

Information Systems Services

Annual Highlights 2013/14

Introduction

About this report

This report highlights key developments and statistics achieved by Information Systems Services for the 2013/14 academic year.

For the purpose of this report, statistics have been derived for the period 30 September 2013 to 1 October 2014, unless stated otherwise.

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“Delivering outstanding ICT and enabling excellence in its use.”

Learning and Teaching

Moodle now mobile-friendly

We upgraded our Moodle VLE to a new responsive design which means it's easier to use on mobile phones and tablets.

New computers for students

We replaced over 200 ISS lab PCs with newer models in 13 teaching and learning spaces including Zest and The Orangery.

Essex 101 and Moodle X

We continue to work closely with Communications & External Relations and Learning & Development, providing technical support for Moodle X, the external Moodle service, for the popular Essex 101 academic skills course.

Improvements to Listen Again

We upgraded the underlying Listen Again lecture capture software (Panopto) which introduced some exciting new features including optical character recognition (OCR) and basic speech recognition, in addition to improving reliability. We also installed higher quality microphones in seminar rooms, and gave staff more options for controlling who and how their lecture recordings are accessed.

Student response technology growing in popularity

Our Electronic Voting System (EVS) is an audience response system that allows participants to anonymously answer questions by using an electronic handset. The new system is growing in popularity, in particular with EBS using the mobile app version with their students, and Biological Sciences loaning handsets to all their first year students.

Spot similarities in an instant

We integrated FASER with Ephorus, an online plagiarism detection service similar to TurnItIn, to automatically send student coursework submissions for similarity checking against external and internal sources.

Giving feedback just got a whole lot easier

We developed a tool in FASER to make it easier for staff to give students feedback on their coursework submissions. The tool, named the Feedback Assistant, enables staff to:

- annotate documents in a web browser without having to download and upload
- give feedback to a group or a cohort in one go
- record audio feedback

We support the digital student experience.

Learning and Teaching



62,720

hours of lectures recorded by Listen Again

↑ up 125% from 27,892 (2012/13)



140

teaching rooms now covered by Listen Again

↑ up 80 rooms from 2012/13



143,935

lecture playbacks by students

↑ up 34% from 107,752 (2012/13)



79%

of lecturers opt-in to Listen Again

↑ and climbing (83% by 2015)



1.03

million Moodle logins

↑ up 7% from 962,417 (2012/13)



2,410

active Moodle courses

↑ up 15% from 2,095 (2012/13)



2.12

million page hits for faser.essex.ac.uk



9,549

students' used FASER



110,076

FASER online coursework submissions



11am – 12pm

most popular time for students to submit work



22

teaching rooms upgraded with state of the art AV equipment



207

Student PC lab computers replaced with newer models

Communication and Collaboration

Email migration to Office 365

We moved all student email from our on-site Exchange service to Microsoft's Office 365 cloud-based service. Office 365 provides a modern, powerful, flexible platform for using and sharing information. Key benefits include:

- a 50GB mailbox quota (previously 2GB)
- enhanced spam filtering and malware protection
- improvements to Webmail features and functionality
- future integration with tools such as Lync (instant messaging) and Yamma (social networking)

We plan to move staff email by December 2014.

Unlimited cloud storage with OneDrive

All Office 365 users now get unlimited cloud storage space on OneDrive, previously this was 1TB.

Free Microsoft Office 365 for all students

As part of our agreement with Microsoft, all students can download the latest version of Microsoft Office on up to five devices, all free of charge. This service has proved extremely popular with students, and we will be extending this service to staff by the end of December 2014.

DevCon1 technology talks day

The second DevCon1 technology talks day took place on Thursday 17 April in the Tony Rich Teaching Centre at Colchester Campus. Topics ranged from general systems discussions to developer-specific technology projects, catering for all technology enthusiasts, developers and web authors from first line support to senior management. Overall the event proved very popular and was attended by a variety of academic and professional services staff as well as undergraduate and postgraduate students from our University and delegates from external organisations.

Find Your Way app for Southend Campus

Maps for Southend Campus have been added to our popular Find Your Way app.

Streaming Graduation 2014 in brilliant 4K

This year all 11 graduation ceremonies were streamed live in brilliant 4K quality – a world first! Working with CSEE PhD students Louis Clift and Adeyemi-Ejeye, ISS delivered the infrastructure to broadcast video streams at 8 Mbps and 14 Mbps, both below the UK's national average broadband speed of 18.7Mbps (OFCOM, Oct 2014), making it the lowest ever data rate for Ultra High Definition (Ultra-HD) content streaming. The 4K feed proved to be popular with hundreds of viewers from over 33 counties.

We get you talking and help you find your way around.

