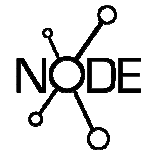


TechNODE bulletin 2012



Key Findings from the 2011-12 survey

- Ownership of mobile (smartphone) and portable (laptop) devices is consistently high among first year students
 - Ownership of tablets is still relatively low but has shown a notable increase since last year
- Students may not bring their laptops to campus everyday but demand for a UWA app for smartphones is high
 - Students are highly connected and have strong appetites for online communication and delivery of services
- There has been growth in the use of Twitter and LinkedIn but students preferences remain Facebook and YouTube
 - Students see a strong line between tools for learning (LMC, LCS and PowerPoint) and tools for engagement
- Satisfaction with on-campus IT facilities is high
 - Students are highly connected and frequently online and use SMS as their preferred way of contacting friends
- Student use of Google apps for education (aside from Gmail) and cloud storage is relatively low
 - There is steady demand for training and advice on how to use technology to improve study techniques

Overview of the NODE survey

The annual NODE survey is managed by Student Services as part of the Online Engagement Strategy. 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. UWA 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 the 2011 First Year cohort.

New in 2011-12

New questions focus on use of Google apps, file storage and device model. 592 students responded to the survey (response rate of 12% from a 5337 survey population).

Students and communication

- SMS remains the most preferred method for students to contact each other (48.6%) with social networks also popular (34.4%). Less than 3% of students used email as their preferred method
- 90.6% of students indicated that they are online more than twice a day or almost all the time
- 96.3% have an email account other than their UWA account with 63% of those choosing hotmail, 37.8% using Gmail, 8.8% using yahoo and 8.6% using an email account provided by their ISP
- 27.5% of students use Google apps with Gmail the most popular (used by 69.8%) then Google docs (37.9%) and the calendar and Google+ (26.6% each)

Device ownership and usage

Laptops are owned by 89.6% of first year students. Ownership has been stable above 80% since 2009 after a notable rise from the 2006-07 level of 57%.

59.7% of laptop owners bring their laptops to campus with them where they are used for accessing the internet (52.7%), writing assignments (49.5%), using email (45%), social networking (38.3%) and taking notes in lectures (26.9%).

Availability of recharging points (57.3% said these would be helpful), easier printing arrangements (55%), secure storage (48.1%) and cabled access to the network (44.4%) would make students more likely to bring their own laptops to campus.

Mobile phone ownership has been at more than 99% since the survey began although the rate of smart-phone ownership has risen to 83.6% in 2011-12 from 76% in 2010 and 42% in 08.

Students mostly use their phones for calls (90.5%), sending SMS (88.8%) and taking photos (61.2% do this).

Although more than 4/5 phones are internet-enabled, only 43.5% of students use them to access email, 53.5% access the internet, 54.1% access social networking accounts, 37.4% use mobile apps and 35.3% use them to play games on.

Tablet-device ownership is lower than for laptops or mobile phones but has risen slightly to 13.9% in 2011-12 from 8.7% the previous year.

The most popular activity for tablet owners is to access media such as video, websites, books and music (78.8% of tablet owners do this) followed by playing games (54.1%) taking notes (51.8%), using the calendar (47.1%), managing tasks/projects (28.2%) and recording and editing media (15.3%).

87% of tablets owned by first years are Apple iPads (others use Windows Phone OS).

Online Tools and Platforms used by students

Respondents to the NODE survey have consistently said that they prefer to use a different set of tools for engagement (chatting with friends, joining programs, finding out about campus life) than they do for learning (communicating with teaching staff, handling assessments, discussing course-content).

For engagement, students are most experienced in using YouTube (99% access this tool), Facebook profiles (93.9%), Wikipedia (93%), Facebook pages (89.9%) and discussion boards (85.6%). These have routinely been the most popular tools over the history of the survey although Facebook has steadily grown in popularity at the expense of other niche tools (other IM tools, blogging, podcasts etc). Respondents to the 2011-12 survey indicated that these same tools are the ones that UWA should use to engage and communicate with students (discussion boards 89%, Facebook pages 72.1%, YouTube 65.6%).

Since the last survey there have been moderate areas of growth in the use of some tools such as Twitter (31.6% use this, up from 24% in 2010-11) and LinkedIn (7.5% up from 3% the previous year).

The most widely-used, enjoyable and useful tools for learning were clearly identified by students as being the University's LMS, lecture-capture system, MS PowerPoint and discussion boards. These 2011-12 results echo those of past surveys. The majority of students (80%) use ICT for studying and like it when their lecturers use it effectively although only 30.9% feel they learn just as well from online materials only.

eBooks, file storage and mobile web

Use of ebooks have risen since the last survey with 16.3% preferring to read e-versions (up from 8% last year) and 64.7% using them if they have to (up from 45.5%). Laptops are still the most popular device for reading ebooks (74.8% use theirs) followed by desktops (40.3%), mobile phones (22.2% up from 6%), tablet devices (13.5%) and eBook readers (5.2%).

Students were asked for the first time about which locations they stored computer files such as assignments and project data. 80.6% use their laptop, 60.6% use a USB, 29.6% email files to themselves, 25% use their desktop and 6.7% use a cloud storage facility (students were not specifically asked about UWA-provided cloud storage).

Appetite for mobile web content is showing some growth with 77.5% interested in mobile-optimised email service, 73.6% saying they would use a mobile version of studentConnect and 60.3% would use a mobile version of the Library catalogue. Strongest interest though was in a UWA app that included access to a range of information including maps, directories and guild outlets (85.4% said they would be interested in using it).

Expectations and satisfaction

Satisfaction with IT services on campus has risen notably since last year's survey. 91.2% think the internet access is adequate or above average (up from 79%). 71% are satisfied with the wireless network coverage (up from 54%). 67% think the printing facilities are adequate or above average (up from 57%). 76.2% are satisfied with Faculty computer labs and 78.1% with the shared /library labs (both were 69% last year)

94.9% expect ALL of their lectures to be recorded in some way (above 90% since surveys began) and 44.1% would like training in technologies to improve study techniques while 46% think there is enough support to be able to use online tools.

Students are mostly comfortable with the information about them that appears online although more students are being mindful of their online behaviour with 93.5% making efforts to protect their online privacy (up from 84%), 86.1% thinking about who can access their online information (up from 78%) and 64.3% saying they read the terms and conditions of online tools they use (up from 61%). More students indicated that they observe their friends uploading information that they think they will regret later (up from 74%).

This bulletin should be referenced as: Cluett, L.J. & Skene, J. (2012) TechNODE bulletin 2012: 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/teaching/student/online/node>

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