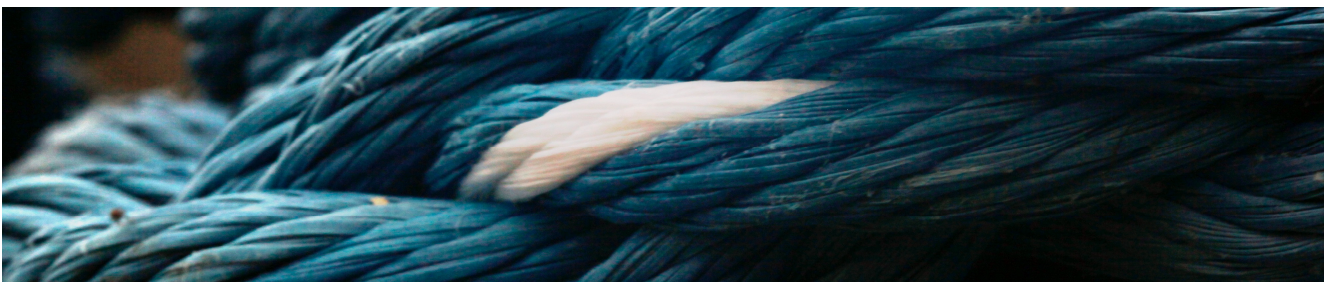navitas

life-changing opportunities to learn

Making Connections:

Global Student Technology Survey

Summary report
July 2018

Introduction

Connecting student experiences, needs and expectations around technology in learning

The Navitas Student Technology Survey, run by the global Learning and Teaching team, explores how technology is used in diverse learning and teaching contexts at Navitas. Building on six years of qualitative and quantitative research in classrooms and colleges, this year's report provides our first global view of student behaviours and attitudes towards using technology in learning.

The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of student experiences, needs, and expectations around technology in learning and contribute to existing industry knowledge in this area. These insights support strategic objectives in technology for learning and teaching through:

- Measurement of progress against goals related to use of technology in teaching and learning
- Data to inform technology policies and procedures
- Information for internal and external benchmarking
- Feedback to inform a technology-enriched student experience and program delivery
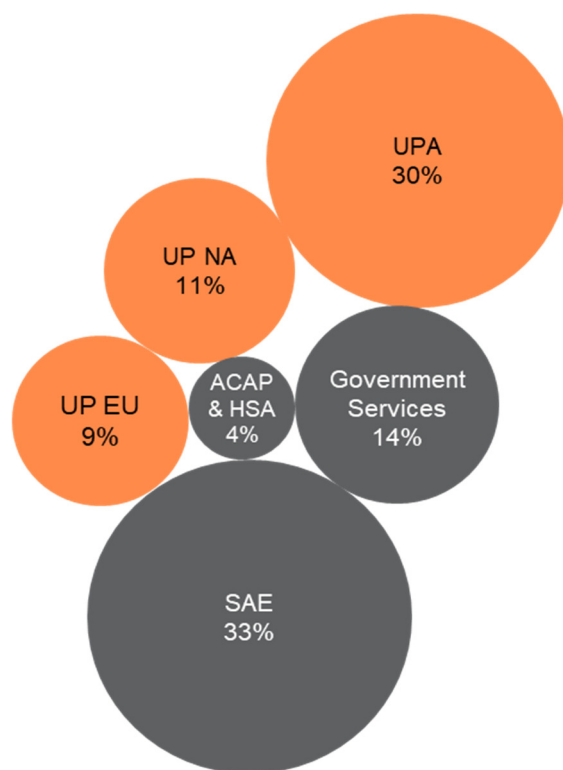
Learning contexts at Navitas

Navitas University Partnerships provide pre-university, managed campus and university pathway (UP) programs across three regional divisions: UP Australasia, UP Europe, and UP North America. UP divisions provide pathway programs for international and domestic learners who may not otherwise be able to access tertiary education. Having completed a program with Navitas, students typically enter the mainstream university in their second year and complete their undergraduate degrees.

