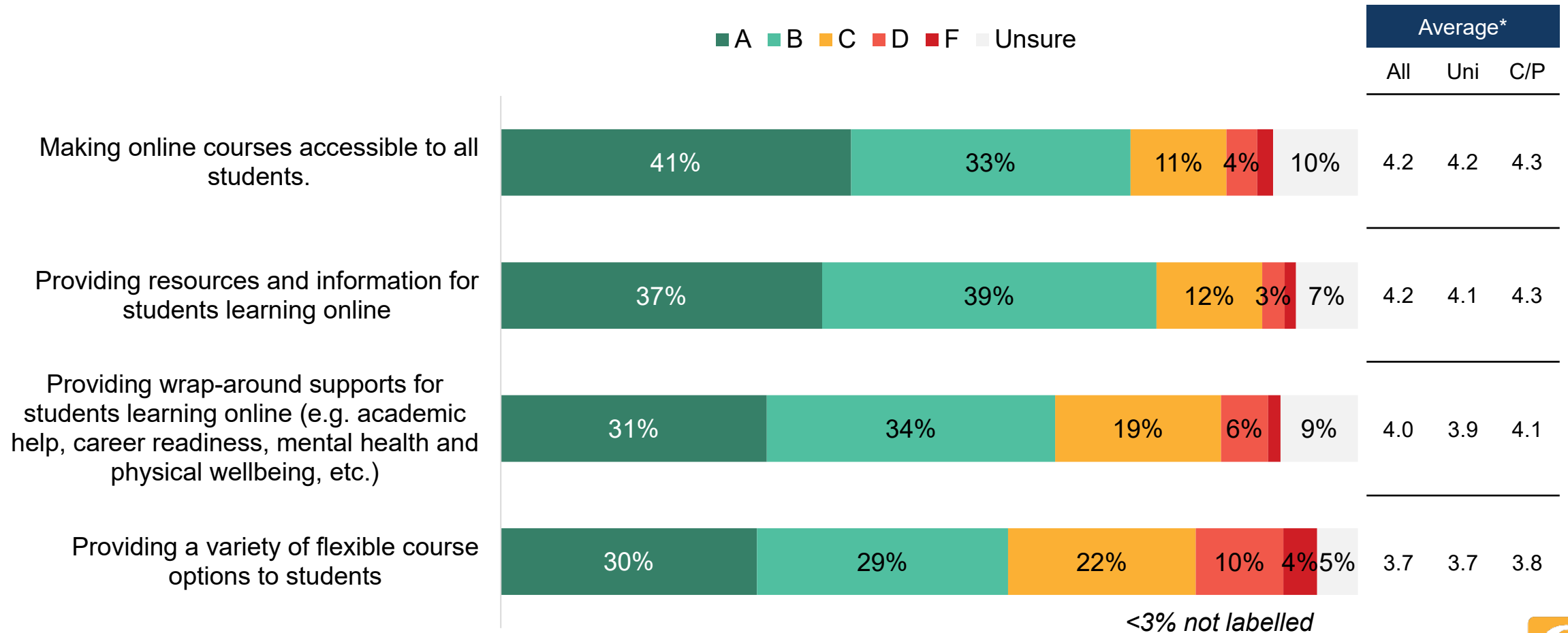
Which of the technologies, if any, were NOT helpful for learning or understanding the course material? | Previously reported using the technology | . | n = 1,183



# Student Comment: Least Helpful Technologies

- “The combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning created a heavy workload and many extra expectations from the student side, leading to much more difficult learning.” - *Domestic university student in Alberta*
- “**Discussion boards** are the definition of busywork. I have learned nothing from any discussion board I've ever participated in.” - *International university student in British Columbia*
- “I much prefer physical, pen-on-paper quizzes, and find that they help me learn much better. Many of the **online quizzes** have the option of making multiple attempts which can be good, but they also take off too much pressure and prevent me from truly trying to learn the course material.” - *Domestic university student in British Columbia*
- “**Online platforms** for student-to-student interactions (such as discussion boards or forums) are cumbersome and feel like a forced activity to foster communication and collaboration. They very rarely contribute to my understanding of the content.” - *Domestic university student in Ontario*
- “The **tools for ensuring academic integrity** wouldn't always work, there would always be people having issues during exams and it was generally a mess.” - *Domestic university student in Ontario*
- “Usually limited participation in **breakout rooms**.” - *International polytechnic student in Ontario*

