



student communications survey

2015 RESULTS

Prepared by Kirsty Budd, Student Success Office
Released Fall 2015



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO



table of contents

Executive Summary	2-3
The Process	4-5
How do Waterloo students want to be communicated with?	6-7
Preferred Communication Channels	8-9
How are Waterloo students using email?	10-11
How are Waterloo students using social media?	12-13
Important Sources of Information	14-15
Summary of Key Takeaways	16-17



executive summary

The University of Waterloo's Student Success Office (SSO) conducted a Student Communications Survey in January 2015 with 1,199 student respondents and 1,100 completed surveys. The highest response rate came from the Faculty of Arts (30 per cent), as compared to other faculties (10-18 per cent), and 84 per cent of respondents were undergraduate students. The data from the survey was further complemented by qualitative data collected at three student consultation groups.

WE WANTED TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

How do Waterloo students want to be communicated with?

How are Waterloo students using email and social media?

Who do Waterloo students consider an important source of information?

Email and social media best practices documents are available at uwaterloo.ca/sso/communications



1 How do Waterloo students want to be communicated with?

Students consistently identified email and social media as preferred methods of communication. When asked about preferences for receiving authoritative communication about student fees, awards and funding, and records, email was consistently selected by the largest percentage of students. However, when asked about preferences for receiving student union or other campus services information, a larger percentage of students selected social media.

2 How are Waterloo students using email and social media?

Students reported checking their email frequently, with 86 per cent checking for email from a University of Waterloo source on a daily basis. However, almost half of students reported not reading every email that comes from a University of Waterloo source.

Subject lines, sender lines and formatting are critical factors in motivating a student to read an email. Students reported wanting concise, well-formatted information with 65 per cent describing their email reading style as 'skim and scan'. The majority of students are checking their email on different sized screens, with 82 per cent indicating they read email on a mobile device.

The majority of students indicated high daily or weekly usage of social media platforms, most notably: Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter and Instagram. There are some exceptions. Math and Engineering undergraduate students reported comparatively lower daily or weekly usage of Twitter and Instagram. Graduate students reported comparatively lower daily or weekly usage for all social media platforms. Finally, student visa students are less likely to have an account on many of the most common North American social media platforms.

3 Who do Waterloo students consider an important source of information?

The majority of students reported that they are "always likely" to consider professors or program co-ordinators and academic advisors as sources of important information. These findings are heightened for student visa students, with an even greater number indicating they are "always likely" to consider their professors or program co-ordinators and academic advisors as important sources of information.

Based on these results, the SSO has created best practices for using email and social media to effectively communicate with students. These documents can be found on the Student Success Office website at uwaterloo.ca/sso/communications.

the process

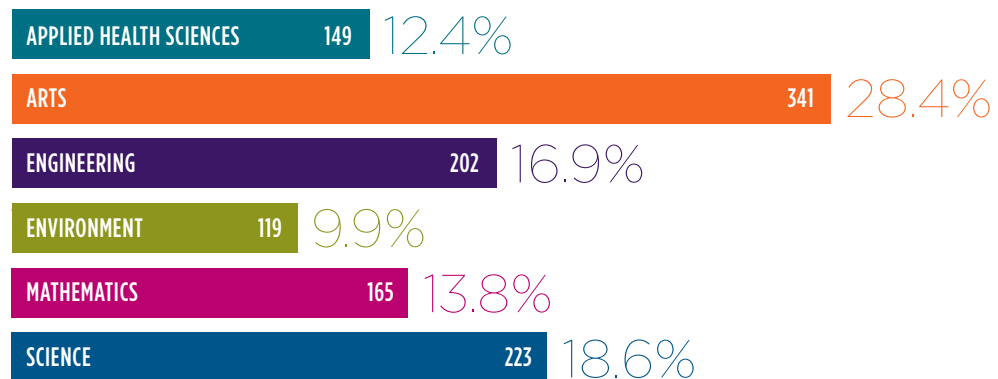
In January 2015, the Student Success Office hosted the survey and student consultation groups. Waterloo students were asked for their feedback around communications, particularly how they use different communication tools and how they want to be communicated with. Specifically we wanted to learn:

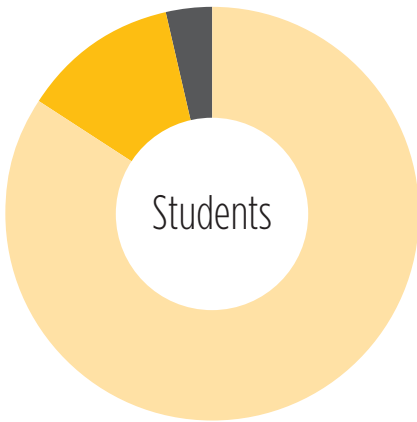
- » How do Waterloo students want to be communicated with?
- » How are Waterloo students using email and social media?
- » Who do Waterloo students consider an important source of information?

