

## The use of ICT in further education

### Becta study from the learners' perspective

A large-scale telephone survey of Further Education college learners, exploring their experiences of, and attitudes towards, using Information and Communications Technology (ICT). Conducted by GfK NOP Social Research on behalf of Becta.

### The research challenge

As the Government's lead agency for Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in education, Becta leads the national drive to inspire and lead the effective and innovative use of technology throughout learning.

The research was commissioned to understand more about the use of ICT for teaching, learning and assessment in Further Education (FE) colleges, from the learner's perspective. The research findings helped to verify some of the key evidence from previous institution and practitioner level studies, as well as contributing to a better understanding of certain issues on which national level evidence was previously missing.

The objectives of the research were to address the following areas:



- Access to ICT resources within FE colleges and at home
- Use of ICT and e-learning in programmes of study
- Perceptions of how the use of ICT and e-learning impacts on learning
- Confidence and competence in using different forms of ICT for particular tasks
- Support for ICT provided by FE colleges and levels of take-up

In addition, Becta wished to explore how the concept of learner e-maturity related to the survey findings. Developed by Becta, the concept of learner e-maturity broadly relates to the skills and abilities that learners need, in order to be effective within technology-rich learning environments. On this survey,

learner e-maturity was based on learner perceptions of their own ICT confidence and competence.

### Why GfK NOP?

Becta awarded this contract to GfK NOP Social Research because of our excellent reputation in conducting research with learners in the FE sector (e.g. the National Learner Satisfaction Survey on behalf of the LSC), our capacity to deliver a large-scale telephone survey in a cost-effective manner, and the strong customer focus within our research proposal.

## What we did

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We worked closely with Becta to develop the questionnaire to meet the research objectives. Following a small pilot survey to test the length and content of the questionnaire, 4,000 FE learners were interviewed by telephone during April and May 2007.

The sample was sourced from the Individualised Learner Records (ILR), which are held by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). It was stratified by a number of key variables (including type of institution, mode of study and course type), to ensure it was sufficiently representative of the FE learner population.

We undertook in-depth analysis of the survey results, which we presented in two full written reports, including commentary, tables and charts of the survey results. The research team applied robust statistical analysis, in order to better understand learner e-maturity and to explore how it might be better defined.

## Benefits

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The research has provided Becta and its partners with robust evidence on FE learner experiences of using technology at college and at home for learning and for leisure purposes. Becta now possess a better understanding in several key learner areas. The findings of the research will help inform Becta's strategic decision-making processes, and should also assist FE colleges in developing and implementing their own strategies for e-learning.

## Overview of organisations

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### **Becta**

Becta is the Government's lead agency for Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in education, covering the United Kingdom. Becta leads the national drive to inspire and lead the effective and innovative use of technology throughout learning. Their ambition is to create a more exciting, rewarding and successful experience for learners of all ages and abilities enabling them to achieve their potential.

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### **GfK NOP Social Research**

GfK NOP Social Research is a leading primary research partner to public sector organisations in the UK providing both quantitative and qualitative research services to all major government departments as well as non-governmental organisations. We frequently work in partnership with a range of academic institutions and consultancies to supply outputs that incorporate specialist sector knowledge and recommendations. We combine first class research experience and public policy knowledge to deliver robust data that is used to inform policy development, spending decisions and communication strategies. ■

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The FE Learners survey report and 'e-maturity' report are available from Becta's website:  
[http://partners.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=rh&catcode=\\_re\\_rp\\_02&rid=14749](http://partners.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=rh&catcode=_re_rp_02&rid=14749)