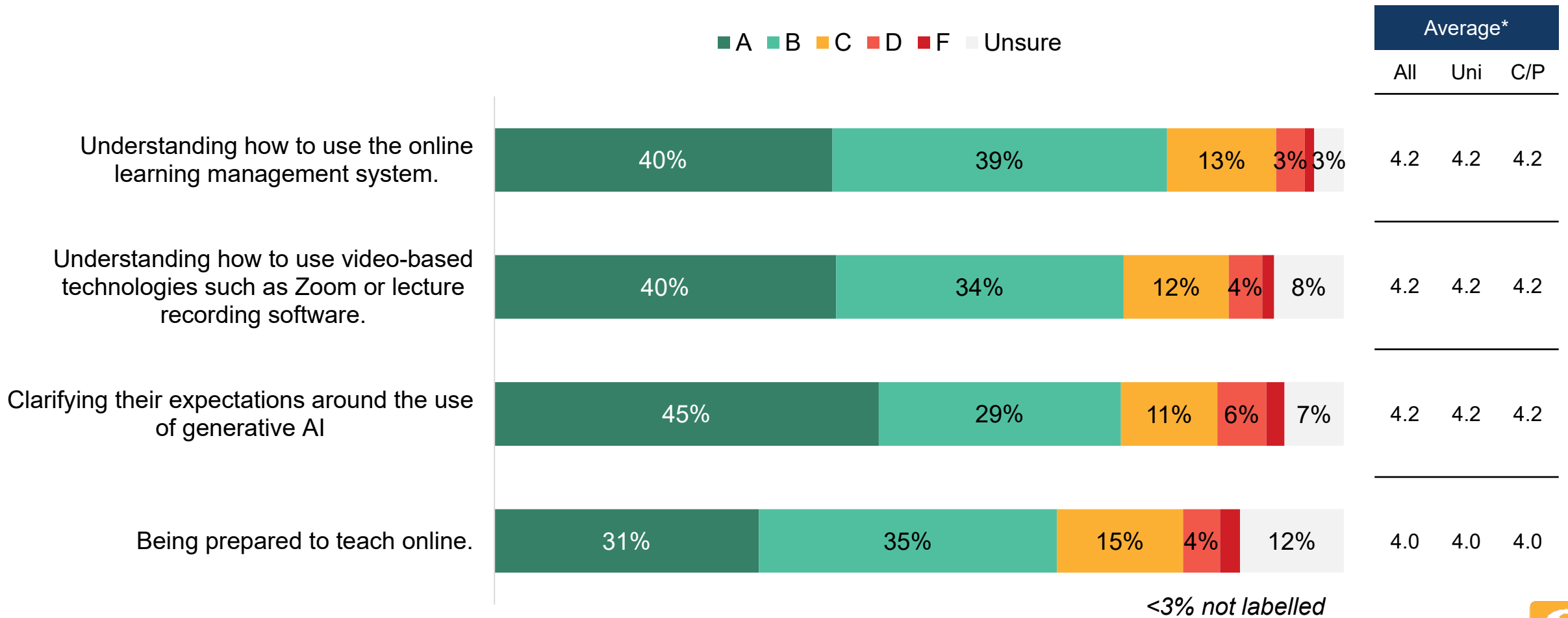
# Grade Rating: Institution



Please provide the letter grade (with "A" as the highest possible grade through a failing grade of "F") that you would give to rate your institution on the following | Total n-size=1,192 \*Average rating, where 1=F and 5=A; Unsure excluded from average calculation