SURVEY OVERVIEW

The survey was open for three weeks and an incentive was offered (a chance to win \$10 on the student's WatCard). There were 1,199 student respondents and 1,100 completed surveys.

Respondents by faculty:

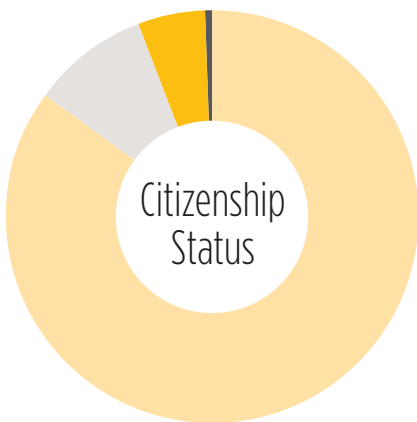




Respondents by undergraduate and graduate:

UNDERGRADUATE / 1,011 / 84.3%
GRADUATE / 147 / 12.2%
OTHER* / 41 / 3.4%

* Transfer students, exchange students, non-degree students, recently graduated students



Respondents by citizenship status:

CANADIAN CITIZEN / 1,010 / 85.2%
STUDENT VISA / 109 / 9.2%
PERMANENT RESIDENT / 62 / 5.2%
OTHER* / 4 / 0.3%

* Exchange students

STUDENT CONSULTATION GROUPS OVERVIEW

Consultation groups were hosted to ensure there was an opportunity to ask detailed questions that might not translate well in a survey format. Consultation groups lasted an hour and an incentive was offered (\$10 on the student's WatCard). Thirty-four students attended the consultation groups.

Participants by undergraduate and graduate:

UNDERGRADUATE / 28 GRADUATE / 4 UNKNOWN / 2

Participants by faculty:



APPLIED HEALTH SCIENCES / 2
ARTS / 14
ENGINEERING / 5
ENVIRONMENT / 8
MATHEMATICS / 3
SCIENCE / 2



how do Waterloo students want to be communicated with?

Students were presented with different types of information and asked to indicate any of their preferred communications channels (for example: social media, email, print) for that type of information. Of all channels, students were always more likely to select email or social media.

For most types of information, email was consistently chosen by the largest percentage of students, with social media frequently chosen by the second largest percentage of students.

This trend changes for authoritative communication about student fees, awards and funding, and records. In this case, the largest percentage of students selected email, with LEARN frequently

chosen by the second largest percentage of students. A much smaller percentage selected social media.

When it comes to student union or campus services information and events, the trend shifts again, with the largest percentage of students equally likely to choose social media or email. The graphs on pages six and seven break down preferred communication channels for each type of information.

Overall, **email is the best way to receive official information.**

Social media is more for social or student life information.

– STUDENT

SHARE STUDENT MESSAGES IN MULTIPLE WAYS

In the consultation groups, students were asked how they felt about receiving the same message in multiple ways. For example, learning about a key deadline via an email, then seeing reminders on social media or on a digital screen. The general response was that students appreciated this multi-channel approach.

The catch: students do not want to receive the same message in the same way over and over. They identified that receiving an email about the same item multiple times in a relatively short time frame made them likely to ignore the content.





KEY TAKEAWAY



Email and social media are preferred communication channels for Waterloo students and it's important to use these tools to communicate effectively with students. It's also important to take an integrated approach to your communications planning. Don't rely on just one channel for your messages to students.

preferred communication channels

Students were presented with different types of information and asked to indicate any of their preferred communication channels for that type of information.



