IPNP Survey

28/5/24

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School Computing Users Committee

- The School Computing Committee (SCC) exists principally to **advise the Head of School (HoS) on all matters related to computing and IT**, including Information Security, and therefore to **provide expert advice on the School's computing strategy, policies and operations**. Its remit includes guiding the strategy of the School's Computing Services Team (CST), to define and update its operational priorities (ie. which aspects of the School's operation CST supports), and to monitor its performance against those priorities.
- SCC operates through two sub-committees: the **School Computing Users Committee (SCUC)** as the primary forum for the responsibilities summarised above; and the School IT Security Committee (SITSC), which has a formal and explicit responsibility within the University for governance of our School's Information Security.

Current Review

- We (the school) have the potential to invest in the school computing in the coming months.

- We are reviewing the school's computing and data storage needs, across the three institutes and teaching.

Survey

- The survey was based on a similar survey carried out in IFA but with changes to remain relevant for IPNP.
- Questions were not compulsory, and where relevant questions allowed multiple answers.
- Open for two weeks from 29th April.
- Regular reminders we sent to staff to complete the survey.
- We received 48 responses.

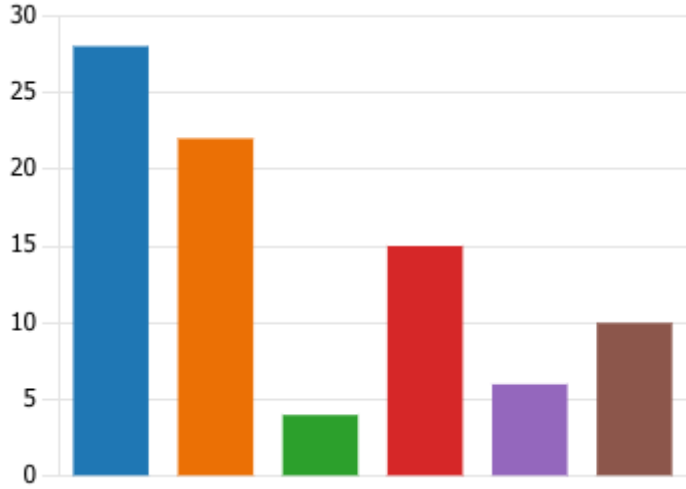
Broad Summary

- We find:
  - people are more likely to use other resources (eg CERN or the world-wide computing grid) than EDDIE.
  - for greater use of centralised computing at Edinburgh we would need: customised environments to be easily available; more storage space; clear instructions on how to use EDDIE including tutorials.
  - people appreciate how helpful the computing team are.
  - the most common issue raised was the lack of reliability with the network.
- We won't simply get more people using school computing if all we do is buy more computing – we need to address the needs of users – eg provide dedicated support, more (mid spec) interactive machines, easily customised environments, tutorial, etc. People are using alternatives not because the specs of our machines are low or because we need more provision, but because the alternatives have a lower threshold to use.
- We conclude that investment into resources should be supported by investment and work that facilitates using these resources given the broad needs in IPNP.

Detail

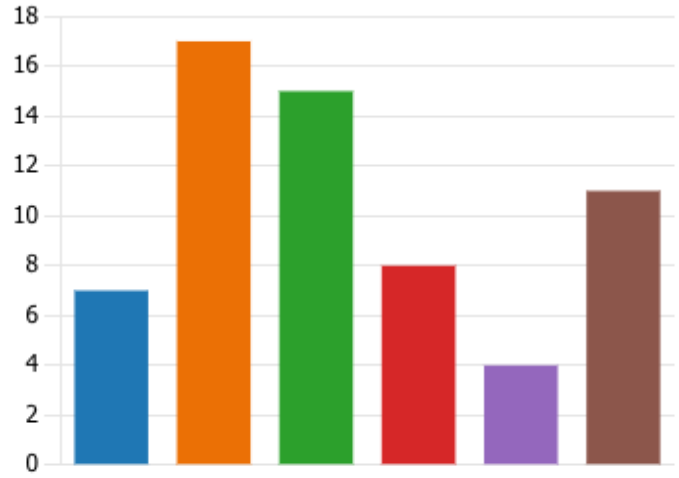
Which of the following computing resources do you regularly use?

Personal laptop – 28
SOPA self-managed laptop – 22
SOPA managed laptop – 4
SOPA managed workstation – 15
EDDIE – 6
Other – 10



If you do not use EDDIE, where do you run your main computations?

I do not need to run complex computations – 7
Desktop/Laptop – 17
CERN cluster – 15
World-wide computing grid – 8
DiRAC – 4
Other cluster – 11



Detail

If possible, please estimate how many CPU hours you have used in the last six months?