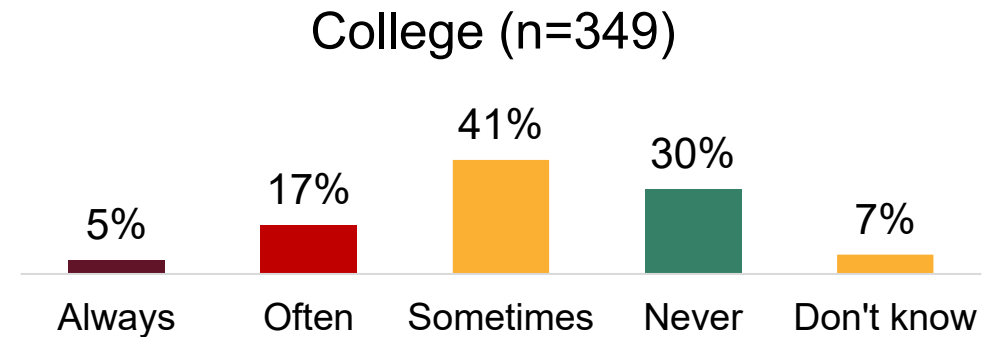
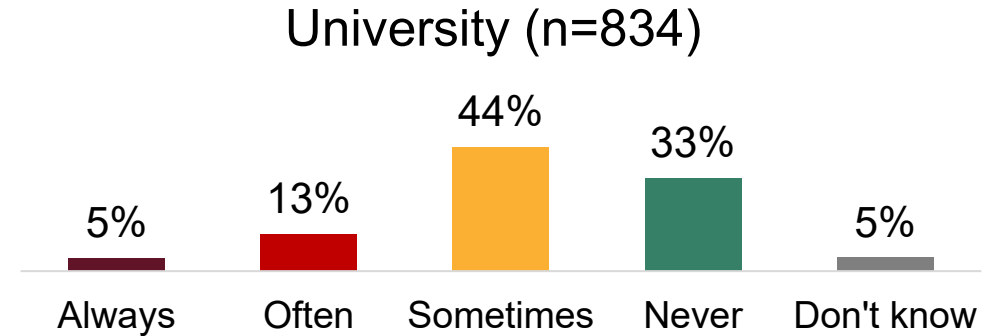
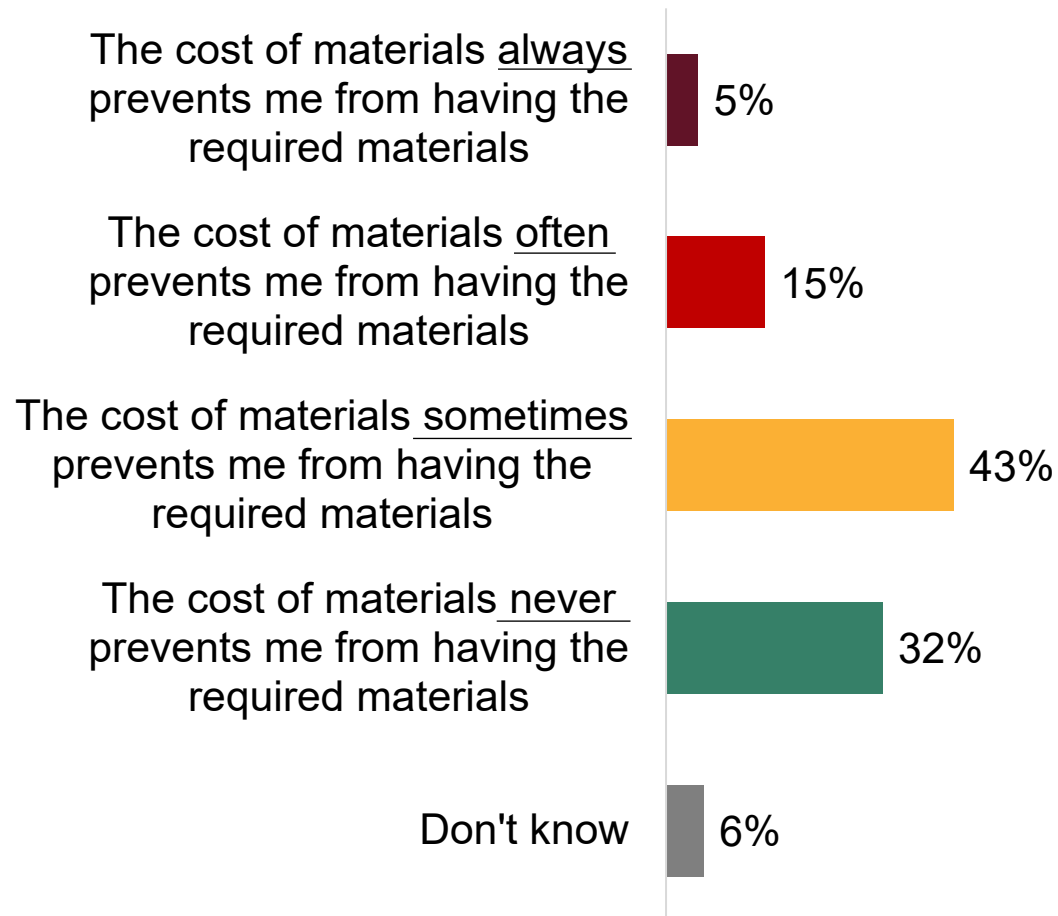
# Grade Rating: Instructors



