The student marketers guide:

NET NATIVES

How to boost adult learning numbers for colleges and local authorities

September 2018
Revised edition

NET NATIVES

Adult education is an important topic for both colleges and local councils alike, and in this whitepaper, we'll provide you with some facts, figures, tips and tricks to help boost your organisation's number of adult learners through digital channels.

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SECTION 1

Understanding your audience

Before you begin promoting your Adult Education courses online, it's important to understand your audience so that you can ensure you're using the right messaging, at the right times and on the right platforms. We've conducted a research project into the digital behaviours of adult learners (between July 2015 and June 2016), which will give you some insight into the thoughts and motivations of your target audience, and how and where to reach them.

Search Analysis

Search We began our research with a search analysis, which identifies the most popular search terms and phrases that people use when looking for information on Adult Learning courses, as well as the most popular time of year, locations and device usage in relation to searches on this topic.

It is important to make sure that your website copy and advertising is optimised to reflect these search behaviours. By using similar search terminology, you will ensure your organic and paid search results effectively answer your audiences query, and generate more enquires.
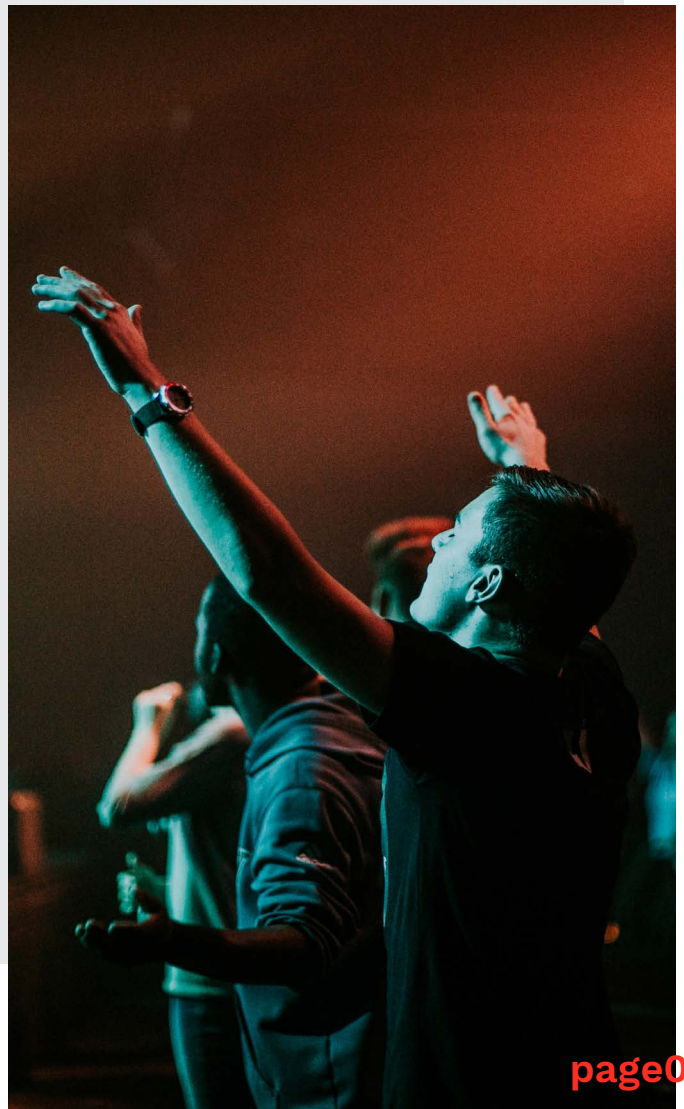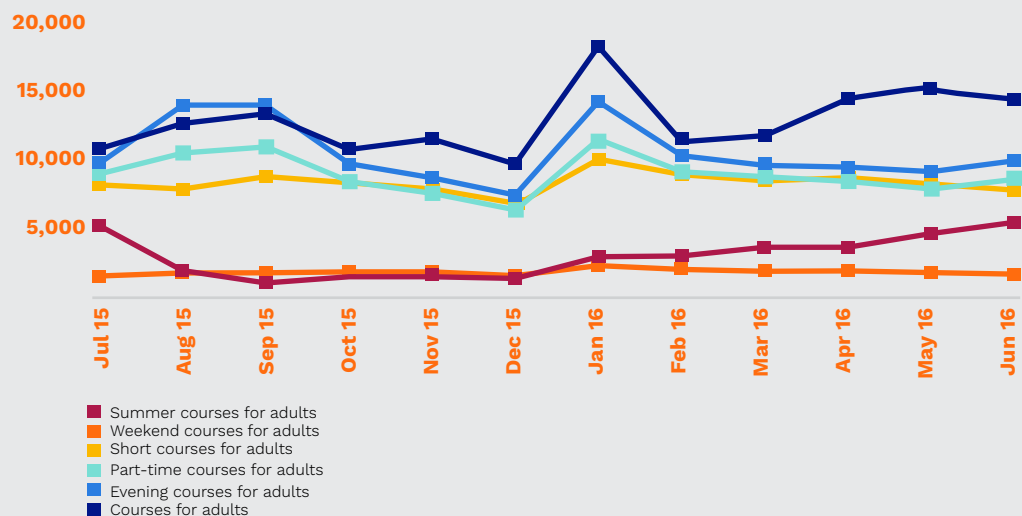
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Understanding your audience

This graph looks at which groups of keywords are most searched for in relation to adult learning.

- Top three - Course for Adults, Evening Courses and Part Time Courses (we will break these down individually later).

- Ensure that you use terminology in your campaigns and on your website that match these so that relevant adverts and listings are being displayed, increasing conversion rates.

