

Study and Technology Survey Report

The Study and Technology Survey was a joint venture between the University and the Students' Association to survey students about their study habits and about the role of technology in independent study at St Andrews.

The survey was open between April 30th and June 30th 2014 and collected 1,113 responses. The survey was advertised online via an all-student email and Students' Association social media.

The report is divided into five sections: Ownership of digital devices, How students study, Ideal study spaces, Specialist software, and Time management. Each section is accompanied by a set of recommendations from the Students' Association Director of Representation.

Ownership of digital devices

<i>What of the following do you own, if any?</i>		
Laptop	1099	99%
iPhone	525	47%
Android smartphone	360	32%
Other smartphone	87	8%
iPad	299	27%
Android tablet	80	7%
Other tablet	49	4%
Desktop computer	78	7%

<i>What kind of operating system do you use?</i>		
Mac OS X	476	43%
MS Windows 7	335	30%
MS Windows 8	219	20%
Other MS Windows	30	3%
Linux	20	2%
Other	22	2%

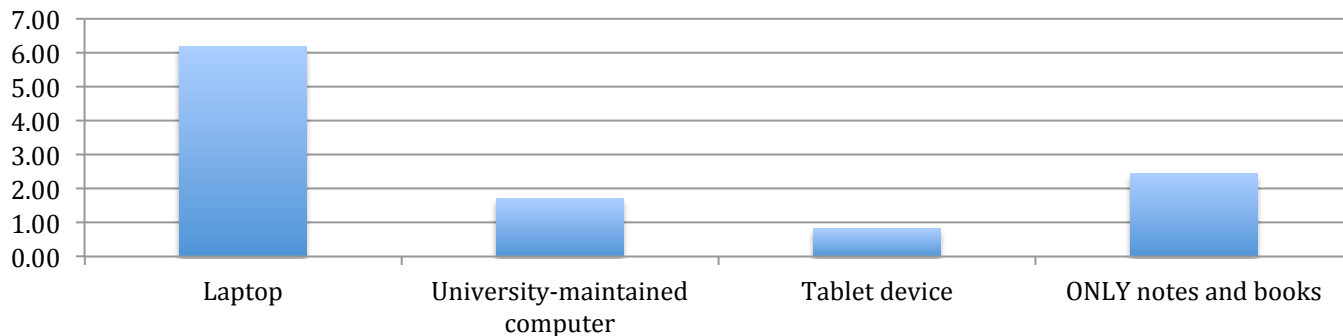
- Nearly every respondent owned a laptop
- 954 students (86%) owned a smartphone
- 421 students (38%) owned a tablet

Recommendations

- 1) Investigate friendliness of the University and Students' Association websites to mobile devices (IT Services, Students' Association).
- 2) Ensure adequate IT support for both Mac OS and Windows laptop users, and mobile devices on different platforms (IT Services).

How students study

What do you use when you study?
(Average usage on a 10-point scale with "0" meaning never and "10" all the time)



- 13.64% of students use electronic devices for 100% of their study time
- 88.76% of students use electronic devices for more than 50% of their study time
- Many students in free-text comments stated access to UniPrint as a reason for usage of University-maintained computers.
- Many students mentioned simultaneous usage of digital and non-digital devices at the same time. A considerable amount of students also mentioned that they use two or more digital devices at the same time (laptop and/or University-maintained computer and/or tablet) to have access to multiple screens.

<i>What are the best periods of the day for you to study efficiently?</i>		
00.00—03.00	139	12%
03.00—06.00	30	3%
06.00—09.00	115	10%
09.00—12.00	659	59%
12.00—15.00	580	52%
15.00—18.00	641	58%
18.00—21.00	637	57%
21.00—24.00	453	41%

- Most students identified period between 9am and 9pm as the most efficient study time (>50%). The period of 9pm till midnight was also identified as a productive time to study by many students (>40%).

- Late nights (midnight–3am) and early mornings (6-9am) were identified as productive times to study by just above 10% of students.

Recommendations

- 1) Ensure that all University study spaces are laptop-friendly with access to power outlets (Estates).
- 2) Run a publicity campaign about setting up a UniPrint on students' own devices (IT Services).
- 3) Ensure adequate provision of University study spaces during the busiest periods of the day (9am till midnight) to both UG and PG students, while keeping in mind that the student body has a diverse study habits (Estates, Library).

Study and Technology Survey Report

University of St Andrews Students' Association

- Match the opening hours of the Main Library to students' study habits and open it 8am-2am every day a week, including weekends.
- Identify alternative study spaces that would be accessible to students during the peak times (9am-9pm), including weekends.
- Create 24-hour *laptop-friendly* study rooms.