Please provide the letter grade (with "A" as the highest possible grade through a failing grade of "F") that you would give to rate your instructors on the following | Total n-size=1,192 \*Average rating, where 1=F and 5=A; Unsure excluded from average calculation



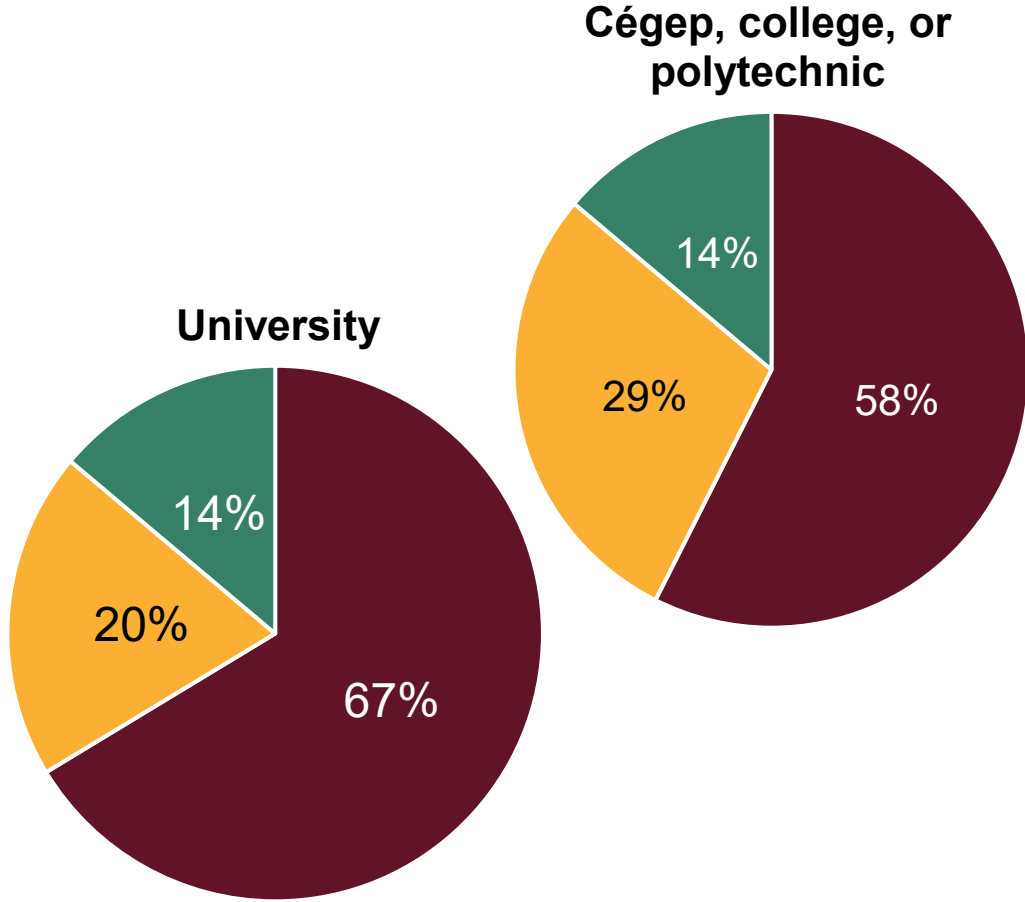
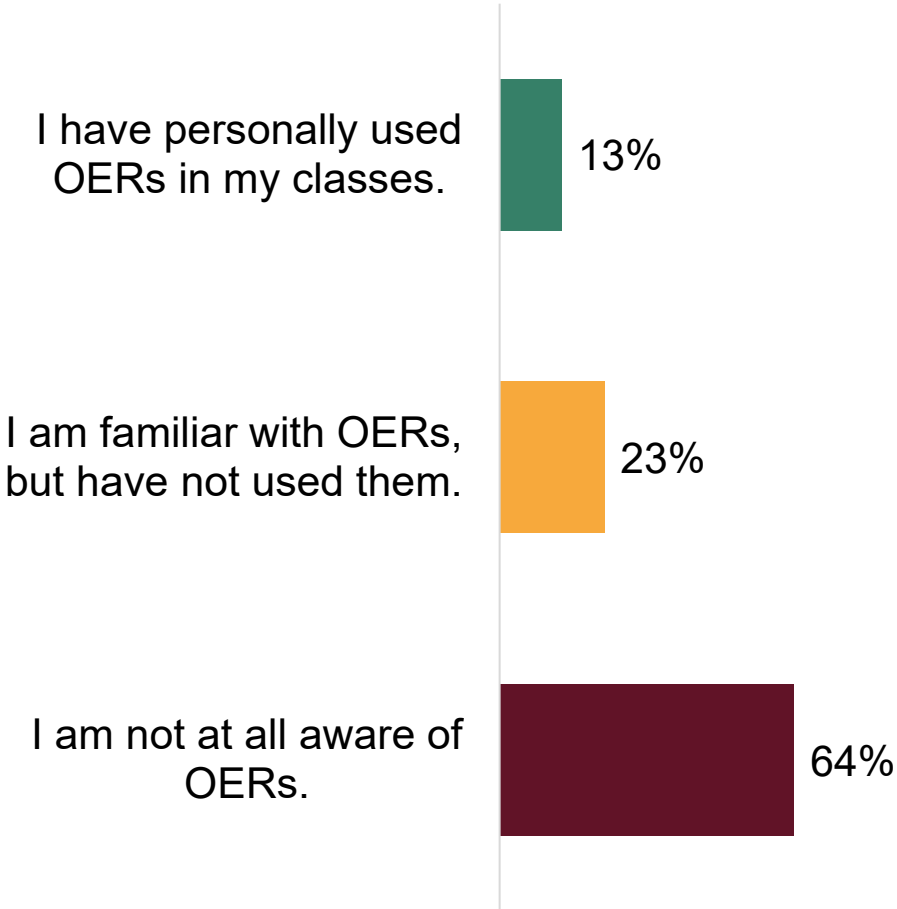
# Experience with Course Material Costs



Which of the following statements best reflects your experience with the cost of required course materials (e.g. textbooks, tools) at your institution? | Total n-size=1,192