- Most prominent peaks are in January, May and September and an increase in searches for summer courses in the months leading up to summer.

Searches in relation to types of courses for adults

- ■ Summer courses for adults
- ■ Weekend courses for adults
- ■ Short courses for adults
- ■ Part-time courses for adults
- ■ Evening courses for adults
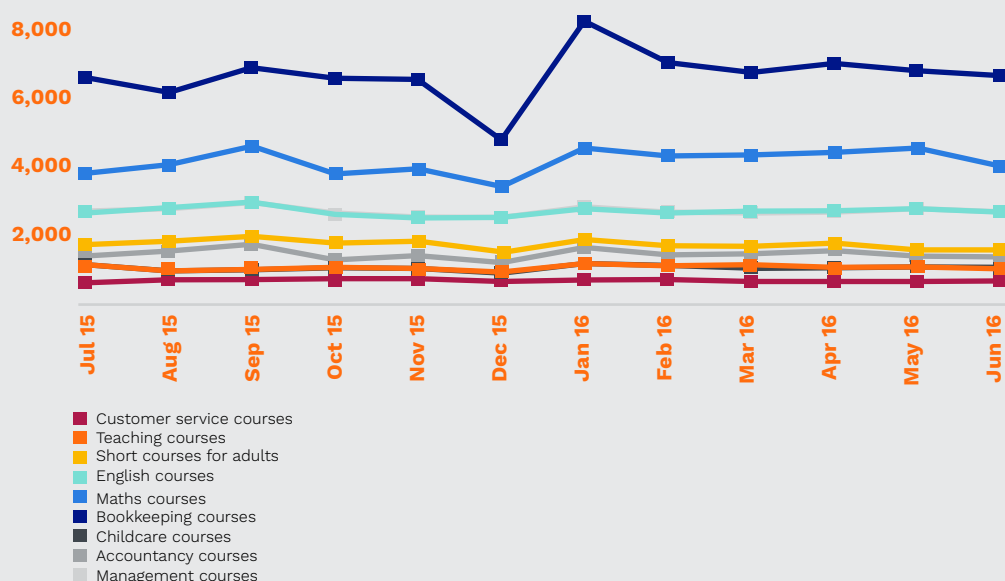- ■ Courses for adults

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Understanding your audience

We've broken down the search terms into sub-sectors; Work Skills Courses and Recreational Courses, as these are the two main types of courses. This graph focuses on Work Skills Courses:

- Bookkeeping Courses searches are most popular, with Maths and English also popular.

- Peaks in search volume in January and September, which we'd expect to see for those who are looking to upskill and improve their career prospects.

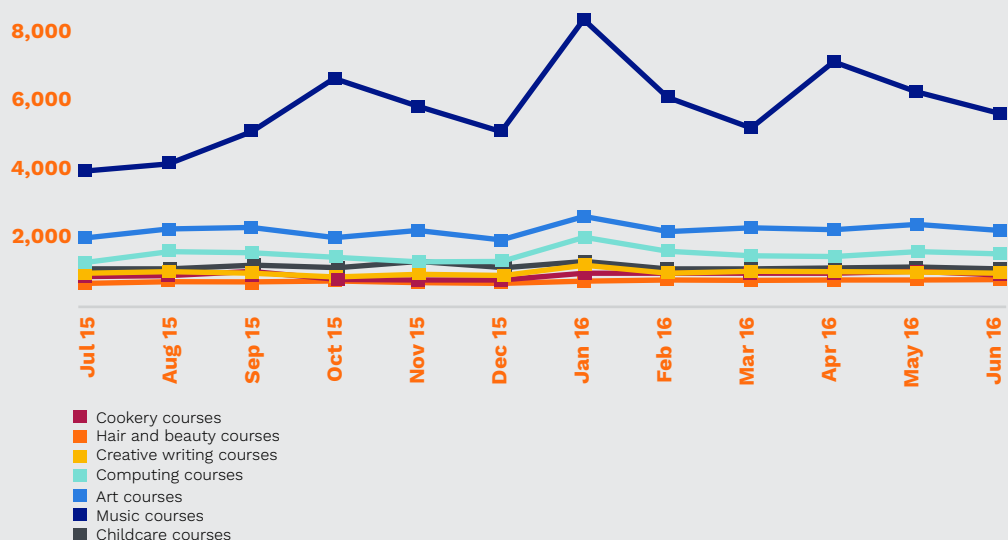## Searches in relation to work skills for adult courses

Legend:
- Customer service courses
- Teaching courses
- Short courses for adults
- English courses
- Maths courses
- Bookkeeping courses
- Childcare courses
- Accountancy courses
- Management courses

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Understanding your audience

For Recreational Courses (less employment focused):

- Music is the most highly searched for subject area in this category. Art and Health Courses are also frequently searched for.

- Unlike the trends for the work skills category, we see the highest peaks for searches of Music Courses are in October, January and April, whereas the other subjects are much flatter throughout the year, but each follow a pattern.

- It's important to see when there is a natural peak in interest in the courses you offer so that you can plan your marketing strategy around them.

Searches in relation to recreational courses for adults

Legend:
- Cookery courses
- Hair and beauty courses
- Creative writing courses
- Computing courses
- Art courses
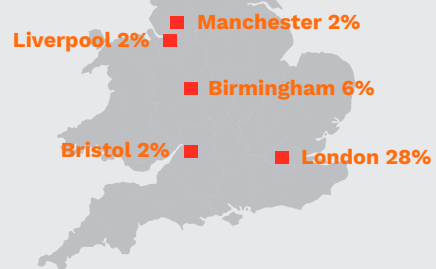- Music courses
- Childcare courses

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Understanding your audience

These graphs show the number of searches around the UK each year for the Courses for Adults group and the locations which are receiving the highest number of searches. As you might expect, the areas with the highest population density are often where more searches come from, but as we'll explore different types of searches are more popular in different regions.

