The University Of Sheffield.

Corporate Information & Computing Services

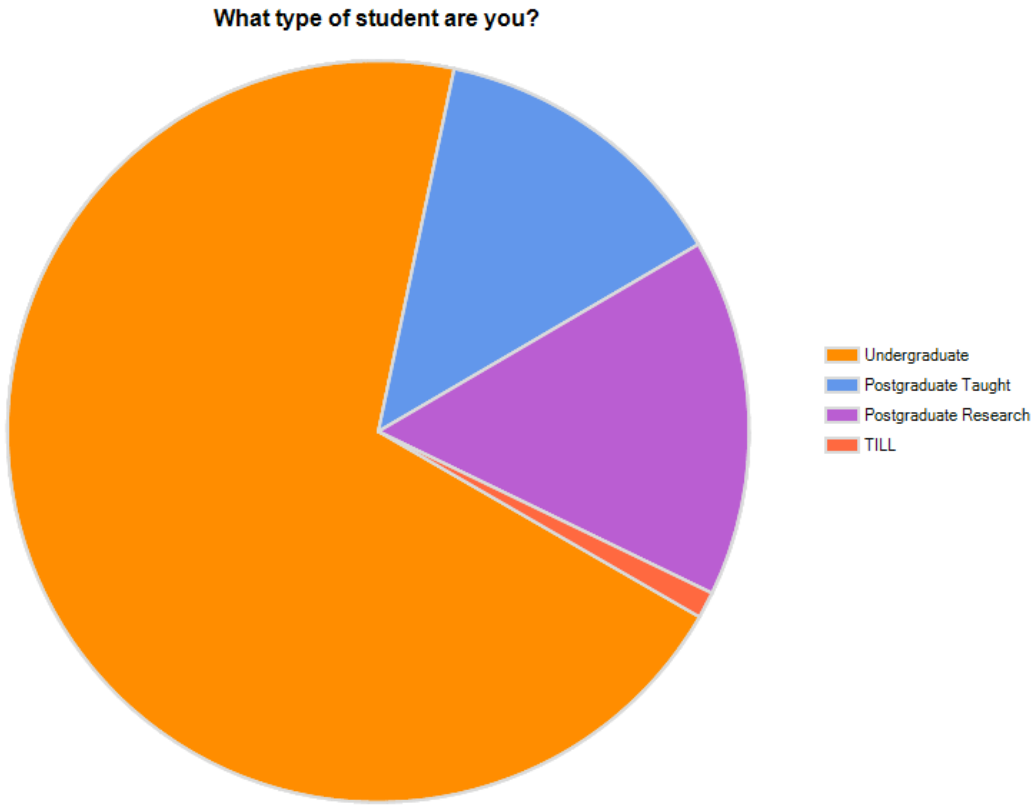
Managed Desktop Student Survey 2010

Introduction

The survey was carried out for the Replacement Desktop Project to look at what applications students would want delivering remotely. It was sent to all students.

Results

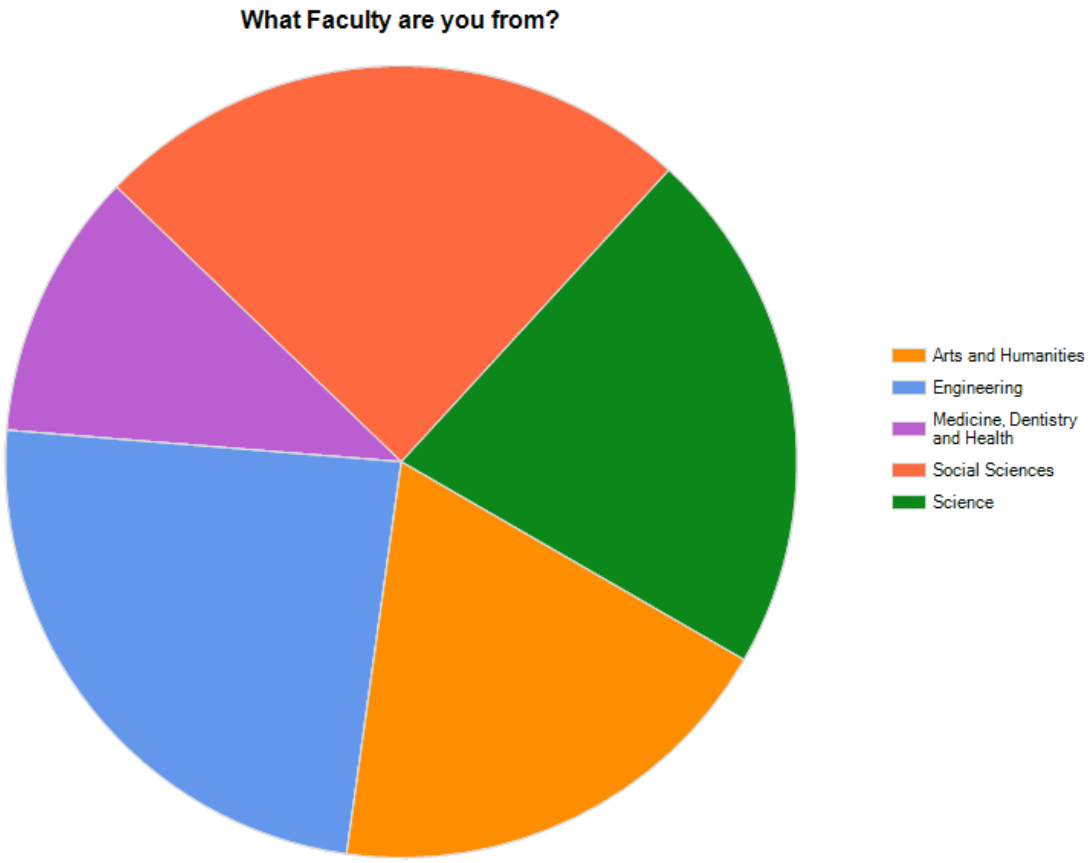
The survey was completed by 1134 people. This is a 5% response rate. The breakdown of student types is shown below.