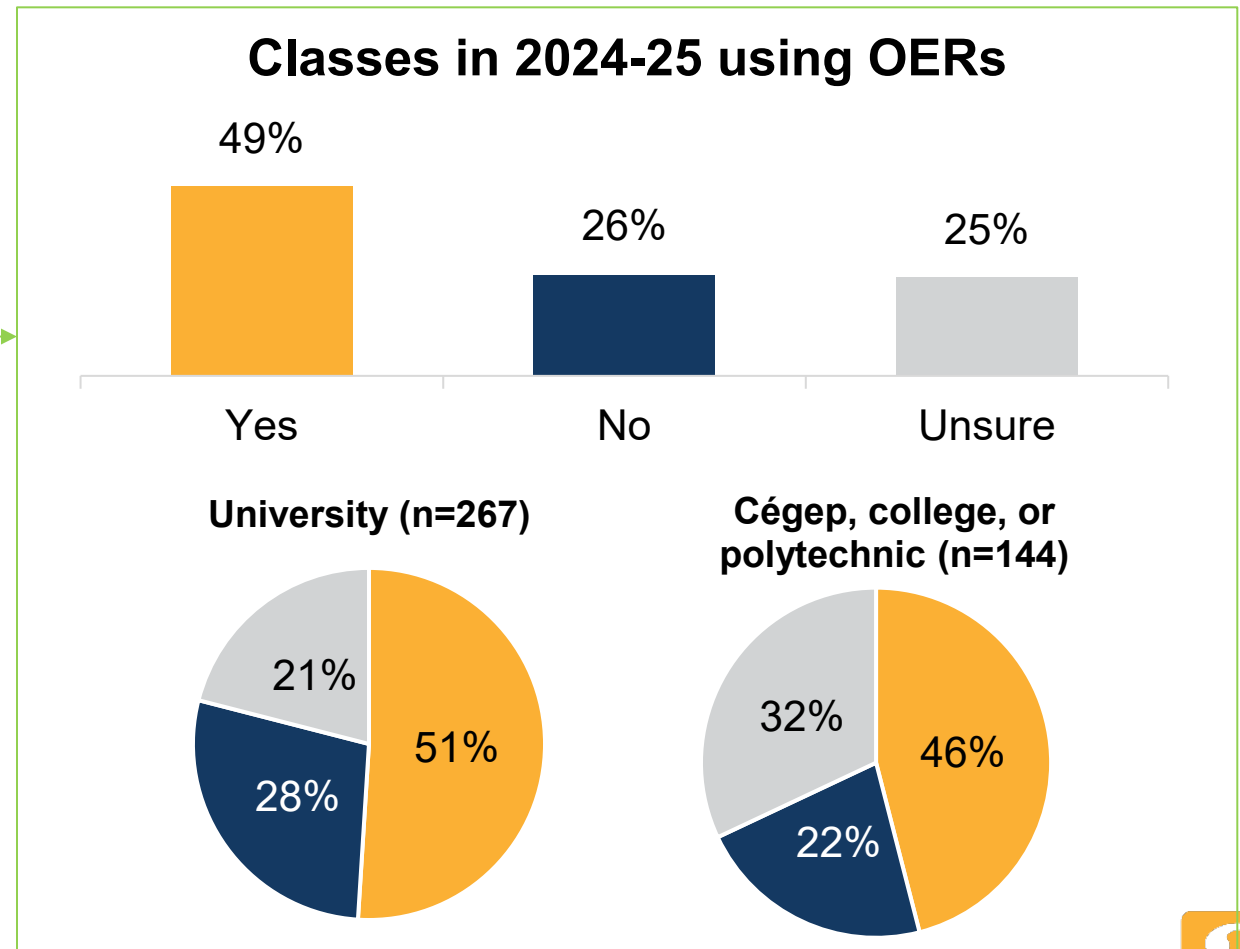