Top UK cities in relation to searches for courses for adults

Manchester 2%

Liverpool 2%

Birmingham 6%

Bristol 2%

London 28%

Searches in relation to courses for adults

Jul 15   Aug 15   Sep 15   Oct 15   Nov 15   Dec 15   Jan 16   Feb 16   Mar 16   Apr 16   May 16   Jun 16

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Understanding your audience

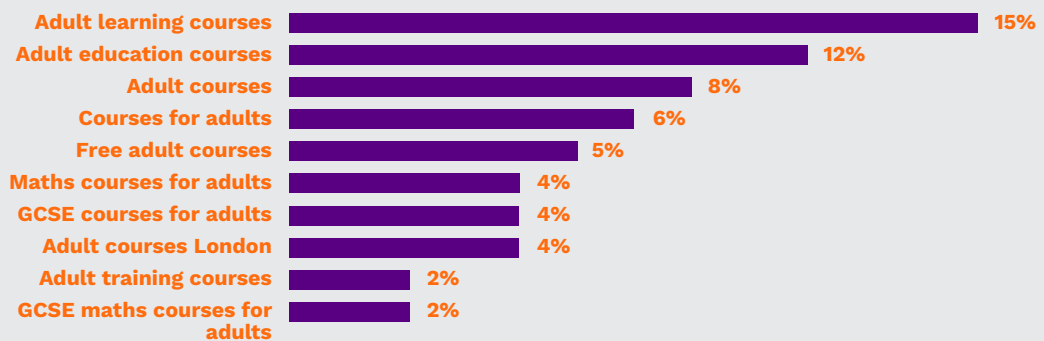Here we can see the most popular individual search terms in relation to Courses for Adults. Generic terms such as Adult Education Courses and Adult Learning Courses are the most popular, but it's worth noting that Maths courses rank highly, suggesting a significant appetite for this subject amongst Adult Learners.

Top 10 search themes in relation to courses for adults

| Theme	Percentage
Adult learning courses	15%
Adult education courses	12%
Adult courses	8%
Courses for adults	6%
Free adult courses	5%
Maths courses for adults	4%
GCSE courses for adults	4%
Adult courses London	4%
Adult training courses	2%
GCSE maths courses for adults	2%

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Understanding your audience

44% of searches for Adult Courses are from mobile, and searches from a mobile are increasing year on year, while desktop and tablet use is decreasing in popularity. Our campaign results echo these stats, with a large amount of engagements and enquiries submitted coming from mobile devices. This stresses the importance of having a simple, mobile optimised user journey for prospective adult learners.

Device use between July 15–June 16

Computer
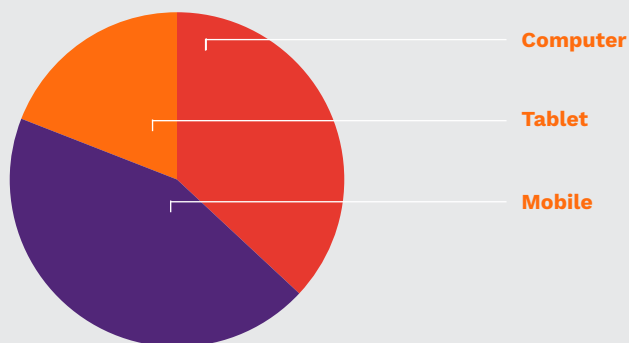
Tablet

Mobile

Mobile +10% Tablet -5% Desktop -5%

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Understanding your audience

Looking at subject related searches in relation to Courses for Adults, we can see further evidence that Maths courses are popular amongst Adult Learners, with English also ranking highly. More specific skillsbased courses such as Computing, Hairdressing and Plumbing are also popular searches.

Top 10 course subjects in relation to courses for adults

Subject	Percentage
Maths	35%
English	19%
Computer	6%
Hairdressing	6%
Plumbing	4%
Mechanic	3%
Childcare	3%
Music	3%
IT	2%
Catering	2%
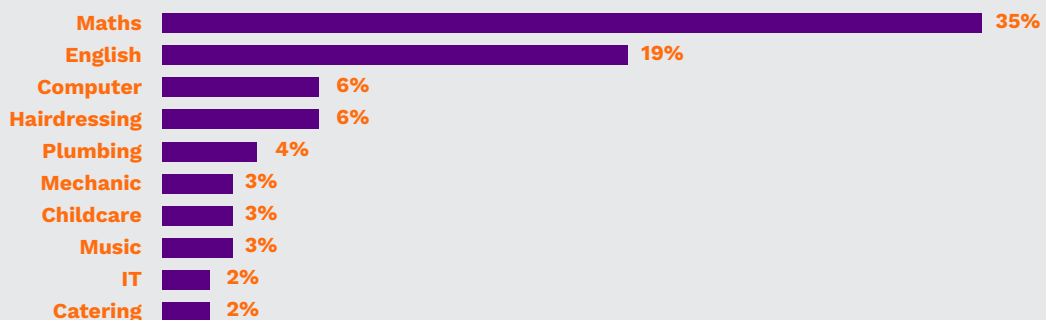
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Part-time courses for adults

These graphs look at the volume and locations of searches of Part Time Courses for Adults. Leeds has appeared as a top city in this category, suggesting that there is more interest for Part Time Courses in particular in this part of the country.

