

2026 Voice of the Online Learner: Business Edition

The Risepoint Voice of the Online Learner is now in its 15th year. We surveyed 4,002 learners across the student lifecycle to better understand their evolving needs. Here, we highlight insights from online learners in the field of business.

Who are online learners in business?

89%

are working full- or part-time

51%

have children under the age of 18

37 yrs

average age

Seek career advancement

95%

pursue a degree for career outcomes

79%

believe advanced degrees are required to improve career prospects

83%

believe their online program was worth the cost

73%

are studying in a field related to their work

Favor online modality *and* local institutions

6 in 10

learners will not enroll at an institution if their desired program is not available online

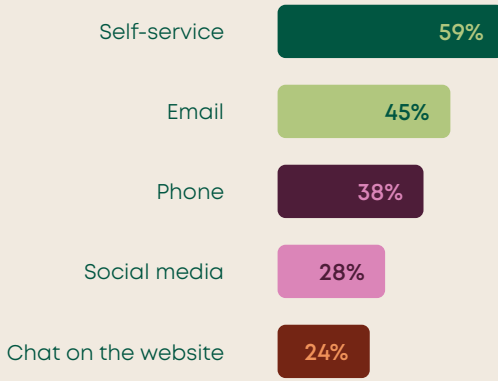
78%

of learners in business live and/or work in the same state as their school

Discover programs digitally

Program discovery is more self-directed through digital channels and AI assistance.

Top discovery methods:



Expect Gen AI training

Gen AI has moved from a future concern for business students to a present reality, and learners expect their institutions to integrate AI guidance into curriculum faster.

74%

believe Gen AI is going to be important to learn and understand to be successful in the workplace in the future

AI guidance or support learners want to receive from instructors:

- Clear guidelines on when AI use is allowed or not allowed
- How to use AI responsibly and ethically in coursework
- How to use AI to improve productivity
- Examples of how AI is being used in real-world professional settings

Upskill quickly with credentials

Learners are finding non-degree credentials to be a fast, targeted way to upskill, especially in emerging areas like technology and AI. **Institutions have an opportunity to improve enrollments by showing stackable, clear pathways from credentials to degrees.**

75%

consider non-degree programs a good fit for help with quick skill acquisition

72%

consider non-degree programs a good fit for support in technical or specialized fields

64%

agree that non-degree programs would be more appealing if it were clearer how they could lead toward a future degree

Scan to download the full *2026 Voice of the Online Learner: Business Edition* for more in-depth insights and takeaways.



Risepoint is an education technology company that supports over 100 higher education institutions across Australia, Canada, Lebanon, the UK, and the US in building high-impact, workforce-focused online programs.

This infographic is based on a Risepoint survey of 4,002 online higher education learners across the student lifecycle, conducted in January of 2026. 907 were business students.