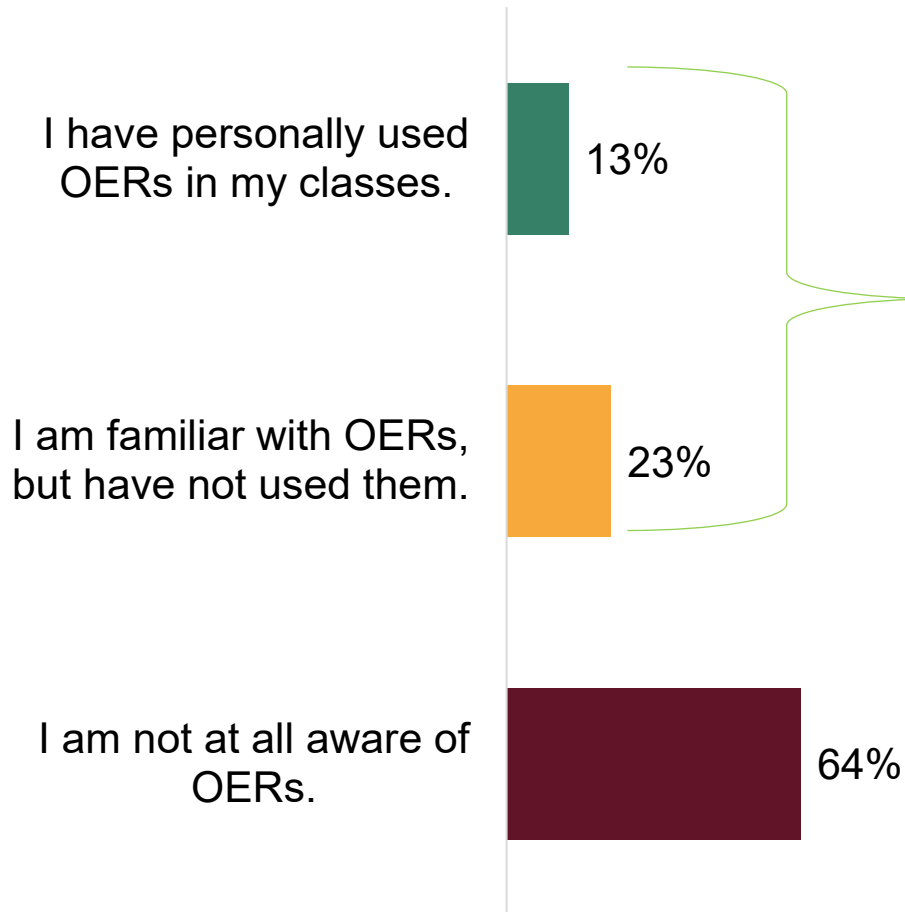