Top UK cities in relation to searches for Part-time courses for Adults
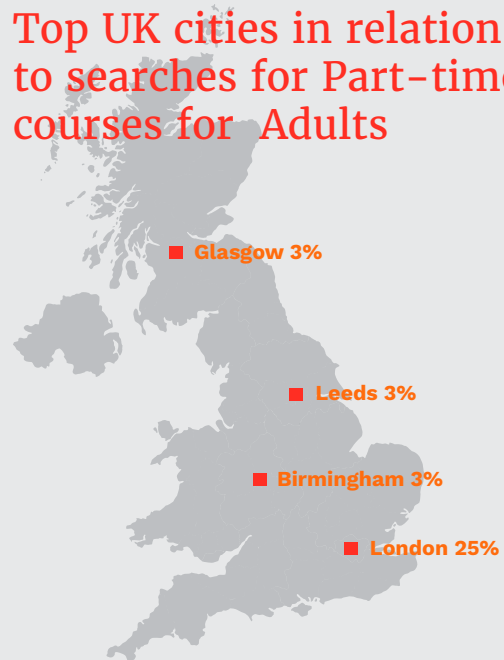
■ Glasgow 3%

■ Leeds 3%

■ Birmingham 3%

■ London 25%

Searches in relation to Part-time courses for adults

Jul 15 Aug 15 Sep 15 Oct 15 Nov 15 Dec 15 Jan 16 Feb 16 Mar 16 Apr 16 May 16 Jun 16
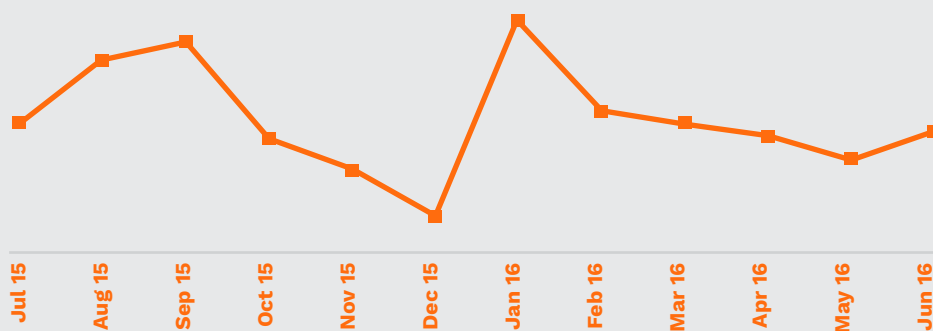
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Part-time courses for adults

When it comes to the individual search terms related to Part Time Courses, there's a clear focus on specific subjects, and career-focused subjects in particular. It's important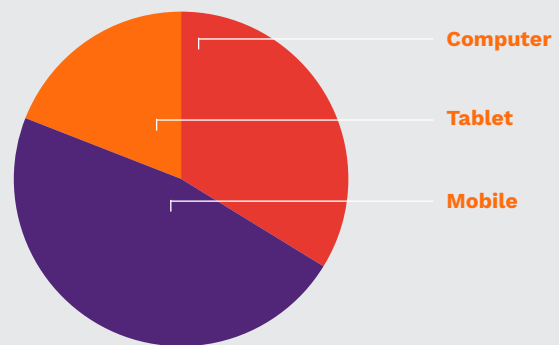 to consider the wording of your advertising campaigns; ensure it matches the language people are using when searching for courses to generate engagement and drive enquiries.

50% of searches for Part Time Courses for Adults were made on a mobile device.

Device use between July 15–June 16

Computer

Tablet

Mobile

Mobile +10% Tablet -3% Desktop -7%

Top 10 search terms in relation to part-time courses for adults

Part-time courses	23%
Part-time hairdressing courses	7%
Part-time beauty courses	5%
Part-time nursing courses	4%
Part-time electrician courses	4%
Part-time courses London	3%
Part-time business courses	3%
Part-time architecture courses	2%
Part-time physiotherapy	2%
Part-time photography courses	2%
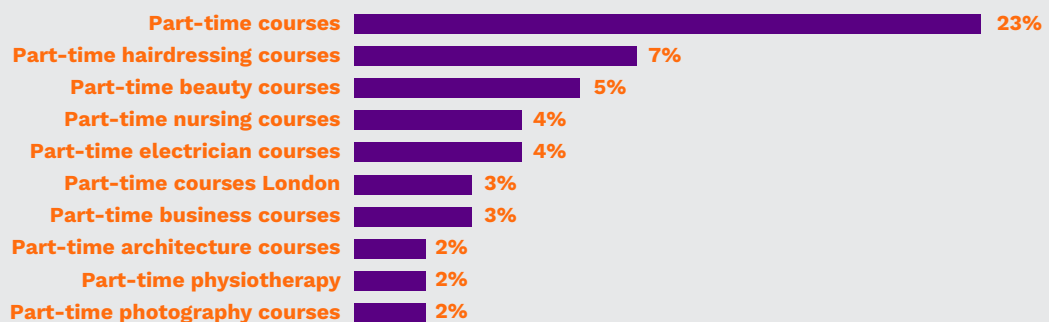
SECTION 1

Part-time courses for adults

Hairdressing, Beauty and Nursing are the most popular subjects searched for in relation to Part Time Courses, with other career-focused subjects closely following. This suggests that people who are interested in a change of career are looking to retrain part time.

