



affecting the trend of affordable smartphones with flagship features adding that since memory makes up 10% to 20% of device cost, manufacturers may have to “raise prices, reduce specs, or both”.

It also expects the memory supply challenges to persist throughout 2026 and likely well into 2027.

“While we do anticipate that the rate of memory price acceleration will slow in the second half of this year, prices will continue to rise and remain elevated,” it says in the report.

Future-proofing

If a device is needed now for work or study, Pikom’s Liew advises consumers to prioritise future-proof specs when considering their next purchase.

Azrul Zafri also recommends that consumers pay more attention to practicality and value rather than aiming for the latest models: “In many cases, mid-range devices or slightly older models can still deliver excellent performance for everyday tasks such as studying, office work, content creation and communication.”

“Consumers are also encouraged to compare prices across multiple retailers and online platforms before making a purchase. Price differences between sellers can sometimes be significant, and careful comparison can help consumers obtain better value.

“Ultimately, MCCA encourages consumers to make informed purchasing decisions and to avoid unnecessary upgrades during periods of global supply

The ‘RAM crunch’ is driving up the price of memory components essential for laptops, smartphones and tablets. — Freepik

uncertainty,” he adds. As the RAM crunch is largely driven by global semiconductor supply cycles, Liew says direct price intervention from a policy standpoint may not be practical, but adds that “policy measures can help support digital access for consumers. For example, the government currently provides Lifestyle Tax Relief of up to RM2,500 for the purchase of personal computers, smartphones or tablets.”

“Given rising device costs due to global component prices, Pikom believes there is merit in considering an increase of this relief to RM3,000,” he says.

Liew believes that such a measure would help Malaysians to continue accessing essential digital tools for work, education and productivity, while supporting the country’s broader digital economy goals.

On his part, Lun says most consumers have been understanding when informed of the higher cost for RAM upgrades.

“I usually explain to customers that the price increase is due to suppliers prioritising AI infrastructure demand and they can accept that,” he says, adding that consumers also tell him that they will learn to adapt.

Survey: AI use by undergrads is nearly universal

NEARLY all undergraduate students say they use generative artificial intelligence (AI) to help with their assessed work, a survey in the United Kingdom has found.

The proportion of students reporting they are including directly AI-generated text in their work has also been slowly increasing, the survey by the UK’s Higher Education Policy Institute (Hepi) found.

Despite the near universal use of AI, undergraduates are still divided on its impact. Some said it allows them more time for critical thinking while others said it stopped them having to use their brain.

Many students do not feel they have enough support to develop the skills to use AI effectively, said Charlotte Armstrong, co-author of the report and policy manager at Hepi.

“If universities want graduates to feel prepared for the future, then AI literacy and

capability must be embedded across the curriculum. These skills cannot be treated as optional,” she added.

The survey of 1,054 full-time undergraduates in the UK found 94% reported using AI in at least one way, and 95% used generative AI to help with assessed work.

Students reporting they included AI-generated text in assessed work rose to 12% this year, up from 8% in 2025 and 3% in 2024.

Nearly two in three (65%) of students said AI has changed university assessment significantly. However, two in five (42%) still said they would be putting off using it out of fear of being accused of cheating.

Almost one in two (49%) said AI has improved their student experience while one in six (16%) felt it had made their student experience worse.

Those who disliked AI cited reasons like “it is making us all lazy”, “I’m not using my brain at

all”, and “it encourages you to think less”.

Around 15% said they were using it to get advice, companionship or address loneliness.

There was a fairly even split in the proportion of students agreeing their university encourages AI use (37%) versus disagreeing (36%). Students from Russell Group institutions were most likely to agree their university encouraged the use of AI.

Hepi recommended universities should provide induction support on using AI for all students, offer training for staff, publish clear guidance on its use, make sure tools that give students an advantage are equally accessible, and consider adapting their curriculum to explicitly teach AI skills.

A survey last month by Coursera of university professors and lecturers found only one in four said they felt confident they could spot AI-generated work. — dpa



The proportion of students reporting they are including directly AI-generated text in their work has also been slowly increasing, the survey found. — Unsplash

Fake AI voices becoming harder to detect

A TEAM of Chinese scientists has found more evidence that most people cannot tell the difference between real speech and fakes generated by artificial intelligence even if some training is given to help.

Based at Tianjin University and the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the researchers hooked 30 people up to brain scanners while they listened to voice recordings and tried to figure out which were AI-generated and which were real people.

For the most part, the answer was that they could not do so, with the team describing the group as “bad at discriminating between the two types”.

The team then sought to then

train the seemingly hapless study group – efforts they said “helped only minimally”.

But the tips did seem to sow some seeds for potential progress: “On a neural level, training made the brain’s responses more distinct for human versus AI speech,” the researchers said, ahead of having their findings published by the Society of Neuroscience.

“The auditory brain system seems to start picking up subtle acoustic differences, even if people can’t reliably turn that into a behavioural decision yet,” said Xiangbin Teng, the team leader, who said the faint signals of recognition were “encouraging”.

The tests followed the publication in September last year of

Queen Mary University of London research warning that “deepfake” voices created using widely available software are “now indistinguishable from real human voices”.

People fare only marginally better when it comes to AI-generated imagery, it seems, with a University of New South Wales and Australian National University study published last month finding most people too confident in their ability to spot a fake face.

Last year, Citibank published a warning that such increasingly-hard-to-detect audio and visual AI fakes “are spreading across recruitment, financial operations and executive impersonation.” — dpa