# Awareness and Usage of OERs





# Awareness and Usage of OERs



Prior to starting this survey, how would you describe your awareness of Open Education Resources (OERs)? | Total n-size=1,192

Are any of your classes for 2024-25 using OERs as part of their course materials? These may include free online textbooks and other resources. | Familiar with OERs | n

= 415



# Student Comments: Online Experience to Date

## Overall Experiences

- “A lot of it is not great. Most of it was implemented heavily during covid and as such are just rush jobs that they haven't bothered to fix/improve.” - *College student in Ontario*
- “I do think in-person learning is the most effective, but students need an option to be online so they do not need to come in-person if they are sick.” - *Domestic university student in Ontario*
- “I like having lessons recorded, but I prefer to have online synchronous classes. Lots of my classes don't even have an actual lesson, they just have reading material or videos to watch. Most of the videos are not even recorded by the teacher, they are just videos they found online. It makes me wonder what I'm paying for? Why is tuition going up if they aren't even teaching me?” - *Domestic polytechnic student in Alberta*
- “In person can be supplemented but never replaced by online elements. Also, my peers put in the bare minimum when the social contract melts away online.” - *Domestic university student in Saskatchewan*
- “[Online learning] should be more interactive.” - *International university student in Quebec*
- “I have immediately dropped out of classes that required intensive group work in an asynchronous environment. I assume the class work from in-person/online learning was just transferred over, but asynchronous shouldn't be requiring that kind of group work commitment or extremely tight deadlines.” - *Domestic student at a polytechnic in Alberta*