Ideal study space

<i>Where are your preferred places to study?</i>			<i>The Ideal Study Space</i>		
My Own Residence	877	79%	Power outlets	966	87%
Main University Library	769	69%	Plenty of desk space	879	79%
Other University Libraries (JFAL, St Mary's College, Martyrs Kirk)	325	29%	Quiet space	767	69%
Departmental Libraries & Buildings	298	27%	Plenty of personal space	717	64%
Cafes Around Town	239	21%	Hot drinks	655	59%
University-Maintained Computer Labs	211	19%	Printer/scanner/copier	556	50%
A Friend's Residence	112	10%	Silent space	520	47%
Students' Association Building	89	8%	Close to books/study materials	521	47%
Other	85	8%	Cold drinks	499	45%
Old Union Coffee Bar	38	3%	Food	460	41%
			Individualised spaces	441	40%
			Social atmosphere	138	12%
			Bustling space	57	5%
			Other	57	5%

- Most students chose own residence as the most preferred place to study (79%). Of public spaces, the Main Library came in as a clear preference (69%), with other University libraries coming in distant third (29%), closely followed by Departmental libraries & buildings (27%).
- Only 128 (12%) respondents preferred to study entirely outwith University provided study spaces¹.
- Students were asked to design their ideal study space. Access to power outlets topped the list (87%), closely followed by plenty of desk space (79%), and desire for a quiet space (69%). Access to hot drinks, printers, study materials, cold drinks, and food was also high on the list (>40%). Only a handful of students would call their ideal space as "bustling" (5%).
- While 69% of students prefer to study in the Main Library, only 47% of students would describe their study spaces as close to study materials, thus leaving a gap of 22% of students who use the Main Library because of other reasons (e.g. access to power outlets, desk space, quiet/silent spaces, printers, drinks, and food). This gap shows a potential for building learning commons, i.e. study spaces similar to libraries that have no or a very small number of physical study materials.
- While PG students chose Main Library less often as their preferred study space (45%), they chose Departmental libraries & buildings more often than the average student (34%).

¹ The figure includes students who prefer to study in their room in University halls of residence.

Study and Technology Survey Report

University of St Andrews Students' Association

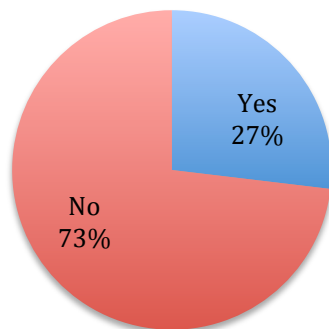
- The ideal study space for PG students looks similar to the ideal study space of UG students, with the exception that they tend to prefer quiet and silent spaces to the same degree (59%).
- This survey did not investigate the importance of location of the ideal study space that might also play an important role in choosing a preferred place to study.

Recommendations

- 1) Increase the provision of power outlets in the Main Library (Library) and other University study spaces around town (Estates).
- 2) Keep desired study space characteristics (power outlets, plenty of desk space, quiet, drinks, printers) in mind for building and refurbishing study spaces (Estates, TISG).
- 3) Investigate the possibility of building learning commons in St Andrews (TISG).
- 4) Take into account different needs of PG students and investigate the possibility of opening more silent study spaces (TISG).
- 5) Compile a list of alternative study spaces with their different characteristics and make it accessible online to students (Students' Association).

Specialist software

Do you use specialist software when you study?



- Out of 298 respondents (27%) who use specialist software when they study, 119 (40%) cannot access it WHERE they want it, and 75 (25%) cannot access it WHEN they want it.

- The most frequent software mentioned with access problems was SPSS (55), Maple (38), R (19), ArcGIS & ArcMap (28), ChemDraw (16), Mathematica (17), LaTeX (11), MatLab (9), NVivo (9), and design software (8).