FACULTY INFO AND EVENTS



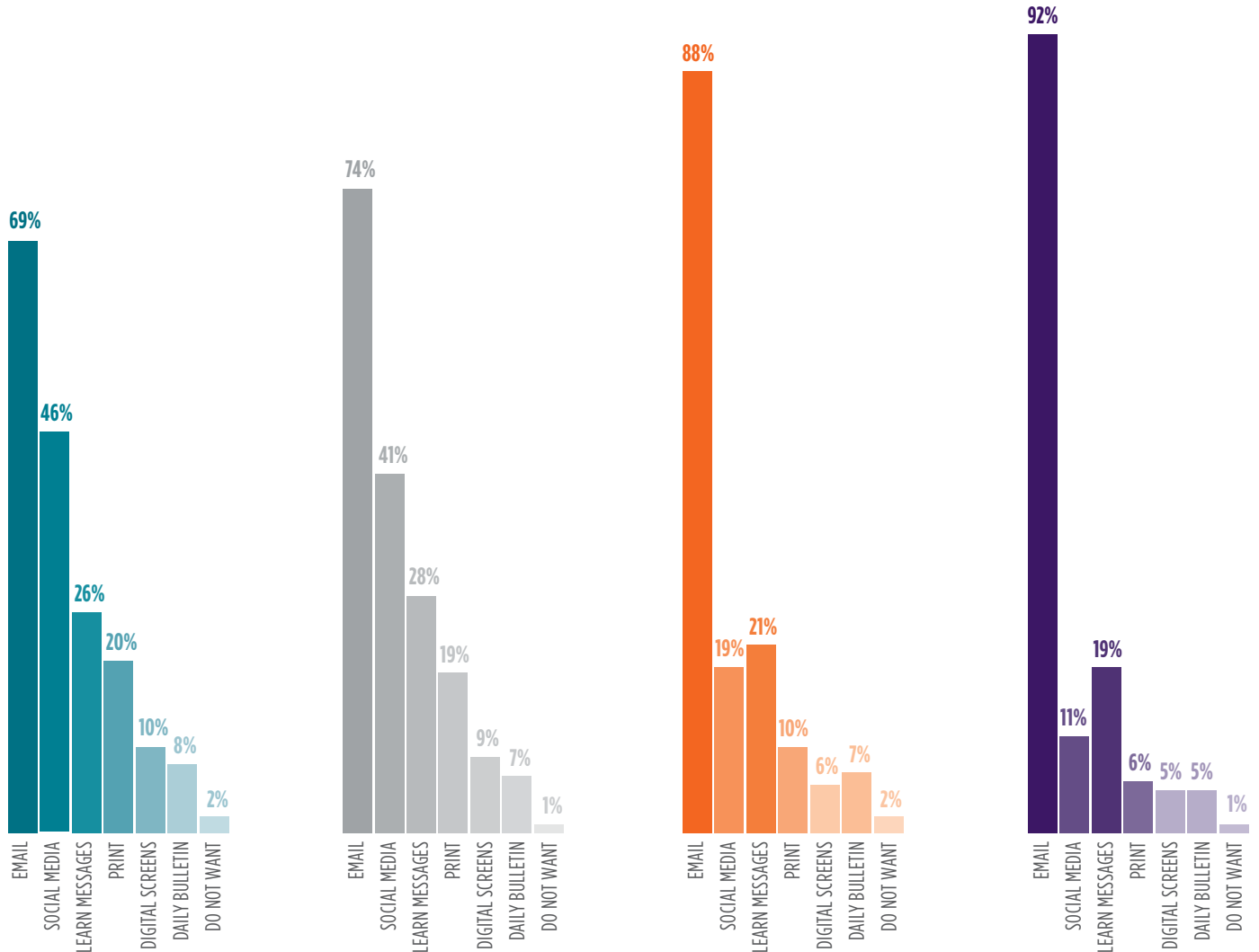
PROGRAM INFO AND EVENTS



AWARDS AND FUNDING



STUDENT FEES



*The results presented here reflect the percentage of all students who identified a particular method of communication as a way they would like to receive a specific type of information.

At the time of this survey, student portal was not rolled out to all faculties and consequently not included as an option.