The **Careers and Industry** (C&I) division brings together niche, Navitas-owned colleges offering accredited vocational education and higher education programs in sectors with strong employment prospects, such as creative media, health services and human services. It also includes our government services arm which delivers critical government-funded English language, literacy and numeracy programs to new migrants, refugees and job-seekers in Australia, as well as Professional Year Programs, internships and work readiness solutions for students, graduates and young professionals.

Respondent profile

"The resources I have available allow me to study almost anywhere at any time with little difficulty. The flexibility I have thanks to computers is a great help when I study so far from home." (University Partnerships Australasia)

Figure 1. Participation across Navitas divisions*

Percentages do not equal 100% due to rounding

University Partnerships (orange)	Australasia (UPA) North America (UP NA) Europe (UP EU)
Careers & Industry (grey)	SAE Creative Media Institute Government Services ACAP & HSA

This year's survey gathered data from 7,240 individuals studying at 96 Navitas colleges in 26 countries around the world. There were particularly high numbers of responses from UPA (University Partnerships Australasia) and SAE (Creative Media) – the latter representing dozens of campuses from Amman, Athens and Auckland to San Jose, Stockholm and Sydney.

Participants in this year's research spoke more than 100 different languages, with many studying in English as a second or third language. Others in this sample (more commonly in ACAP, HSA and SAE) are mostly taught in their first language and study in their home country. The survey was available in 7 languages to enable participation from students with lower levels of English language ability.

Over two-thirds of respondents were between the ages of 18 and 25, considered broadly representative of student demographics across most Navitas divisions. ACAP, HSA and Government Services demonstrated a broader age profile, from 18 through to 65+ years. When responses were compared by age cohort, however, very few differences were noted in ownership, attitudes or use of technology in learning.

7,240	**100+**	**96**	**26**
survey responses	languages spoken	colleges	countries

Key findings

Working across four main themes (Attitudes and Experiences; Access and Usage; Learning with Technology; Challenges and Support), this year's report highlights some familiar aspects of technology and its potential to connect people, places, systems and experiences in learning and teaching. At its best, technology bridges physical and virtual classroom spaces, personal devices and learning systems, and supports innovation, student community and ultimately student success.

Looking across the many different colleges, countries, languages and study disciplines included in this research, technology is also a connecting feature between seemingly disparate students, with many similarities in technology ownership, usage and attitudes towards technology in learning.

This year's survey findings indicate that students are generally well-equipped to take advantage of a range of technology-enabled learning activities in terms of their own device ownership and internet access, and demonstrate a positive attitude towards integrating technology into learning. Many are relatively self-sufficient in fixing tech-related issues and directing their own learning about new technologies, but there is also appetite for further input, guidance and support from teachers and institutions.

Responses across the survey as a whole also raise areas for further discussion and exploration, including:

- **Mobile:** exploring how trends in mobile ownership and usage can be leveraged in pedagogy, learning design and technology provision, acknowledging how students are already using their own technologies beyond learning contexts.
- **Community and student experience:** developing and supporting a stronger sense of community among students, both online and face-to-face. Peer support networks can build confidence and competence in technology, learning and the student experience in general, with wider impacts on student engagement and retention.
- **Foundations:** removing practical obstacles such as internet issues, unreliable technology and other elements within the control of the institution. This not only minimises frustrations for students and teachers, but also provides a solid foundation for further development and innovation in the use of technology to enhance learning.

Overall, there is an emerging sense over several years of research with Navitas students that they are increasingly discerning about how technology is used to support and enhance learning. Students place certain expectations on education providers to ensure learning environments are contemporary and reliable, systems are fit for purpose and technology works seamlessly with the student experience overall. Teachers are expected to integrate technology thoughtfully into their pedagogical approach and have the skills to use it, as well as guide less confident students where necessary. Students also recognise their own responsibilities for appropriate use of technology in learning and for building relevant skills, not only in their courses but also for their future work and personal development.

Attitudes and experiences:
Positive connections for learning

"The class space and having all resources online as well as many library books in e-book format means that I have good access to study resources, making my study at ACAP a less stressful and more enjoyable experience overall." (ACAP)

77% rate their experience with technology in their course as 'positive' or 'very positive'

Student responses across all colleges and cohorts indicated a positive overall experience with technology. Similarly, around three-quarters of respondents felt their course used the right amount of technology.

