

ISC14D007

Title: *PC procurement options*
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Issue

Variance in approaches to funding PC replacements is leading to a number of under specified PCs remaining in use which are unable to be maintained. They represent a security risk to the institution and a disproportionate demand on IT support. The paper recommends a different approach to PC procurement and considers a number of other options.

Recommendation

Recipients are invited:

- To endorse the recommendations of the paper.

Resource Implications

Resource implications are described in the paper. Departments are expected to plan for PC replacements as required by the University's Desktop Computer Procurement and Deployment policy and this will have an impact on department budgets.

Risk Implications

There is risk to the University from continuing to run unmaintainable IT equipment, impacting both use of resources (for support) and the level of security risk.

Equality and Diversity

The proposals are not expected to have any impact on groups with protected characteristics.

Timing of decisions

Once agreed by ISSC, departments will be approached to address budgeting for the next financial year 15/16.

Further Information

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Attachments

- PC procurement and deployment

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Author: Mark Jones
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Introduction

IT infrastructure at UEA has evolved over the past four years and has moved to a model where PCs across the estate are generally managed centrally by tools that push software and updates to individual workstations and make self-service possible through developments such as the Application Catalogue. In January 2015, 13% of all Windows staff PCs fall below the required hardware specification needed to ensure they can run the latest versions of core software and be managed effectively and securely. Hardware under-specification results in loss of productivity, an increased risk that data will not synchronise leaving work not backed-up, increased security risks as software updates and patches are not successfully deployed, and increased IT Support costs as technicians are needed to make manual adjustments and modifications to PCs. In 2014, 7,334 IT Support calls were closed within the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Medicine and Health, 4,655 IT Support calls were closed within the Faculty of Humanities and the Faculty of Social Sciences, while administrative departments raised a further 7,441 IT Support calls - it is estimated that overall 10% of these calls were either directly or indirectly related to PC hardware that was under-specification.

The responsibility for setting and managing an IT budget is devolved to faculties and departments. Budgetary approaches vary considerably with those that invest appropriately and other areas where IT expenditure is not planned. ISSC is asked to consider funding and support models for PC procurement and amendments to the Desktop Computer Procurement and Deployment policy that reflect a need to ensure the University deploys hardware of the appropriate standard. The recommendations put forward are:

- **ISD will utilise the Managed PC Procurement Service contract to ensure all PCs procured fall within an advertised hardware specification. Only new PCs that meet this hardware baseline will be connected to the UEA wired network.**
- **Faculties and departments should retain their own IT budgets but be required to adhere to policy that requires appropriate IT investment by allocating funding to support a 5 year replacement schedule.**
- **That ISD be empowered to determine the procurement schedule for replacement PCs, this will allow us to better manage workloads.**

Policy and current practice

The Desktop Computer Procurement and Deployment Policy approved by the Information Strategy and Services Committee (ISSC) on 4th February 2011 states that faculties and departments should have a rolling replacement strategy for IT equipment built into their budget setting processes and that the University will aim to retain PCs for a minimum of 5 years. ISD has worked closely with faculties and departments since 2011 to achieve these

goals through engagement with areas by ISD IT Account Managers and the application of the Managed PC Procurement Service with varying degrees of success.

The Faculty of Humanities, the Faculty Social Science and the Faculty of Medicine and Health now operate a five year replacement budget at faculty level to address the issue of fluctuating incomes at school level. This is the most successful approach in place and leads to areas where hardware is replaced at the appropriate time.

The Faculty of Science has set a budget for support staff but academic PCs are largely financed through research grants and tend not to be refreshed at the five year cycle as neither the research grant nor the faculty has funds to do this.

In Central Divisions some departments have set IT hardware budgets while others have made no long-term plans and continue to replace hardware on an ad-hoc basis.

As IT equipment goes beyond five years the support overhead increases and in effect those Faculties that make budget provision for a regular refresh cycle are supplementing support in the other areas of the University. The risk associated with older equipment increase and in particular there have been a number of recent examples of IT equipment that is of a specification too low to allow for agreed software updates, potentially increasing security risks across the whole network.

Funding PC procurement

To enable effective budget management a five year PC refresh cycle remains a valid mechanism to manage PC procurement. Wherever possible PCs remain in operational use beyond the five year period to obtain the maximum value from assets.

To address the issue of underinvestment ISSC is asked to support the following procurement option approach.

1. Faculties and departments retain their own IT budgets and adhere to policy that requires appropriate IT investment

ISD requires all faculties and departments to allocate appropriate budgets based on a five year cycle that take both the age and specification of hardware into account. ISD will provide full hardware reports at the start of the financial year to determine the units that need to be replaced. In faculties where IT spend is partly funded by research grants, they are required to assign funds to replace workstations no longer funded by research.

Any PC not replaced after the five year refresh point and which is below the advertised baseline hardware specification will either be moved to a segmented part of the network or removed from the UEA wired network. IT Support will not be provided.

Benefits and drawbacks of this approach include:

- All PCs remain within the baseline specification.

- Faculties and departments have autonomy over IT budgets and can react to changing local requirements.
- This approach takes into account both the revenue and research budget streams used to procure IT hardware.
- Valuable research work will be protected. If relevant departments do not invest there is a risk to the University that work will not be completed until a replacement PC is purchased.