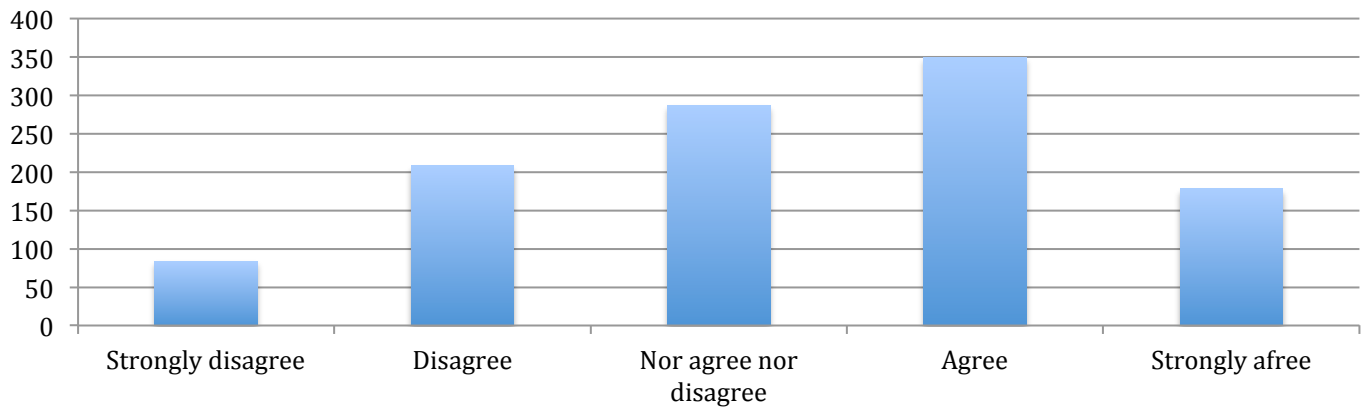
Recommendations

- 1) Make specialist software more widely available on University computers (IT Services).
- 2) Investigate the possibility of purchasing a mass licence for specialist software and make it available to students on their own computers (IT Services).

Time management

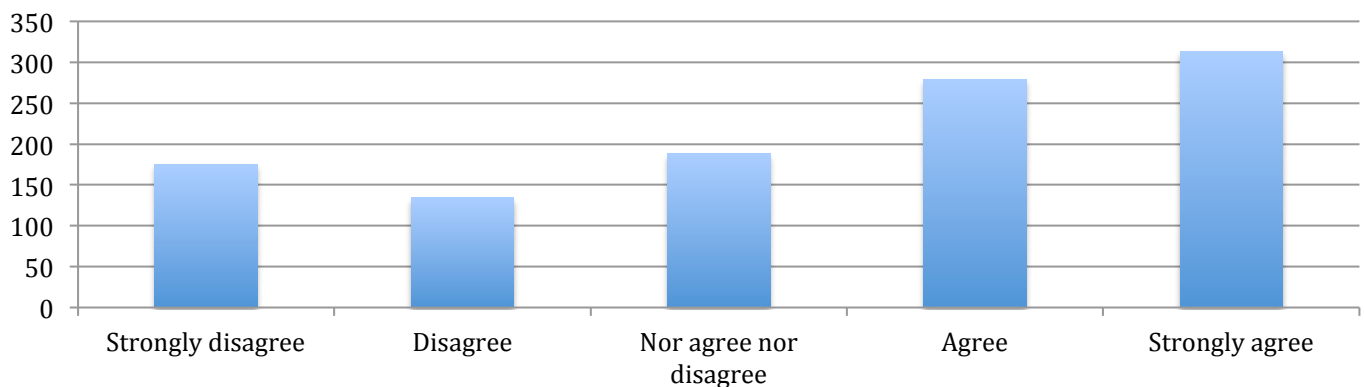
- More than 60% of respondents “strongly agree” or “agree” that they are comfortable with their ability to manage their time to achieve academic requirements. The proportion is higher for PGR students (>75%).
- Less than 20% of students are *not* aware how many hours they are expected to spend studying and preparing for each module. This proportion is slightly higher for PGT students (24%).
- Only 14% of students had to request an extension for an academic assignment more than once.

I have adequate time for extra-curricular activities



- While 47% of students “strongly agree” or “agree” that they have adequate time for extra-curricular activities, 26% of students “strongly disagree” or “disagree” with the statement. The proportion of students who replied in negative is slightly higher for PGT students (34%), and students in Science/Medicine (31%).

Wednesday afternoons are generally available for my extra-curricular activities



- While 60% of UG students “strongly agree” or “agree” that Wednesday afternoons are generally free for their extra-curricular activities, 24% of UG students “strongly disagree” or “disagree” with the statement.
- The proportion of PG students of students who replied in negative to the statement that Wednesday afternoons are generally free for their extra-curricular activities is **radically** higher on 56% (with >60% for PGT students). Only 1/5 of PG students “strongly agree” or “agree” with the above statement.
- 35% of students indicated that they have unavoidable demands on their time: primarily as a result of paid employment (20%), health reasons (9%), and caring for relatives/children (1%). Other reasons (5%) included commuting, positions of responsibility, and studying. The proportion of students with unavoidable time demands was higher for PG students (43%).

Study and Technology Survey Report

University of St Andrews Students' Association

The two last questions of the survey asked about time management support:

- While 30% of students were aware of support available to help them with managing their time, 45% of students responded negatively to this question. The awareness was higher among PGR students (36%), the only group that had more respondents aware than not aware of the support available to help them with managing their time.
- While 29% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that additional time management support would be useful, only 9% of PGR students responded positively to that question.

Recommendations

- 1) Investigate the effects of compulsory Wednesday afternoon teaching, especially in the PG student body, on the St Andrews student experience with focus on involvement in societies, sports, and music (Students' Association, Athletic Union, Music Centre).
- 2) Consider extending the Senate regulation on Wednesday afternoon teaching to PG students (LTC & Academic Council).
- 3) Monitor the number of students who work part-time during term-time and investigate its effects on academic results, involvement in extra-curricular activities, and future employment (Registry, Careers Centre, Student Services).

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