# Student Comments: Instructors

## Instructors

- “I think that the instructors at my postsecondary institution should be more open-minded when it comes to using online platforms, like Zoom, and (pre)recording their lectures. As someone with a mental health disability, I feel more included and excited to learn when I am able to take my classes at home instead of on a busy, anxiety-inducing campus. In other words, I feel more equal to other students (and more of a student in general), which I think my instructors should try to better appreciate by, at least considering, offering online learning alternatives/additions.” - *Domestic university student in Ontario*
- “Many professors at my school have used online tools to avoid teaching the course themselves, creating a detached and dissatisfying learning experience. While some online tools are excellent for accessibility, these tools are best used to supplement our current model of education, not replace in-person learning, I feel.” - *Domestic polytechnic student in Ontario*
- “We just changed to a new learning system... and most of the teachers have no idea how to use [it] and so neither they or the students know how to use it. I’ve used it in Calgary before and I can’t even use it properly sometimes because they don’t know what they are doing.” - *Domestic polytechnic student in Alberta*
- “Some professors don’t know how to properly use, and set up, Brightspace/D2L.” - *International college student in Ontario*

# Student Comments: Accessibility

## Access

- “At my postsecondary institution, many online classes (scheduled as fully online) still have in-person final/midterm exams. I don't think this is fair, because we never practice in-person before the class. If exams are scheduled in person, I believe that courses at my institution should have at least some in-person components as well, such as labs/lectures.” - *Domestic university student in Alberta*
- “Online learning does not count as being a full-time international student.” - *International college student in British Columbia*
- “Not always very inclusive to mature students. Schools should provide either a free course in person for training how to use these platforms and/or having the option to choose online or in person.” - *Domestic college student in Ontario*
- “Often digital and online learning is not as easily accessible to those with adhd or other neurodivergences. Many institutions need to provide extra supports for this.” - *Domestic university student in British Columbia*
- “Online learning allows people like me to work full time and get a post secondary education.” - *Domestic university student in Ontario*
- “I wish more universities would have this option for people who work full time. Even blended with the option to attend in person for two weeks when one can get off work. Programs that enhance our careers.” - *Domestic university student in Manitoba*



# Student Comments: Materials

## Online Texts & Subscriptions

- “After purchasing textbooks, I found out that I am paying the price as if I am getting a physical copy when instead I am just getting a code to use online to access the rest of the course. If I didn't purchase the codes, I would not be able to do my assessments.” - *Domestic college student in Ontario*
- “Even if the cost of the materials never prevented me from having the required materials, it has been a stress and worry due to the high cost.” - *Domestic polytechnic student in Alberta*
- “I don't love online textbooks. The ONLY good feature I have found so far in an online textbook is the ability to use the search function. Everything else about online textbooks is a negative in my mind.” - *Domestic university student in Alberta*
- “I feel like I pay too much for online resources; Instead of textbooks, I'm purchasing licenses to textbooks.” - *Domestic university student in Alberta*
- “The use of third-party apps that cost absurd subscription fees for courses that really don't need them is a huge problem.” - *Domestic university student in British Columbia*

# Student Comments: Materials

## Open Educational Resources (OERs)

- “Most of my classes use online OER textbooks which is immensely helpful compared to expensive (and often heavy) copyrighted textbooks.” - *University student in Quebec*
- “OERs are currently being implemented in first year classrooms.” - *Domestic university student in Ontario*
- “OERs are fantastic. They tend to be more succinct in teaching key ideas and are specifically tailored to course needs. Online methods of learning are available unlike with all textbooks, including videos and sounds.” - *Domestic university student in Ontario*





This report was created for CDLRA by Academica Group,  
a Canadian market research and institutional consulting firm.

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