Top 10 course subjects in relation to part-time courses for adults

Subject	
Hairdressing	12%
Beauty	9%
Nursing	7%
Electrician	6%
Photography	5%
Business	5%
Architecture	4%
Physiotherapy	4%
Psychology	4%
Engineering	3%
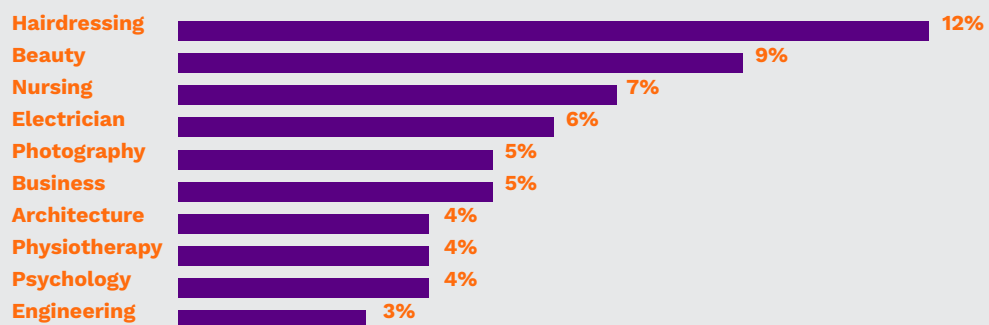
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Evening courses for adults

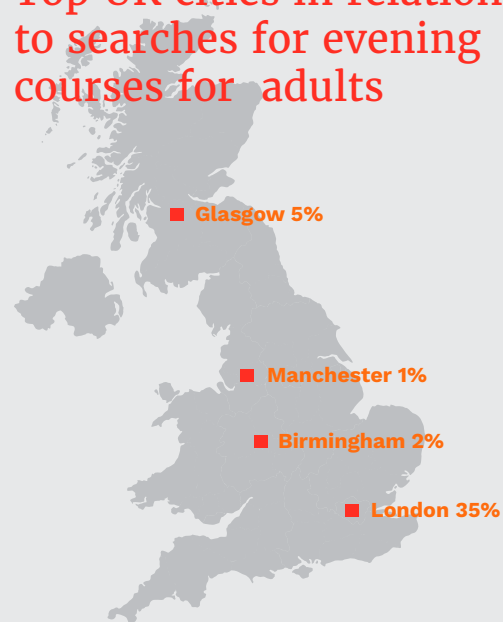**Looking at the time and location of searches for Evening Courses, we see similar patterns as before, but this time Manchester appear as a top location instead of Leeds. It's important to look at what the interest in Adult Education Courses is like in your region, so that you can tailor your advertising strategy to reflect the terminology that is being searched for in your area.**

Top UK cities in relation to searches for evening courses for adults

- Glasgow 5%
- Manchester 1%
- Birmingham 2%
- London 35%

Searches in relation to evening courses for adults

Jul 15 | Aug 15 | Sep 15 | Oct 15 | Nov 15 | Dec 15 | Jan 16 | Feb 16 | Mar 16 | Apr 16 | May 16 | Jun 16
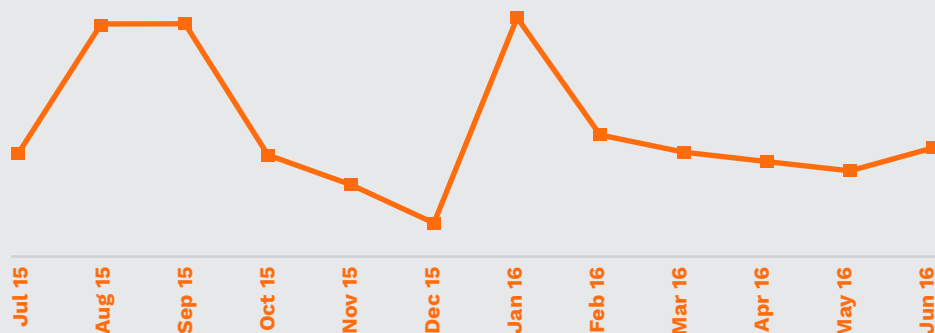
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Evening courses for adults

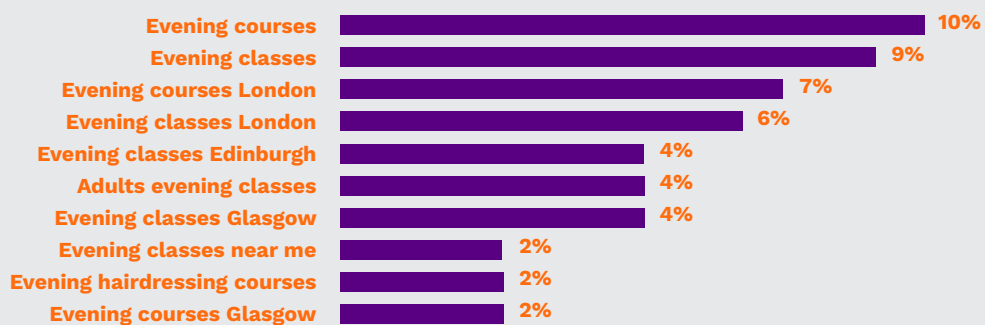The clear difference for search themes around Evening Courses is that location is more frequently searched for than subject area. It seems that people searching for Evening Courses, at this stage, are less concerned about course subject and more concerned with whether it is locally available. Again, it's important that your advertising and website copy addresses the fact that your Evening Courses are local to provide the information that people are searching for. You can then offer them information on the range of courses you offer once you have engaged with this audience and pulled them through to your website.