When asked to consider their own general attitudes to technology, 36% self-classified as 'Early majority'[1] ('*I usually use new technologies at the same time as other people I know*'). 'Innovators' (18%) and 'Early adopters' (25%) were also well represented across cohorts, with a notable spike in the latter among our Creative Media students.
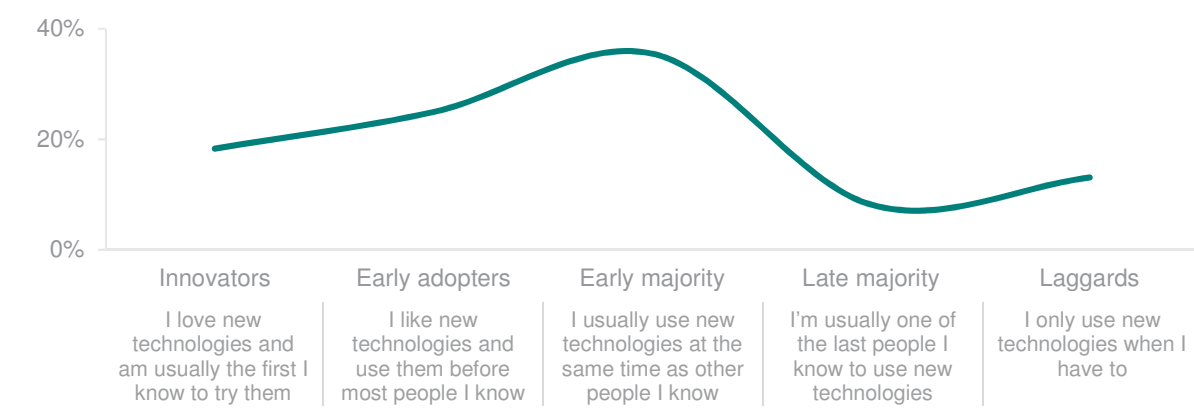
When asked about the benefits of using technology in learning, there was emphatic agreement (77-91%) with a wide range of statements, from *'Technology helps me to communicate'* to *'Technology allows me to learn*

when and where I want'. Responses also suggest that students enjoy learning with technology and perceive that it helps them to learn in different ways. They appear less convinced that it helps them to organise and manage their learning, or that it makes learning 'personal'.

Positive overall attitudes and experiences echo patterns in current and historical results of other global student research studies such as the ECAR Undergraduate Students and Information Technology Survey[2] (78% report good or excellent experiences). However, whilst students may feel that technology is working well enough for them at the moment, our institutions, teaching staff and others supporting the student experience cannot 'set and forget' where digital is concerned.

To continue developing the digital experience, listening and co-creating solutions with students offers many opportunities to challenge the status quo. This includes working with the attitudinal 'extremes' as well as those who are satisfied with their experience.

Figure 2. Attitudes towards technology adoption

| Innovators	Early adopters	Early majority	Late majority	Laggards
I love new technologies and am usually the first I know to try them	I like new technologies and use them before most people I know	I usually use new technologies at the same time as other people I know	I'm usually one of the last people I know to use new technologies	I only use new technologies when I have to

Access and usage:
Connecting devices and systems

"I want to be able to do everything basically online so it gives me more mobility…" (University Partnerships North America)

54% describe internet at their college/campus as 'excellent' or 'good'

Good Wi-Fi is fast becoming a non-negotiable aspect of the student digital experience, whether at home, in the classroom or other spaces students connect to learn.

Analysis across several questions in this survey suggests experiences of campus/college internet quality are correlated with the overall student experience with technology. As internet quality declines, fewer students report a positive experience with technology. Correspondingly, 'excellent'/'good' internet quality correlates with a higher number of students reporting a positive experience with technology.

