

UWA TechNODE bulletin 2014

Higher Degree by Research Students



Key findings from the 2013-14 survey of UWA students enrolled in Higher Degree by Research programs

- 92% of UWA HDR respondents own smartphones and 49% of those devices are iPhones. 46% of respondents own tablet-style mobile devices and of those 74% are iPads.
- 55% of HDR respondents have a LinkedIn profile and that platform is the most popular for HDR students who make conscious effort to build their online profile.
- Most HDR students (83%) pay for a mobile data plan and 65% of those pay for more than 500MB per month.
- HDR respondents use SMS and email to contact each other and list emails and social media as the preferred method for UWA to communicate with them about university events and activities.

Overview of the NODE survey

The annual NODE survey is managed by UWA Student Services and has been administered to first year undergraduates since 2005-06. Some questions are modified each year in response to key issues of interest to the University and to reflect the changes in available technologies. Other questions are maintained in the survey to observe trends over time.

In 2013-14, the NODE survey was administered for the first time to students enrolled in HDR programs. 456 Higher Degree by Research students responded to the 2013-14 survey generating a response rate of 21%.

Research Profiles

57% of HDR respondents indicated that they make conscious effort to build their professional online profiles and networks. Of the 57%, LinkedIn is the most popular platform (63%), followed by UWA Research Profiles (38%) and participating in Facebook groups external to UWA (26%).

Device ownership

83% of respondents pay for a data plan for their main mobile device and of those 30% use 4G, 56% use 3G (14% are not sure). Of HDR respondents that pay for a plan, 21% pay for 200-500MB per month, 29% pay for 500MB-1GB per month, 36% pay for more than 1GB per month while 14% were not sure.

Mobile device usage and data storage

95% of HDR respondents own a laptop and 53% of those bring their laptops to campus every time they come (24% bring their laptops sometimes and 23% say they never do). 100% of respondents own a mobile phone and 92% are smartphones (of those, 49% are iPhones and 46% are Android devices). 46% of respondents own a tablet-style device and of those 74% are iPads and 22% Android.

49% of HDR respondents indicated that they prefer to read books and other documents electronically rather than hard-copy (47% will use e-versions if they have to and 4% said they will only read hard copy). Respondents use a number of devices to read ebooks, with laptops are the most likely device to be used (65% use them), followed by desktop computers (44%), tablet devices (34%), mobile phone (20% use them) and ebook readers (16% use them).

When HDR respondents come to their UWA campus, 95% bring at least one device that could connect to UniFi. 38% bring one device, while 49% bring 2 devices and 8% bring 3 (5% said they bring zero and 1% said they bring 4 or more devices).

Individual HDR respondents stored files relating to their University work in multiple storage options/locations. 71% use their laptops, 61% use a USB drive, 42% save files on a desktop computer, 42% use a web-based cloud service (such as drop-box), 31% email files to themselves and 11% said they use the UWA cloud storage UniDrive.

Communicating with peers and with UWA

HDR respondents rated text messaging as the tool they would most likely use to contact friends (42% use this as their first choice) followed by email (22%), social media platforms (14%), phone call (11%), mobile apps such as Instagram or Snapchat (8%) and VOIP such as Skype or iChat (3%).

81% of HDR respondents are aware of askUWA and 19% are aware of pg-help (GRSO's online help).

HDR students rated sources of advice about studying for a research degree at UWA in the following order:

1. University website
2. External review sites that host feedback from students and visitors
3. Social media posts and comments on a University-managed page
4. Online opinion pieces and news articles by University staff
5. Social media posts about the University by family and friends
6. Content posted to a LinkedIn group

HDR students prefer to be kept up to date on university events, activities, opportunities and competitions that do not relate to their individual research or candidature through the following ways:

- by receiving emails from the university (89% rate this in their top 3 communication methods)
- by using Facebook groups (48%)
- by managing a LinkedIn group (17%)
- via a blog written for students by staff (16%)

Other options were less popular such as hosting an online discussion board (11%), via scheduled synchronous chat sessions with staff (2%) and creating and sharing video content (2%)

Social media use and online privacy

86% of HDR respondents use Facebook profiles and 69% use Facebook fan pages. 96% use YouTube and a third of those users have created and uploaded their own video content to the platform. 40% of respondents read or create Twitter content (compared to 45% of first year undergraduates), 32% access or create content on Instagram (compared to 55% of first year undergraduate respondents) and 55% have a LinkedIn profile (compared to 14% of first year undergraduates).

48% of students have considered deleting or cancelling one or more social media accounts in 2013, and 70% are concerned about wasting their time on social media, both figures down marginally from 2012. Students are generally happy with the information about themselves that appears online but 98% still try to protect their privacy online. 77% of HDR respondents adjust the privacy settings of the online tools they use, 48% are concerned that they waste time on social media and 66% take measures to manage the amount of time they spend on online social networks. 91% of HDR respondents said they think friends have uploaded potentially regrettable content.

89% of HDR respondents would use a free UWA mobile app and while the top 5 most requested features were a access to UWA email (73% of respondents would like this feature), calendar of UWA events (64% of respondents would like this feature), access to personal library account (61% of respondents would like this feature), UWA Contact Directory (55% would like this), Campus map (50% of respondents would like this feature), HDR respondents listed additional features specific to the HDR experience that they would like included such as candidature milestones, grant information, job opportunities and PSA information.

Endnote is the most popular bibliographic software used by HDR respondents (78%) with an additional 2% using Endnote Web. 5% use Mendeley and 2% use Zotero. Other software including Papers2, Bibtext, BookEnds, Jabref, MS Word, Goodreader and DevonThink is used by 12% of HDR respondents.

This bulletin should be referenced as:

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<http://www.staff.uwa.edu.au/teaching/student/online/node>

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