< 100 CPU hours – 15
100 – 1000 CPU hours – 16
1000 – 10k CPU hours – 3
> 1k CPU hours – 9

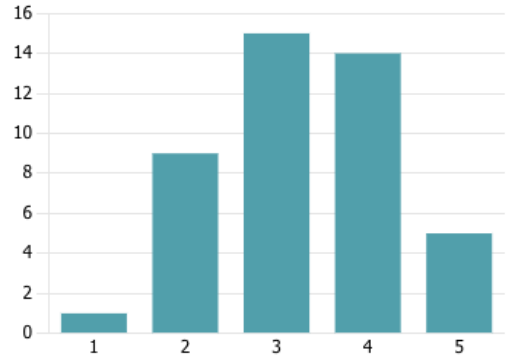
Excluding legacy data that you no longer interact with, how much storage do you use for your data in Edinburgh?

< 100 GB – 23
100 GB -1 TB – 9
1 TB - 10 TB – 15
> 10 TB – 1

How much storage are you using overall (e.g. at CERN / at former institute / on the grid)?

< 100 GB – 9
100 GB -1 TB – 8
1 TB - 10 TB – 24
> 10 TB – 7

Detail



What is your overall rating of computing in JCMB?
Average score is 3.3/5.

What do you like about computing at JCMB?
22 responses – answers most typically referred to the helpdesk, and the helpfulness of the team. People also appreciated the ability to self-manage computers.

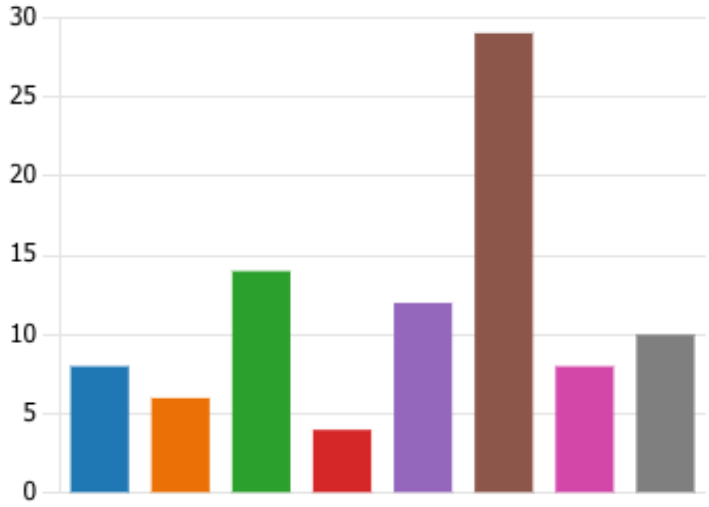
What do you dislike about computing at JCMB?
28 responses – answers typically mentioned network / wifi reliability. Others mentioned communication on strategic issues, lack of storage, and lack of tutorials/instructions.

If relevant, what did you like about computing provision at a previous employer?
6 responses – mentioning support, flexibility, good cluster, software licenses.

Detail

What are the computing issues you run into with your workflow?

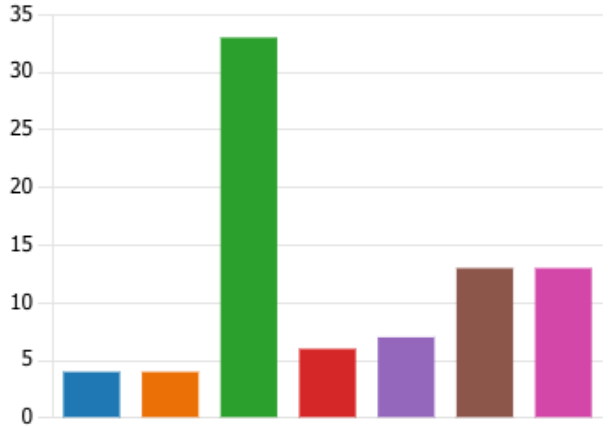
I don’t run into any computing issues – 8
Insufficient computing power – 6
Insufficient storage – 14
Cannot purchase appropriate hardware – 4
Issues running software on appropriate hardware / IT requisition issues – 12
Network / connectivity issues – 29
Lack of IT support – 8
Lack of IT documentation – 10



Comment: Network/connectivity issues dominates as the main issue, though more storage and easier ability to get appropriate hardware would also aid.

Detail

Where do you keep your backups?
I don’t have backups – 4
Datasync – 4
External hard-drive – 33
IPNP servers – 6
Another UoE managed option – 7
CERN – 13
Other non-UoE facility – 13



Detail

If you don’t use centralised computing resources in Edinburgh, what changes would be needed to encourage you to do so (if at all)?

22 responses – answers typically discussed need for more disk space, and for greater ease of use of environments automatically available at e.g. CERN. Others mentioned a need for more tutorials.

One long answer captured views expressed in many of the other comments:

> *Reliability, ready availability of a useful amount of storage without political barriers such as "having this storage is going to specifically cost you/the group specifically X amount of money and has to be specifically applied for", no data loss horror stories, faster optimised network link with CERN, no regular weekly network drops or unscheduled connectivity issues/downtime, a provision of Lxplus-style clusters which can be relied upon for non- intensive (i.e. low cputime, low-ish memory) computing needs. SOPA workstations don't really work anymore - one worries too much that someone is actually physically using it when using ssh. Need a more load balanced scalable solution like lxplus, for example.*

lxplus = interactive logon service to Linux for all CERN users for interactive work.