Figure 3. Technology experience and internet quality
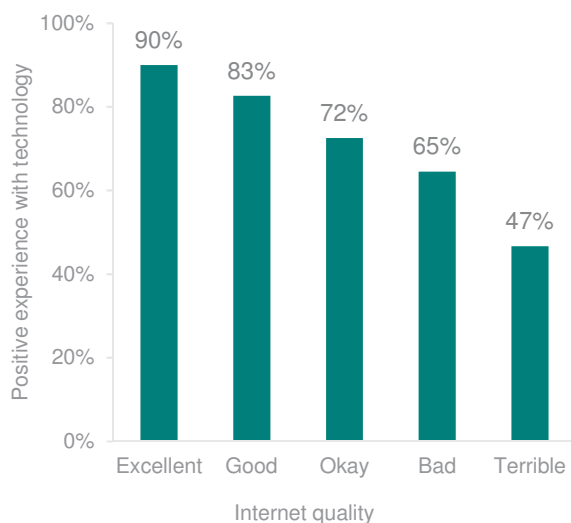
In terms of personal technology ownership, student trends appear to be converging on two main devices: laptops (79%) and smartphones (93%). Less than half as many respondents own tablets or desktops, with data from ECAR surveys suggesting that these devices are declining in popularity over time.

Figure 4. Device ownership vs. use in course
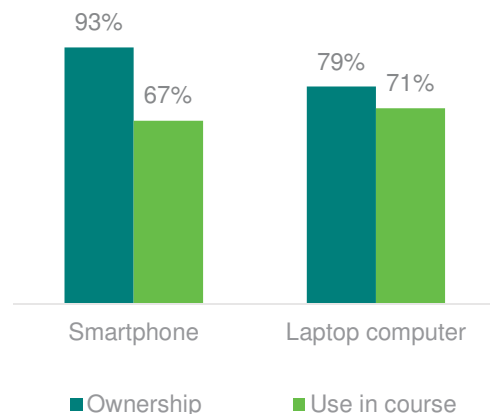
Laptops are clearly a key device for many students, but the more agile smartphone is also finding its place, with two-thirds reporting its use in learning. This has implications for many aspects of the student experience, from curriculum and learning design (in both face to face and online spaces) to campus provision (power points and charging facilities). As smartphone capabilities continue to evolve, what kinds of skills might teachers need in order to design and deliver effective, engaging and mobile-friendly learning experiences both now and in the future?

Learning with technology:
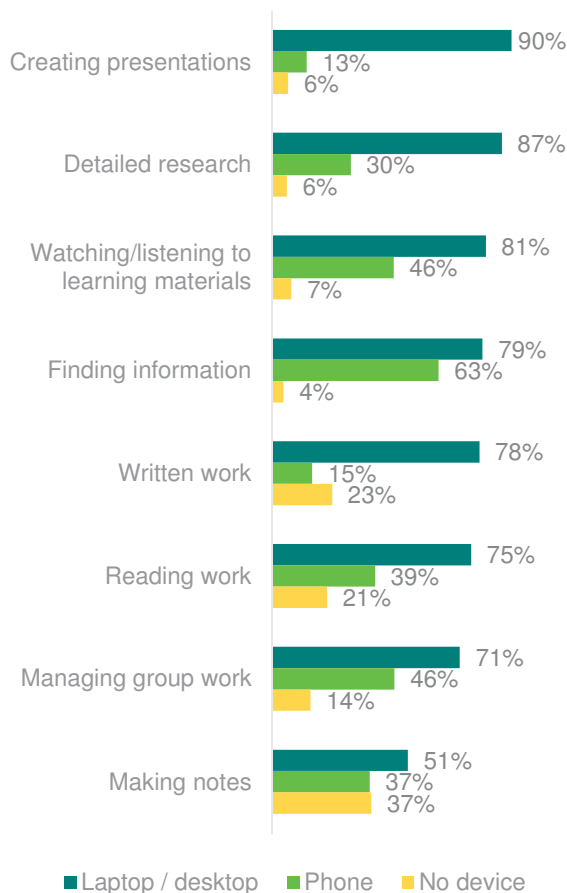# Connecting in the classroom and beyond

"Sometimes [the] teacher introduces the information so fast, but I can use my laptop or smartphone to search the detail, it helps me understand the information easier." (University Partnerships Australasia)