The percentage of each student type filling in the survey compared to the University population shows that this survey was filled in by less undergraduate and postgraduate taught students than average. Conversely more Postgraduate research students filled in the survey than average.

Types of student	% student population	% Filling in survey
Undergraduate	75%	70%
Postgraduate Taught	16%	13%
Postgraduate Research	9%	16%

Below is the distribution of Faculties.



Again comparing numbers filling in the survey with overall faculty numbers shows more interest from Arts and Humanities, Science and most significantly Engineering.

Faculty	% in Each Faculty	% Filling in survey
Arts and Humanities	16%	19%
Engineering	13%	24%
Medicine, Dentistry and Health	15%	11%
Social Sciences	36%	25%
Science	16%	22%

It could be that those groups more likely to fill the survey in are also more aware of the importance of certain applications on the Managed Desktop.

Usage

Each Faculty was asked how often they used the Managed Desktop. In 4 Faculties the majority (Arts 35%, Engineering 29%, Social Sciences 36%, Science 30%) said they used 3 to 4 times a week. In the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health the majority (30%) said they used it occasionally.

Speed

Students were also asked if they thought that the speed of the Manage Desktop had improved in the last few months. The majority (72% of those responding to that question) said it has stayed the same. In the comments where students were asked if there was anything else they

wanted to say, out of 232 response 73 were commenting on the slow speed of the Managed Desktop.

Applications

The main body of the survey asked students what software/applications they would prioritise to access remotely. Each faculty answered this separately and the results showing applications that got more than 20% of respondents saying they were 'important to access remotely' are below.

Faculty	**General Applications**	**Faculty Specific Applications**
Arts and Humanities	Microsoft Office (74%) Microsoft Publisher (36%) Microsoft Project (28%) British Library App (26%) Adobe Photoshop (26%) Media Player (22%)	Western European Languages (29%)
Engineering	Microsoft Office (67%) Solidworks (35%) Microsoft Project (33%) Microsoft Publisher (30%) Adobe Photoshop (30%)	Ansys (38%) Fluent (32%) Gambit (31%) Mathematica (27%) Pro Desktop (27%)
Medicine, Dentistry and Health	Microsoft Office (78%) Microsoft Publisher (40%) SPSS (35%) Endnote (32%) Microsoft Project (32%) Media Player (29%) British Library App (26%) Imagescope (23%)	N/A
Social Sciences	Microsoft Office (77%) Microsoft Publisher (44%) SPSS (44%) Microsoft Project (31%) Adobe Photoshop (26%) Media Player (21%)	Arcview (25%)
Science	Microsoft Office (71%) Microsoft Publisher (32%) Sigmaplot (27%) Endnote (26%) Microsoft Project (23%) SPSS (21%) Adobe Photoshop (21%)	Matlab (37%) Chemdraw (25%) Maple (21%)

At the end of the survey students were asked if there was any other software that they would prioritise (see Appendix 1). Out of 288 responses 104 said Matlab. These were presumably students not in the Faculty of Science where Matlab was a specific choice. The second most popular choice was AutoCAD with 24 students asking for this.

Verbatim Comments

As state above the majority of 'any other comments' were regarding the slow speed of the Managed Desktop (see Appendix 2). Some comments detailed which rooms and buildings housed particularly slow computers.

Out of the 232 comments, 73 were about the slow speed, 28 about problem getting access to student computers, 23 wanted updated software on the Managed Desktop and 23 thought the service was good.

There were also a number of suggestions for improving the service some of which I will quote below.

'The computers should be tailored to the building they are located in such as cics computers within the landscape building should have bigger RAM capabilities and increased CPU speed. Maybe this could be done when we move back into the arts tower later this year'

'Surely thin clients and a set of thin clients & servers running desktop virtualisations would be more cost effective and power efficient. Most students spend their time using web browsers and word documents. Intelligently load-balanced servers providing desktop virtualisation would give users more power as and when required.'

'Reduce the number of terminals and increase the number of PC's especially within the Students Union and the Information Commons.'

'Not enough of them! Perhaps post timetables of the rooms that aren't the IC ones online? Telling people to use Hicks/Geography Building instead when the IC is full is fine, but there's always the risk you'll go and be kicked out for a lesson 5 mins later. Publishing room timetables online would help people to plan around this.'

There was support for the idea of providing the Manage Desktop service remotely.

'It would be great to have the expensive software packages such as MiniTab and SigmaPlot available to access remotely. It would also greatly reduce the demand for PCs in the IC and other areas.'

'I think it would be useful to have all software available off campus, I have a loan laptop but not everything works on it which means I have to go over 5 miles from where I live to use a computer and with a mobility disability this is not easy.'

Conclusions

Overall there does seem to be support for providing applications remotely, although the most popular applications may not be those we can provide in this way.

There is still a significant perception that the Managed Desktop service is slow. Comments do indicate this may be more to do with the age of PCs than the service itself. For example the Information Commons PCs are rarely said to be slow but those at St Georges are. This reflects the age of the computers, with the Information Commons PCs being less than a year old whilst those at St Georges are 3 years old.