



UWA TECHNODER BULLETIN 2016

FIRST YEAR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE 2015-16 SURVEY OF FIRST YEAR UWA UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

- 96% of UWA first-years own laptops, 99.7% own a smartphone and 42% have a tablet.
- 62.4% have Apple phones, with Android coming in next at 35.5%, followed by Windows at 2%.
- 62.5% of students bring 2 devices on campus that could connect to WiFi, 27.5% bring only one device and 7% bring 3.
- Instagram has become a predominate social media channel that students use, with followers doubling over the past year to over 7000. Facebook, YouTube and Instagram are the social media platforms most used by current students.
- 95% expect their university lectures to be recorded and available on LCS. 72% of students would prefer to use software and tools on their own devices rather than use university facilities.
- 89% of respondents consider themselves to have good digital skills and 95% consider it important to gain digital skills for their careers.
- 25% of visits to the UWA Current Students website are from a mobile device and 50% of student respondents view the UWA Students Facebook page from their phone or tablet.

OVERVIEW OF THE NODE SURVEY

The annual NODE survey is managed by the UWA Education Portfolio 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. Students are surveyed at the end of their first year of undergraduate study and survey responses are made available via the TechNODE bulletins. This report summarises data gathered from students who were first year undergraduates at UWA in 2015.

NEW IN 2015–16

New questions in this survey asked students about content they would like to see on the UWA Students Facebook page and how they prefer to access support for UWA platforms and systems. Feedback was also gathered regarding the UWA Students app.

DEVICE OWNERSHIP

Mobile phone ownership is now almost universal, with 99.7% of respondents owning a mobile phone. 99% of mobile phones owned by students are smartphones.

Tablet device ownership has dropped slightly this year to 42% against the steady rise shown in past survey results. 77% of tablet devices are Apple iPads, 14% are Android devices and 5% are Windows, indicating a drop in Android devices and a rise in Apple iPad ownership.

Laptop ownership in 2015 was consistent with previous years at 96% (up 2% from 2014–15). 87% of respondents sometimes or always bring their laptops to campus (up 9% from last survey), and 13% (down 9% from previous survey) do not bring them to campus at all.



UWA STUDENTS APP

97% of respondents were interested in a UWA mobile app and the UWA student app was released at the end of 2014.

The most popular features of the current app are the **campus map facility** with 90% of users using it primarily for that purpose, followed by **checking availability of the library computers**. As with the previous year's result, the most requested feature addition to the app is **course notifications** at 82% (vs 90% last year), then **UWA email access** (65% vs 71% last year), followed by **notifications about student life** such as admin deadlines, events and activities (59%). Demand has increased for access to their **personal library account** (41%).

DIGITAL SKILLS

When asked about digital skills (the ability to confidently and competently use digital tools and devices), 89% of respondents rate themselves as digitally competent. Most students consider it important to gain these skills (96%), practice them at university (84%), and gain them for their careers (95%). 74% of respondents think that their lecturers consider digital skills important for students to have.

Students use a variety of ways to learn a new digital skill, with 53% reporting that they'd try to work it out for themselves, 49% would go through any tutorials or 'getting started' guides if available, 40% would watch a YouTube video, 38% would search for tips online, 32% would ask a friend from uni, while 21% would use the help or FAQ options within the tool, and 9% would ask someone at home.

SOCIAL MEDIA USE

Tools are ranked by students' mean level of experience and confidence (out of 5) below:

1. Facebook profiles (4.35)
2. Facebook groups/pages (4.08)
3. YouTube (3.85)
4. Instagram (3.6)
5. Snapchat (3.45)
6. WhatsApp (3.6)
7. Twitter (2.95)
8. Tumblr (2.9)
9. Pinterest (2.6)
10. LinkedIn (2.21)
11. YikYak (1.7)
12. Social TV (1.43)
13. Periscope (1.4)

Social media usage can still prove problematic with just over half of respondents (60%) believing they waste too much time on social media (a small drop from last year's figure of 63%). 63% try to limit the time they spend, and half of respondents have considered deleting/deactivating at least one of their accounts.

COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION WITH FRIENDS

Since last year students have increased their use of social media to talk with their friends, with 49% now using sites such as Facebook to communicate, as opposed to last year's figure of 37%. Text messaging continued to drop as a favoured communication medium with now only 29% of respondents using it to communicate to their peers compared with last year's figure of 44%. Using a mobile app such as Instagram or Snapchat has risen to 16% from 2014–15's figure of 14%. Email and phone calls polled evenly at 4%, which is similar to previous years.

COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION WITH THE UNIVERSITY

When receiving communication from the university, 90% of students still prefer hearing about campus events and opportunities via targeted emails (3% up from 2014) and 65% through Facebook groups and pages (5% drop on 2014/15). Other communication options like a blog for students, creating YouTube content, hosting online discussion boards, instant chat sessions and LinkedIn groups are not favoured as highly (22%, 19%, 13%, 7%, <1%).

UWA STUDENTS FACEBOOK CONTENT

Students are generally appreciative of the content with 42% just wanting more of everything. Specifically 52% want more career information, 49% would like more information about courses e.g. broadening units, 41% want to see more social information and finally, 28% would like to see more shared content.

UNIVERSITY COMPUTING

When considering University computing facilities in the future, 72% would prefer to be provided with the appropriate software/tools for their own devices that they bring to campus and 28% would prefer to use UWA computing labs equipped with the appropriate software.

SUPPORT

When needing support for UWA platforms and systems, most prefer email (35%) followed closely by using the online helpdesk (32%), then in-person at 22%. Only 10% prefer the phone.

UWA STUDENTS ANALYTICS:

ONLINE AND SOCIAL

The Education Portfolio manages four social media channels for current students and a range of web channels including the Current Students website and askUWA.

- Instagram (est 2013) is the fastest growing channel with over 7000 followers, more than doubling from Feb 2015.

- The UWA Students Facebook channel (est 2005) with over 18,000 followers is used to aggregate all other non-official channels with relevant, audience-focused and timely posts gaining an average 25%–50% reach (compared to benchmark levels of around 10% average organic reach for Facebook pages between 10,000–50,000 likes). 'This Is' (#humansofUWA) regularly top the most liked posts. Students are most likely to access the Facebook page on mobile devices (52%).

- The UWA Students YouTube channel (est 2011) hosts 215 videos centred on the enrolled student experience and there have been approx. 200,000+ minutes watched in total. Average view duration is 2 minutes, 40 seconds.

- Twitter is not commonly used by students but the UWA Students account (est 2011) is employed as a strategic and social listening tool.

- Analytics demonstrate that popular and successful online content is original, specific to UWA audiences and contains stories about student life. Events, resharing content and promotional content are less successful.

- The peak timeslot for all channels is evenings between 6pm–10pm.

- Users visit the Current Students website to access LMS, Webmail and studentConnect. 21% of users access the Current Students website via mobile phones and 4% via tablets. 69% of those devices were Apple iOS, 26% Google Android and 5% Microsoft Windows Phone.

- Targeted emails are very successful with high overall open rates and click rates, indicating receivers feel the content is relevant and engaging. Emails sent in the morning are generally more successful than those sent in the afternoon.

- The most popular content in askUWA (Current Students) related to dates of teaching weeks (62,191 views in 2015), the definition of GPA and WAM (combined 38,539 views) and access to unit results (24,485 views). While most still access askUWA from desktops, mobile device use has increased to 25.4% for 2015 from last year's 13.4%.

Cluett, L.J. (2016) UWA TechNODE bulletin 2016 – First Year Undergraduate Students: An annual synopsis of student access to, experiences with and expectations of ICT at The University of Western Australia. Available from: <http://www.staff.uwa.edu.au/procedures/student-engagement/node>.

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