46% use smartphones to watch/listen to learning materials

37% use smartphones to make notes

Figure 5. Devices and learning activities

Creating presentations
- 90%
- 13%
- 6%

Detailed research
- 87%
- 30%
- 6%

Watching/listening to learning materials
- 81%
- 46%
- 7%

Finding information
- 79%
- 63%
- 4%

Written work
- 78%
- 15%
- 23%

Reading work
- 75%
- 39%
- 21%

Managing group work
- 71%
- 46%
- 14%

Making notes
- 51%
- 37%
- 37%

■ Laptop / desktop ■ Phone ■ No device

Student responses indicate that 'large-screen' devices (laptop/desktop) continue to offer flexibility across the broadest range of learning activities, no matter what the study context. These devices are especially important for 'production'-related tasks such as creating presentations, written work and detailed research, where the smaller screen and functionality of the smartphone has a lesser role to play (but is not entirely absent).

Never more than arms-reach away, smartphones are used to some extent across many learning activities, but with a bias towards 'consuming' resources: watching and listening to learning materials, reading work and finding information. Students are also attempting more and more with these small but powerful devices, using them to manage group work and some 'productive' tasks such as note-taking.

As a counterpoint to the constant presence of digital devices in both personal and learning contexts, there were notable examples among student comments throughout the survey expressing a need for balance and an appreciation that technology is not the only enhancement to learning:

"Despite the advantages of technology/ the internet, I also like learning from books. You can touch them, look things up, write notes and the battery can't run out ;)"
(SAE - Creative Media Institute)

Learning with technology:
Connecting in the classroom and beyond

"Communication with other artists is one of my favorite ways to learn, creating a connection in conversation about learning topics always inspires me to work, which then leads me to deal with technology."
(SAE – Creative Media Institute)

73% communicate with teachers via email

16% communicate with teachers using online spaces

Survey responses suggest that technology may currently be underused in this area, with teacher-student communication often defaulting to email rather than collaborative, community-focussed online spaces. The challenge remains to equip teachers and students to make the best use of digital options: rather than competing with social media and messaging 'distractions', institutions can learn by exploring and adapting some of the most engaging aspects of digital communication.
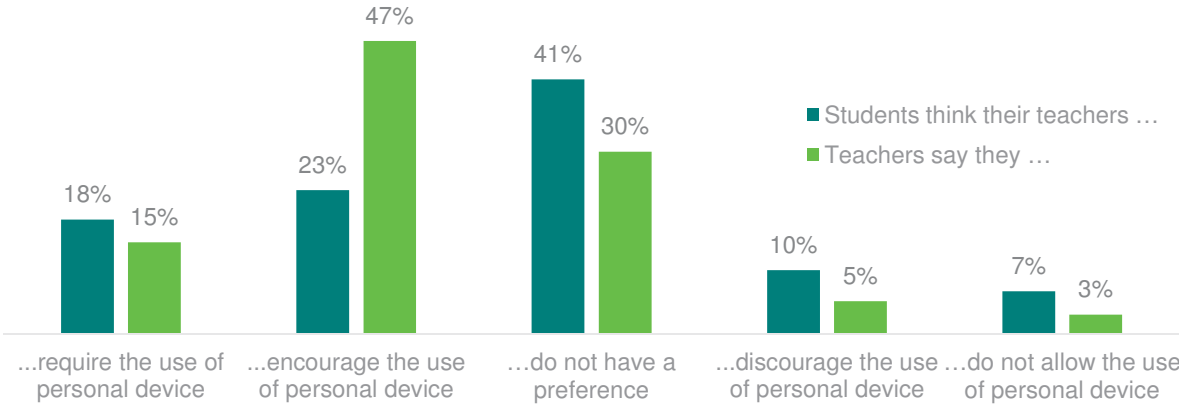
The concept of the 'connected student' underpins many of the drivers behind student retention and success, including meaningful connection with peers,

relationships with teachers and staff and a robust support structure (*Navitas Retention Driver Tree*).[3]

With smartphones ever-present in our classrooms, there has also been much discussion about managing personal devices in class. Our survey findings suggest positive and constructive attitudes to personal device usage among both teachers and students, with fewer than one in five reporting that devices are discouraged or banned in class.