Top 10 search themes in relation to evening courses for adults

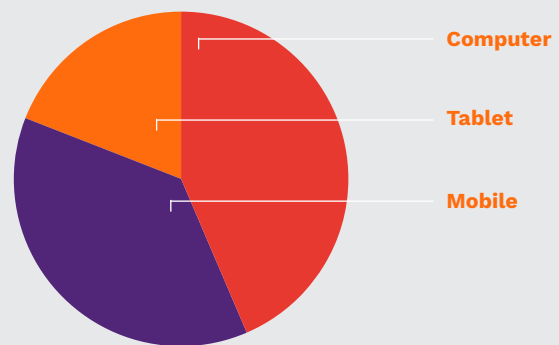| Search theme	Percentage
Evening courses	10%
Evening classes	9%
Evening courses London	7%
Evening classes London	6%
Evening classes Edinburgh	4%
Adults evening classes	4%
Evening classes Glasgow	4%
Evening classes near me	2%
Evening hairdressing courses	2%
Evening courses Glasgow	2%

SECTION 1

Evening courses for adults

It is interesting to note that there is a far higher proportion of Desktop searches for Evening Course.

Languages appear to be the most popular subject of Evening Courses, with French and Spanish being the most frequently searched for.

Device use between July 15–June 16

- Computer
- Tablet
- Mobile

Mobile +8%   Tablet -1%   Desktop -7%

Top 10 course subjects in relation to evening courses for adults

Subject	Percentage
French	12%
Spanish	12%
Art	9%
Hairdressing	8%
Language	7%
Beauty	6%
English	5%
German	5%
Mechanic	4%
Photgraphy	4%
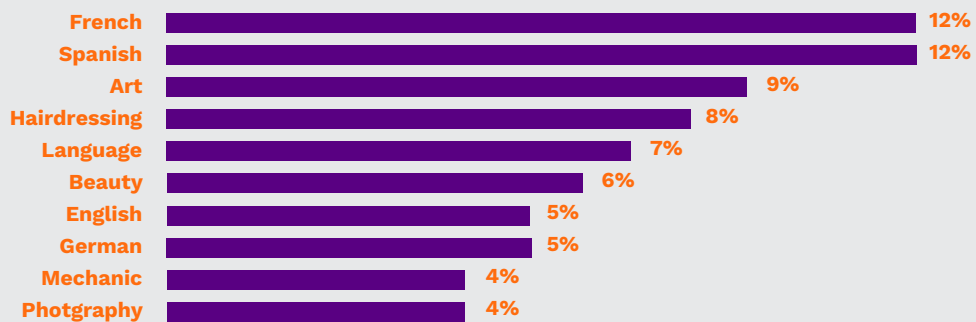
SECTION 1

Digital listening analysis

We examined some of the digital conversations taking place around the topic of Adult Learning courses; looking at when and on which platforms these discussions take place, and the c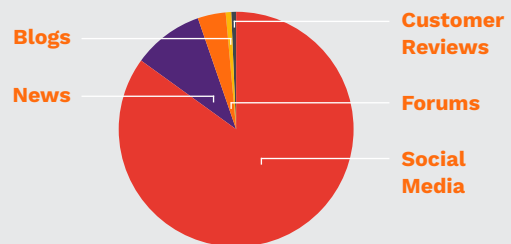ommon themes surrounding the subject. This insight will allow you to adapt your messaging and your strategy to match what is important to your target audience.

A huge majority (85%) of online conversation around Adult Learning takes place on social media - predominantly across Twitter and Facebook. This demonstrates the importance of your college or council having a strong social media presence,

and monitoring these conversations to be able to tap into them either directly, or to contribute with relevant content that addresses the subjects being discussed.

Think carefully about the way in which you contribute to these digital conversations; we know, for example, that video and photo content produces far more engagement than link posts or status updates.

Breakdown by media type by between July 15 and June 16

Blogs
News
Customer Reviews
Forums
Social Media

Timeline of mentions

Jul 15 | Aug 15 | Sep 15 | Oct 15 | Nov 15 | Dec 15 | Jan 16 | Feb 16 | Mar 16 | Apr 16 | May 16 | Jun 16

SECTION 1

Digital listening analysis

Our Digital Listening Analysis showed that a common theme surrounding the topic of Adult Learning was 'FREE'. With this in mind, are you able to offer any free content, or free online/taster courses to attract potential students? Once somebody has attended a free course, they're more likely to convert onto a paid-for course.

Wordcloud showing common themes in relation to adult learning

Mentoring Adults course
adult course guide
adult courses starting
amazing deal MORE **work**
courses starting
club
great FREE students
SUMMER PM **info**
skills new school
part time
adults starting COLLEGE january
@warringtoncoll **take a look**
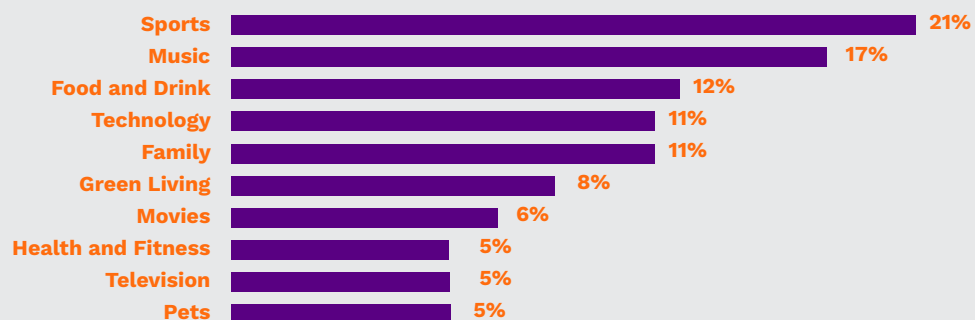Check out this amazing

SECTION 1

Digital listening analysis

We also found out about the interests of the people who are talking about Adult Learning online. 21% of people participating in these discussions are sports fans, and 17% have an interest in music. This doesn't necessarily mean that they are looking to study sports or music related courses, but perhaps sports and music fans are more likely to be interested in enrolling on an Adult Course than somebody with an interest in pets or TV - who only made up 5% of the online discussion. You can use this insight to target your advertising campaigns towards people with these particular interests.