**REGISTRAR
INFO**



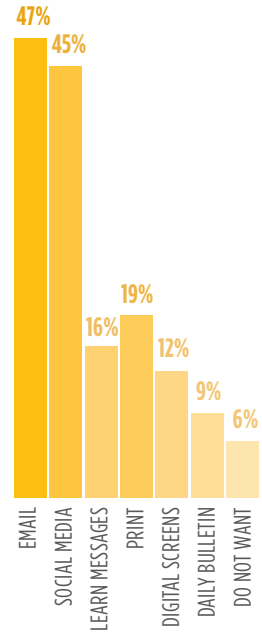
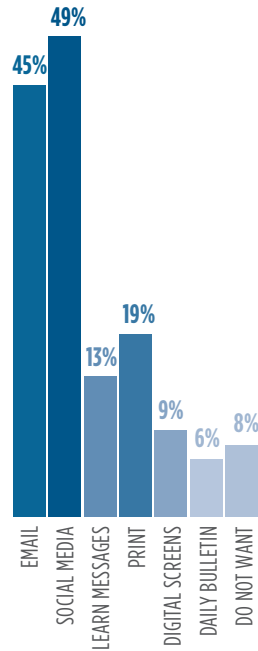
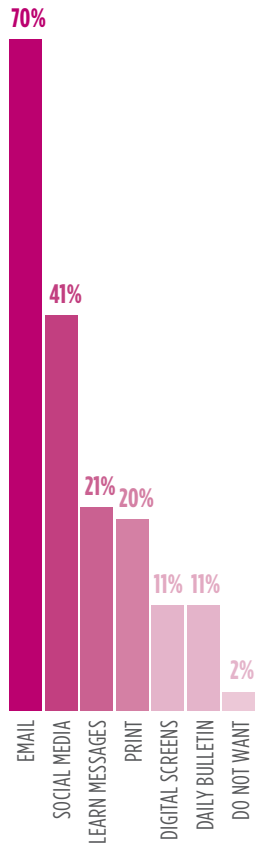
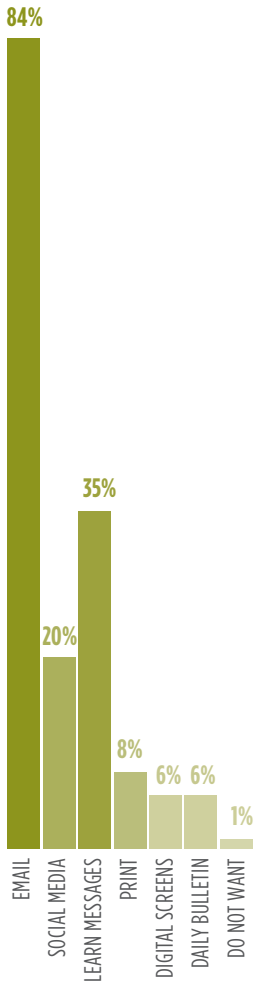
**JOB AND VOLUNTEER
OPPORTUNITIES**



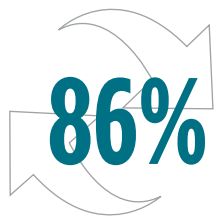
**STUDENT UNION
FEDS/GSA**



**CAMPUS SERVICES
INFO AND EVENTS**



how are Waterloo students using email?



of Waterloo students check for emails from a Waterloo source daily

47%

don't read every email that comes from a Waterloo source

When I'm on my phone I can only see so much, so **make it concise** or put what's most important at the beginning.

- STUDENT

Students were asked to indicate any of the devices they read email on:

82% read email on a mobile device

91% read email on a personal computer

WHAT ENCOURAGES A WATERLOO STUDENT TO READ AN EMAIL?

90% indicated that the **subject line** helped them decide whether or not to read an email

76% indicated that the **sender line** helped them decide whether or not to read an email

Students were asked to indicate any of the sender lines that would motivate them to read an email:

THEIR FACULTY OR PROGRAM

83%

SOMEONE THEY HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH (TA, PROFESSOR, ADVISOR ETC.)

81%

THE UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

72%

A SERVICE OR DEPARTMENT

55%

I typically ignore Waterloo emails if I'm getting **too many generic emails** that are not customized to my needs.

– STUDENT

Indicate **'what', 'when' and 'where'** in subject lines – on a smartphone, this makes the email more accessible.

– STUDENT

WHAT KIND OF EMAILS DO WATERLOO STUDENTS WANT TO READ?

In the survey we shared the same content presented three different ways and asked students to choose their favourite version. The overall preferred choice was:



- » Use of headings to emphasize important information
- » Use of bullet points to list information
- » Bold and colour is used sparingly
- » Short and concise content (limited scrolling needed)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

A large percentage of Waterloo students check for emails from a Waterloo source daily and are equally likely to read these emails on a mobile device or personal computers. **If the email is difficult to read on a mobile device, or too long, students may skip the content.**

When crafting an email, the subject line and sender line are two key parts of your content. When writing content for an email, take the time to think about what subject and sender lines will motivate students to read your email.



how are Waterloo students using social media?