There are a few differences to note between the 2016/17 teacher responses and 2017/18 student responses. The teacher survey showed that this group were more likely to see themselves as encouraging use of personal devices, whereas students thought their teacher didn't have a preference. Whilst these are different cohorts, this pattern may also mean teachers could be more explicit about permission to use devices during class activities, and perhaps seek further opportunities to include tasks where mobile devices are integrated into the learning design.

Figure 6. Use of personal devices in class

Legend:
- Students think their teachers …
- Teachers say they …

	...require the use of personal device	...encourage the use of personal device	...do not have a preference	...discourage the use of personal device	...do not allow the use of personal device
Students think their teachers …	18%	23%	41%	10%	7%
Teachers say they …	15%	47%	30%	5%	3%

Challenges and support:
Connecting for learning and improvement

"If I can't google it or figure it out myself, it depends on the day. If I'm going to be at uni […] I ask tech support, but if it's a weekend, I ask friends that are experienced with technology." (University Partnerships Australasia)

64% use Google/online search to learn about new technology in their course

With technology changing and upgrading so frequently, students appear to take the initiative and reach for the most convenient resources when they need to learn new things or fix an issue with technology. Google/online search, friends, classmates and teachers all feature frequently in their top responses, with more variable use of institutional resources such as IT helpdesk and user guides.

Whilst these 'formal' resources are still being used, there is a focus again here on ensuring students feel connected and part of a learning community in order to draw on more informal sources for help. Teachers also need the skills and confidence to respond to students' basic technology issues, but also to design appropriate learning experiences for their students which make the most of available technologies.
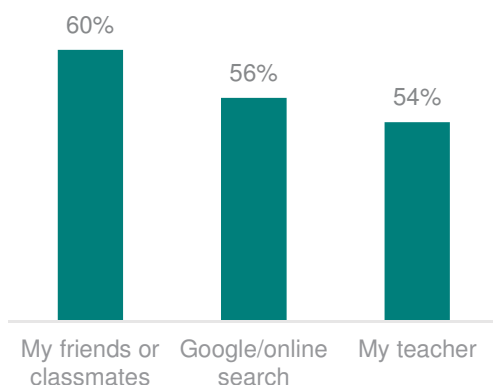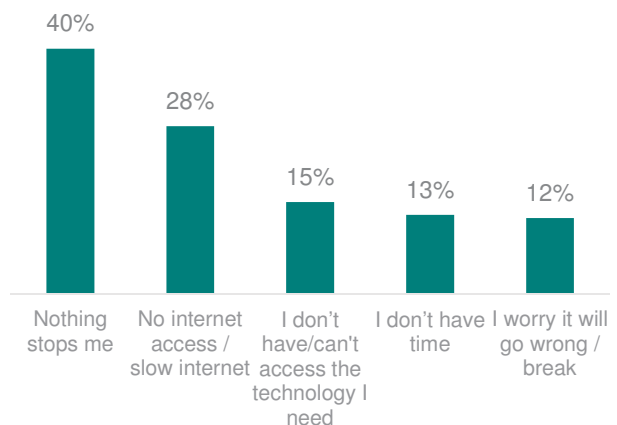
Figure 7. Top 3 technology help sources

It is encouraging that 40% of respondents indicated that nothing stops them from using technology more effectively. Where there are barriers, they focus on internet, access to the right technology and lack of time/confidence.

Asked about potential improvements in the use of technology, students' comments reinforced themes observed throughout the survey: better technology (particularly internet), well-functioning systems and thoughtful integration of technology into teaching and curriculum.

Survey respondents took significant time and effort to articulate their own ideas and suggestions for improvements in written commentary, suggesting students are invested in this area and keen to help with continuing development. Students should continue to be involved in ongoing work about technology, through structured conversations, observations, design/co-creation of solutions and other regular opportunities to collaborate.

Figure 8. Barriers to using technology

Additional information

Many thanks to the academic managers, college directors and other contributors who helped to design and encourage participation in this survey. Thanks also to our Navitas teachers and students worldwide for taking the time to contribute and share your experiences.

We look forward to your participation in 2019!

Research and report by

Navitas Learning and Teaching Services

Providing connected L&T leadership across Navitas and enabling innovation in teaching, learning and the student experience.

