

Faculty of Natural Sciences Research Computing Committee
10/7/24

Attendees: David Colling (Chair), Andrew Richards, Eric Keaveny, Fernando Bresme, Michael Bearpark, Richard Bantges, Mike Sternberg, Thomas Willson, Okan Kibaroglu, Debbie Oram, Craig Bryce (minutes)

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Ramon Vilar, Will Pearce, Ian Staffell and Katerina Michalickova.

2. Minutes and matters rising

Okan Kibaroglu flagged a correction to item 5 of the minutes from the previous meeting, related to Microsoft 365 storage, rather than “ICT are reviewing their options”, it should be replaced with “Imperial are reviewing options presented by ICT”, the CIO having presented options to stakeholders at the beginning of May.

David Colling (DC) welcomed the committee to this final FRCC meeting in its current format, in 24/25 the Committee shall be renamed the Faculty Computing Committee to encompass relevant issue related to both research and education.

3. Update from RCS

Andrew Richards (AR) presented a slide summarising the updates from RCS, including details of,

- The recruitment of Emily Lumley who joined RCS as Research Engagement Lead from 1st July and who will attend future meetings of this committee.
- HEX 1 went live earlier this year and phase 2, HEX2, is now in planning. Approval has been given to use two years of capital budget combined and the plan is to bring HEX2 online by summer 2025 to replace high throughput machines and CEX1/3. AR flagged this as an opportunity for users to engage as to whether this is the correct approach, RCS want to hear from the community about what would best suit their needs in terms of HEX2 and also looking further afield to a broader at 3-5 year plan.

Action – Departmental reps are requested to consult with their department on their needs. To assist, DC will circulate a template email of what is being consulted upon and AR agreed to send a link to an overview of current facilities.

- AR updated on the transfer from the Research Data Service (RDS) to the Research Data Facility (RDF), a newer model comprising RDF-HPC, RDF-Store (the bulk storage component) and RDF Archive (longer term storage). RCS will be working with users to move data across and also encouraging users to consider what data is either not required or can be archived and thus doesn't need to go to the RDF.
- Work is ongoing on the institutional FAIR data repository to allow publishing of research data. RCS are working with Cottage Labs with a view to having a minimum viable product by December 2024.
- AR also updated committee on a revised operating model to be applied across all RCS provisions, i.e., where grant funding is available for compute time there is a move to a prepayment module, whereby funding is converted to non-expiring credits to reduce the number of internal financial transactions for computing credit.

4. ICT update from – Okan Kibaroglu

- In relation to the revision to the previous meeting's minutes, Okan Kibaroglu (OK) recommended that David Bradford be added to the membership of this Committee.

Action – CB to invite David Bradford to 24/25 FCC meetings.

- ICT staff have been undertaking a programme of proactive checks on IT resources, particularly on lecture theatre and cluster rooms. As a result customers are encountering less issues and ICT have recorded less than 3 AV incidents on average in the past 3 months.
- OK reported that 92% of tickets are now resolved in 2 contacts.
- OK demonstrated a new chatbot available via the Imperial ASK site. The chatbot is still being tested and users are encouraged to engage and report feedback, all queries and responses are still being monitored.

5. AoB

- Thomas Willson informed committee that Google has announced changes to Chrome trust certificates and ICT will issue guidance in due course.

Summary of Actions

Departmental reps are requested to consult with their department on their needs. To assist, DC will circulate a template email of what is being asked and AR agreed to send a link to an overview of current facilities.
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CB to invite David Bradford to 24/25 FCC meetings.
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The next meeting is scheduled for Weds 6th November via Teams