DAILY OR WEEKLY USAGE FOR POPULAR NORTH AMERICAN SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS*

	FACEBOOK	SNAPCHAT	TWITTER	INSTAGRAM
Student Visa	89%	22%	24%	39%
Permanent Resident	96%	51%	29%	49%
Canadian Citizen	98%	64%	50%	55%
Undergraduate	97%	65%	49%	57%
Graduate	86%	19%	29%	24%

Math and Engineering undergraduate students, as well as student visa students consistently identified using all of these social media platforms less frequently and were also less likely to have an account (when compared to other faculties and to other citizenship statuses). Graduate students have comparatively lower daily or weekly usage for all of these social media platforms (when compared to undergraduate students).

*The results presented here reflect the percentage of all students who identified they used a particular social media platform on a daily or weekly basis. Students were asked to provide responses for a wide range of different social media platforms.

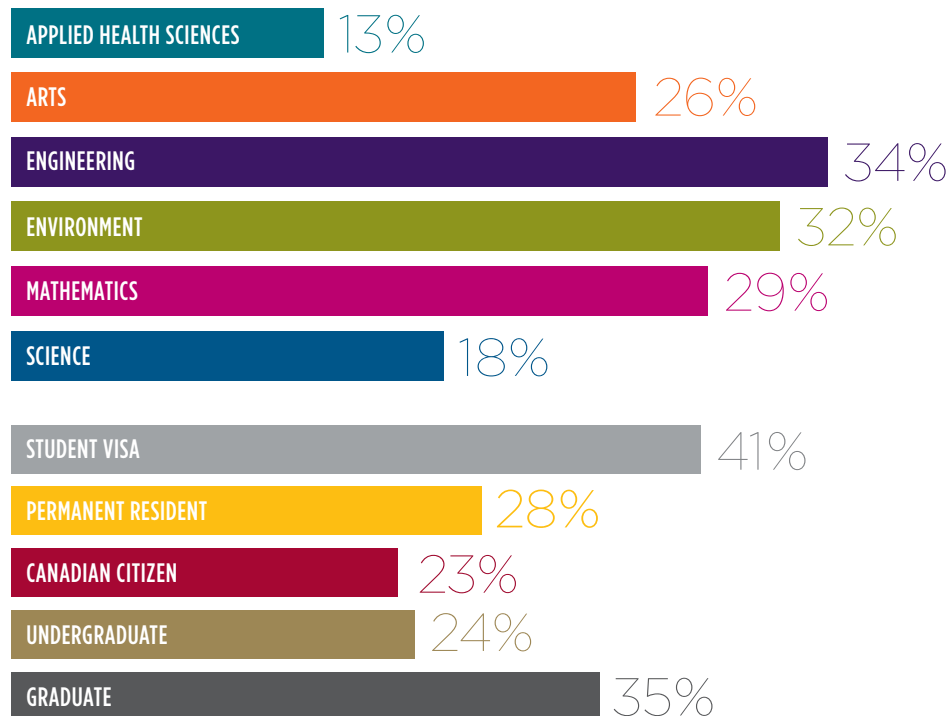


KEY TAKEAWAY

While the majority of Waterloo students are using social media to some extent, it's important to understand that platform preferences and activity levels vary amongst different groups.

HOW ARE WATERLOO STUDENTS USING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CAREER ADVANCEMENT AND NETWORKING?

Daily or weekly usage for LinkedIn:



WHERE ELSE ARE WATERLOO STUDENTS SPENDING TIME ONLINE?