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Footnotes

1. Rogers, E. (1962). *Diffusion of Innovations.* New York: Free Press.

2. Brooks, C. & Pomerantz, J. (2017). *ECAR Study of Undergraduate Students and Information Technology* (Research report). Louisville, CO:ECAR.

3. Learning and Teaching Services. (2017). *Driving student outcomes and success: Immediate interventions to improve retention.* Retrieved from https://learningandteaching-navitas.com/articles/driving-student-outcomes-success-immediate-interventions-improve-retention/

Other references and material

1. Mirriahi, N. & Alonzo, D. (2015). Shedding Light on Students' Technology Preferences: Implications for Academic Development. *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, 12(1).

2. Survey questions
   https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/STS2017Preview

3. Detailed reports
   In addition to this global summary, full detailed reports have been produced for the following:
   Careers & Industry
   SAE Institute
   ACAP & HSA
   Government Services
   University Partnerships
   UP Australasia
   UP Europe
   UP North America

4. Past reports
   For a copy of historical reports (2012-2017) contact
   learningandteaching@navitas.com

Participating colleges – University Partnership

UPA

Australian College of Business and Technology (ACBT)

Centre for English Language at the University of South Australia (CELUSA)

Curtin College Perth

Curtin Singapore

Deakin College

Edith Cowan College (ECC)

Eynesbury

Eynesbury College Academy of English (ECAE)

Griffith College

Hawthorn Melbourne

La Trobe Melbourne

La Trobe Sydney

Navitas English

Navitas Professional

Navitas English North Metropolitan TAFE Perth

Newcastle International College (NIC)

South Australian Institute of Business and Technology (SAIBT)

University of Canberra College (UCC)

University of Canterbury International College (UCIC)

Western Sydney University International College (WSUIC)

UP EU

Birmingham City University International College (BCUIC)

Cambridge Ruskin International College (CRIC)

Edinburgh International College (EIC)

Hertfordshire International College (HIC)

International College at Robert Gordon University (ICRGU)

International College of Portsmouth (ICP)

The College, Swansea University

London Brunel International College (LBIC)

Plymouth University International College (PUIC)

University of Northampton International College (UNIC)

UP NA

Fraser International College (FIC)

University of Idaho Global Student Success Program (Idaho GSSP)

International College of Manitoba (ICM)

Florida Atlantic University Global Student Success Program (FAU GSSP)

University of Massachusetts Boston International Student Success Program (UMass Boston ISSP)

University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Global Student Program (UMass Dartmouth GSP)

University of Massachusetts Lowell Global Student Success Program (UMass Lowell GSSP)

University of New Hampshire Global Student Success Program (UNH GSSP)

Richard Bland College of William & Mary Global Student Success Program (RBC GSSP)

Participating colleges – Careers and Industry

ACAP & HSA

Australian College of Applied Psychology (ACAP)

Health Skills Australia (HSA)

Government Services

Navitas English Auburn

Navitas English Bankstown

Navitas English Cabramatta

Navitas English Campsie

Navitas English Canberra (Reid)

Navitas English Fairfield

Navitas English Liverpool

Navitas English Sydney City (Hyde Park)

SAE Institute

SAE Institute Adelaide

SAE Institute Amman

SAE Institute Amsterdam

SAE Institute Athens

SAE Institute Atlanta

SAE Institute Auckland

SAE Institute Barcelona

SAE Institute Belgrade

SAE Institute Berlin

SAE Institute Bochum

SAE Institute Bogota

SAE Institute Brisbane

SAE Institute Bucharest

SAE Institute Byron Bay

SAE Institute Cape Town

SAE Institute Chicago

SAE Institute Cologne

SAE Institute Dubai

SAE Institute Emeryville

SAE Institute Frankfurt

SAE Institute Geneva

SAE Institute Glasgow

SAE Institute Hamburg

SAE Institute Hannover

SAE Institute Jakarta

SAE Institute Leipzig

SAE Institute Liverpool

SAE Institute London

SAE Institute Los Angeles

SAE Institute Madrid

SAE Institute Melbourne

SAE Institute Mexico City

SAE Institute Miami

SAE Institute Milan

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SAE Institute Nashville

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