Breakdown of interests for people in the UK mentioning in relation to courses for adults

Interest	Percentage
Sports	21%
Music	17%
Food and Drink	12%
Technology	11%
Family	11%
Green Living	8%
Movies	6%
Health and Fitness	5%
Television	5%
Pets	5%

SECTION 2

Case studies:
Buckinhamshire Adult Learning

Now we have an understanding of the online behaviours of your target audience and how and where to reach them, we thought you'd like to see how Net Natives have put this research to good use. These case studies demonstrate how an excellent use of digital can drive awareness and attract prospective Adult Learners.

⚔ The Challenge:

Analyse and improve the customer user journey taken by prospective students How easy is it to find information on courses and enrol? Where are people dropping off? How can we improve the customer journey?

💡 The Solution:

Using Google Analytics and our in-house website usability tools, we identified a relatively long customer user journey which led to high levels of abandonment. This journey involved multiple portals and websites, which were not all mobile optimised, and made it difficult for the user to find the information they wanted. It was also difficult to track potential students through this process.

To improve the Customer User Journey, we implemented Akero - our own software that's designed to capture and convert leads. We created a landing page that would act as a destination for all of their digital activity, which reduced the customer user journey to just one step between engaging with an advert and making an enquiry. This minimised abandonment and allowed the potential student to quickly and easily submit their course and location of interest. The team at Buckinghamshire County Council would then be able to follow up with highly personalised information about courses that would be of interest to them.

Akero's automated workflow feature also enabled the team to set-up customised auto-response emails, based on the information submitted in the form. This keeps the prospective students engaged, and in turn, has improved conversion rates. Akero was also able to track the individual sources of each enquiry, where the

SECTION 2

Case studies:
Buckinhamshire Adult Learning

student's touchpoints were, and what led them to make that enquiry.

⚔ The Challenge:

Promote key courses and implement full tracking of enquiries generated. How do we drive enquiries and enrolments to key courses that need specific attention? How do we know where these enquiries came from? What is working and what's not?

💡 The Solution:

We created a full marketing schedule based around the key courses that were new or needed more students enrolled for the next intake, the locations of the courses and how far people would be willing to travel to attend them, and our analysis of the key times when campaigns would be most effective. Through detailed research and insights, we were able to identify the most relevant audiences and targeting options.

The two main channels that we used to drive enquiries were Google Search; to capture those that were actively looking for Adult Courses in Buckinghamshire, and Facebook; to target the key audience demographics with relevant and engaging content. These campaigns led prospective students through to the Akero landing page, where they were able to enquire instantly.

We created multiple ad variants to split test and find out which images, messages and call-to-actions were most effective in producing quality enquiries. We were then able to optimise the campaign to ensure that the platform spend was giving the best results possible.

SECTION 2

Case studies:
Buckinhamshire Adult Learning

⚔ The Challenge:

Convert enquiries to enrolments. How do we re-engage with lapsed learners or previous enquiries to drive enrolments? How can we use our current database to identify other prospective students?

💡 The Solution:

We ran remarketing campaigns on Facebook and conversion messaging through Akero to target those who had visited the landing page but not yet made an enquiry and those who had enquired but not yet enrolled on a course. These were particularly successful in producing more enquiries and encouraging more enrolments.

We also ran campaigns targeting Buckinghamshire County Council's database of lapsed learners, with stronger calls to action that proved very successful. We found that these previous students were much quicker to come back and book another course.

Using current learners data to build profiles, we were able to create 'lookalike audiences' to identify new prospective students whose demographics, interests and behaviours closely matched those of the current students.

✨ The Outcomes:

Our campaigns generated awareness of Adult Learning courses across the county, with 950,000 impressions on our campaigns. From this, we were able to track 970 enquiries,
which led to increased enrolments from new students and lapsed learners alike.

Buckinghamshire County Council also saw increased engagement on their Facebook profile and gained 351 new followers over the course of the campaign, who will now see their organic content.

SECTION 2

Case studies: Morley College

⚔ The Challenge:

How can we use digital campaigns to promote the college and it's Adult Learning courses? How can we generate attendance to open events at the college?

💡 The Solution:

We first identified Morley College's priority courses and carried out research to establish the target audience and find out what the demand was like for these courses in the target locations.

Based on this research we found that Google Search, Facebook and Display ads would perform the best to generate awareness and convert into enquiries and event attendees. We created the ads using various images and messaging and split test and continuously optimised the campaigns based on which ads were performing the best.

SECTION 2

Case studies: Morley College

⚔ The Challenge:

How can we convert existing enquirers into applicants? How can we expand our target audience?

💡 The Solution:

We ran remarketing campaigns on Display and Facebook to target those who had enquired or attended an event, to keep them warm or reignite their interest and drive them to apply for a course. To discover a broader target audience, we created lookalike audiences of people based in the target location with similar online behaviours and demographics to current learners and targeted these individuals with display and Facebook advertising. We also used Connection Targeting, a referral form of campaign that uses the college's existing applicant and enrollee database to target individuals connected to existing applicants and students.

We also implemented conversion tracking and site traffic analysis tools to measure the ROI and success of the campaigns we ran.

⚓ The Outcome:

From our campaigns we were able to track 926 enquiries, this is 10% of the college's total annual enquiry target. Our lookalike audiences and connection targeting generated enquiries from a brand new audience, while our conversion campaigns reignited enquiries and applications that had gone cold. Morley College also saw an increased social media engagement and following, which will be valuable for targeting and audience profiling in future campaigns.