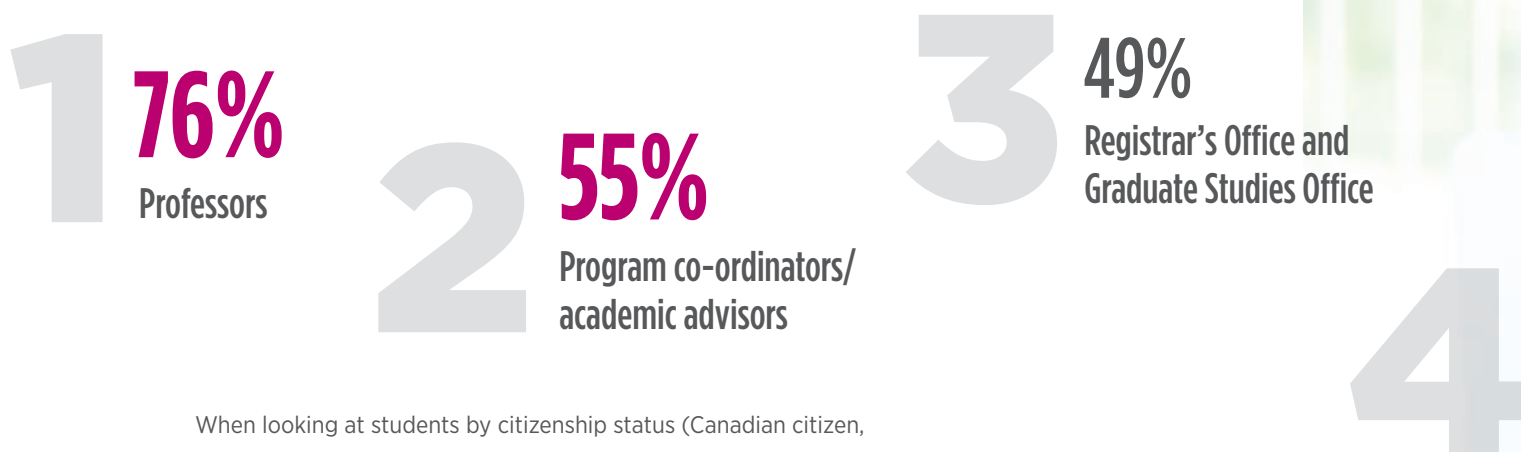
- » Google + **19%**
- » Tumblr **17%**
- » Pinterest **16%**
- » YikYak **6%**

A smaller percentage of students also referenced spending time on Reddit, Whatsapp, YouTube, WeChat and Vine

important sources of information

WHO ARE STUDENTS “ALWAYS LIKELY” TO CONSIDER AN IMPORTANT SOURCE OF INFORMATION?

Students were asked to indicate any sources they were “always likely” to consider an important source of information on campus (across any channel).



When looking at students by citizenship status (Canadian citizen, student visa and permanent resident), these results shift, particularly when it comes to professors or program co-ordinators and academic advisors. Student visa students represent the largest segment who identify professors or program co-ordinators and academic advisors as sources they were “always likely” to consider as important.

CANADIAN CITIZEN:

Professors **74%**

Program co-ordinators/academic advisors **53%**

PERMANENT RESIDENT:

Professors **80%**

Program co-ordinators/academic advisors **65%**

STUDENT VISA:

Professors **85%**

Program co-ordinators/academic advisors **73%**



5

8%
Student services

6

6%
Federation of Students
and Graduate Student
Association

39%
Student Awards
and Financial Aid
and Student Accounts

KEY TAKEAWAY

The majority of students consider their professors or program co-ordinators and academic advisors as sources of important information. This trend is heightened for student visa and permanent resident students.





SUMMARY OF KEY TAKEAWAYS



How do Waterloo students want to be communicated with?

- » Waterloo students consistently identify email and social media as their preferred communication channels.
- » The use of multiple channels to communicate key messages helps ensure your messages will be heard by Waterloo students.



How are Waterloo students using email and social media?

- » Waterloo students are equally likely to read their emails on a mobile device or a personal computer.
- » Waterloo students identified email subject and sender lines as two motivating factors for reading an email.
- » Waterloo students identified that their email reading style is 'skim and scan' and in an email, they prefer to have links to further information.
- » The majority of Waterloo students are using social media, but platform preferences and activity levels vary amongst different groups.



Who do Waterloo students consider an important source of information?

- » The majority of students consider their professors or program co-ordinators and academic advisors as sources of important information.



CONTACT

If you'd like to receive a copy of the survey, access specific results about your audience, or have any questions about the information in this report, please contact Kirsty Budd, Manager, Integrated Communications in the Student Success Office. k2budd@uwaterloo.ca



UNIVERSITY OF
WATERLOO

STUDENT SUCCESS OFFICE

519-888-4567 | success.uwaterloo.ca

200 University Avenue West, Waterloo, ON, Canada N2L 3G1