SECTION 3

Technology updates

There have been a number of recent technology developments that present really great opportunities for generating enquiries and converting adult students to enrolment.

👍 Facebook Lead Gen Ads

Facebook's new Lead Gen ads appear in the newsfeeds of your target audience and feature a customisable 'autofill' data capture form, which quickly and easily pulls the prospects details from their Facebook profile from one click. In such a fast-paced mobile world, shortening the enquiry process is important to cater to decreasing attention spans, and this ad format is already showing great results.

📄 Google Expanded Text Ads

Google's Expanded Text Ads are two times bigger than the standard Google Search text ads, featuring longer headlines and descriptions. The old ads were made up of a 35 character headline with two description lines, limited to 35 characters per line. The new ads provide space for two headlines, of 30 characters each, separated by a dash, and a longer description of 80 characters. Ultimately, more text equals more visibility.

🤖 Automated Conversion Communication Strategy

Akero's automated workflows allow you to send targeted, personalised messages to your leads, depending on how engaged they are with your content, and what information they submit in their enquiry form (i.e., which subject they are interested in studying). This ongoing, customised communication keeps prospects warm, leading to higher conversion rates, with very little work from your teams.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Understand who your audience is, and what they want at different times of the year, through campaign analysis and the use of search trends.

- Listen to the digital conversation around your courses, choose the platforms where people are already talking about that type of content, and figure out what your provision should be.

- Provide a simple, mobile optimised, digital customer user journey to make it easier for prospective students to get in touch.

- Ensure that you are tracking ROI of any budget spend on digital through the use of conversion tracking and goal setting.

- Split-test different adverts to see what works best - always benchmark against quality enquiries generated.

- Understand who your audience is, and what they want at different times of the year, through campaign analysis and the use of search trends.

- Listen to the digital conversation around your courses, choose the platforms where people are already talking about that type of content, and figure out what your provision should be.

- Provide a simple, mobile optimised, digital customer user journey to make it easier for prospective students to get in touch.

- Ensure that you are tracking ROI of any budget spend on digital through the use of conversion tracking and goal setting.

- Split-test different adverts to see what works best - always benchmark against quality enquiries generated. Use your current data to drive new enrolments and to profile those that are more likely to study with you.

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Q: How do we choose which channels to advertise on?

A: In our experience we have found that Facebook and Google Search, Google Display Network and programmatic display tend to be the most successful platforms, but we are always open to trying multiple and new channels to reach and engage your audience; we have recently begun pioneering campaigns on Twitter, Snapchat and Pinterest - which has generated a great number of leads already.

The call-to-action of the advert will also have an effect on which platform would be most suitable, and we always analyse the results of your campaigns to find out which platforms work best for your institution, as it really does differ for each individual organisation.

Q: How can I overcome budget constraints?

A: Implementing tracking on your website shows which advertising sources your high quality enquiries come from, and informs the best platforms to spend your money on.

To save on staff resource, Akero's automated emails will keep your leads warm and more likely to convert, giving your team the time to focus on converting the hottest leads.

Q: How can we reach new users digitally?

A: Lookalike Audiences are a great way to expand your audience, but if you're unable to access your past enquiry data, you can also create Lookalike Audiences based on people who like your Facebook page. We can also create 'Similar Audiences' with Google, where people's social and web activity is matched to those who have visited your website previously. Both of these have seen great conversion rates.

Q: How do we improve our position in Google Search?

A: To rank higher in the organic search results, we can perform an SEO Audit on your website to identify any technical issues and recommend improvements. For paid advertising results, we always aim for our campaigns to appear in the top two positions.

ABOUT
NATIVES GROUP

Who are we?

We are a collection of specialist brands who can either solve individual problems or work collectively as partners to our clients.

NET NATIVES

NATIVES GLOBAL CONSULTING

Akero

STUDENT HUT

NETIZEN NATIVES 网络原住民

edurank

CEREBRO™

THE NATIVE

THE STUDENT TRADING EXCHANGE

N C S

your objectives. Then we add knowledge, expertise and superlative execution. And we make something amazing.

We deliver a range of creative solutions that will make your college stand out from the crowd, including; digital and print advertising, email template and microsite design, video production, photography, experiential and animation. We pioneer the use of the latest innovative creative formats for the education sector.

What is the secret to a successful advertising campaign? Combining your data with inspiring creative and copy. We believe in the importance of collecting and using your audience data to inform our targeting and messaging.

Who are Net Natives?

We are **creatives, thinkers, makers, planners and doers** - tenacious, talented and together, more than the sum of our parts. We know great campaigns all start with one thing: understanding. So that's where we begin - with you, your audience, your ambitions and

Contact Us

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hello@netnatives.com

 @netnatives   /netnatives

SERVICES:

Here are just some of the services our team of experts can work with your institution on:

Advertising

- Direct media planning and buying
- Biddable media (search, social & programmatic)
- Attribution tracking
- End to end reporting

Creative

- Video and photography
- Creative concepts
- Graphic design
- HTML5 displays ads Copywriting

Analytics and Insight

- Desk and field-based market research
- Analytics
- Business intelligence
- SEO Training
- Conversion strategies
- Strategic content development
- Lead generation and nurturing
- Competitive analysis
- Performance analysis

Student Engagement

- Student audience panel
- Brand advertising
- Lead generation campaigns
- Community management

International Expertise

- Chinese social platform management
- China digital advertising
- Local website and microsite development

Social Media

- Social media and social content strategy
- Social media training

Strategic Marketing

- Reputation and SEO management
- Consulting and project management

Marketing Software

- Marketing performance software
- Data visualisation software
- Social media content performance software