Communication and Collaboration



6,585

Find Your Way app downloads

- iPhone most popular device



442,114

findyourway.essex.ac.uk hits

- peaking at 3,000 searches per day on the first week of term



4.25

million phone calls

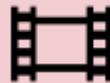
- most chatty on Tuesday afternoons



150

videos created by our Videographers

- watched 42,476 times in over 150 countries



3,000

viewers watched Graduation 2014 online (approx)

- in over 70 countries from the Cayman Islands to Uzbekistan



1.1

million emails sent and received in October 2014 (Office 365)



Unlimited

OneDrive cloud storage for all Office 365 users



5,569

people read their email on a mobile device in October 2014



19,060

mailboxes on Office 365

- 6,038 mailboxes left to move



428

ISS Facebook likes

- ↑ up from 327 this time last year



345

@EssexISS Twitter followers

- ↑ up from 179 this time last year



49,142

research papers downloaded

- ↑ up **152%** from 19,466 (2012/13)

Help and Support

Windows 7 upgrades

This summer we completed an eighteen month project to upgrade all ISS-maintained computers from Windows XP to Windows 7. The completion of this project means that no computer on campus supported under an ISS maintenance contract should be running Windows XP (which is no longer supported by Microsoft).

Office 2010 upgrades

We rolled out Microsoft Office 2010 to all ISS PC labs and the majority of staff PCs.

IT website redesign

In February 2014 we launched our new IT website with the aim of getting people to a solution more quickly and easily. We redesigned the website in alignment with the University's corporate brand to deliver a consistent and familiar user experience. We completely overhauled our web content, rewriting hundreds of webpages to be more student-focused.

Using service management to deliver great customer experiences

We've implemented award-winning IT service management (ITSM) software and essential ITIL processes to help us manage the delivery of support and customer-facing services. These processes will help us to collect similar incidents to aid in first call resolution, and easily link problems to incidents to resolve issues more quickly.

Centrally Funded Desktop Scheme

A new computer purchasing scheme for staff has been introduced. Budgets for computers that were previously recharged are now held centrally with ISS. The scheme has been introduced to reduce the amount of unnecessary internal recharging (cross charging), administration and paperwork. The scheme allocates *eVouchers* on an annual basis to each Department (Academic and Professional Services) to ensure University funded staff have appropriate equipment to carry out their work. The head of department or delegated nominee uses these *eVouchers* to obtain computers at no cost to their department.

Excellence in customer service

Our IT Training and Engagement team were delighted to receive a Staff Development Group Award at the UCISA 2014 gala dinner for their brilliant basics submission that focused on establishing a framework for assessing responsibilities (within the University), for the provision of training associated with emerging technologies and upgrades; and ensuring that this programme of services aligned with the University's Strategic Plan.

We help you discover new technologies.

Help and Support



1,291

IT Helpdesk tickets logged

- in October 2014 alone



3,357

faults and requests resolved by our Desktop Services team



338,108

ISS website pageviews

- since its launch in February 2014



2,146

hours of training delivered

- ↑ up 37% from 1,564 (2012/13)



82

European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) registrations

- ↑ up 51% from 54 (2012/13)



309

ECDL exams taken

- ↑ up 56% from 198 (2012/13)



Office 2010

rolled out to all ISS PC labs and the majority of staff PCs



Windows 7

now installed on all ISS-maintained computers



56,980

password changes

- on average everyone fails once when changing their password



3,528

computers supported by ISS



576

printers supported by ISS



1.55

million sheets of paper printed by ISS PC lab printers

Infrastructure

Wireless network upgrade

The expansion of the University's wireless network (Wi-Fi) service had not kept pace with the large growth in demand so this project has provided a major enhancement and expansion to the service by significantly increasing the signal coverage at all campuses and introducing greater technical capability.

MATLAB site licence

We procured a new site licence for popular MathWorks software, MATLAB, for wider University use. The previous licence capped the number of concurrent users, which led to problems with licence provision when large groups of students needed to use MATLAB at the same time. The new licence removes this cap, theoretically allowing all staff and students to access the software at the same time on any University-owned computer. The new licence also allows staff and PhD research students to install MathWorks software on their personally-owned computers and purchase additional products for their own use.

Self-service print kiosk in Lab C

In October 2013 we installed our first ever self-service print credit kiosk in Lab C. The kiosk lets students top-up their print credit balance using cash (coins and notes only). The kiosk is easy to use and students can login by swiping their Essex student card. Having the kiosk at Colchester Campus means that the IT Help Desk no longer have to manage the printing and selling of print credit vouchers – saving time and paper.

Data storage

In November 2013 we completed a project to re-engineer the University's main data storage and systems to provide capacity (about 100 Terabytes) for the growth in the University's data along with significantly improving the resilience of its systems. The University now operates a highly resilient 'private cloud' for its main IT infrastructure.

Datacentre improvements

The University's two main corporate datacentres (server rooms) have been upgraded together with using space for corporate systems in the separate UK Data Archive datacentre. The project has improved environmental controls, security, and monitoring. The use of the three locations provides improved resilience and has reduced risk.

Telephony service improvements

The telephone service remains a vital tool for personal interaction and University business. In April 2014 we completed a project to update and upgrade the University's telephone systems at all three campuses, providing better interconnection, improved management and introducing modern IP (computer network) based telephony. All the new systems are installed and operational - including the Loughton campus which is now fully integrated as part of the University's telephone network

We get you connected.

Infrastructure



425

new Wi-Fi access points installed

↑ totalling 470 Wi-Fi access points across our campuses



16,445

people connected to our Wi-Fi



3,450

devices connected at peak

▪ on Monday 27 October 2014



24,190

active user accounts



4,000

active telephone extensions (approx)



50GB

email disk quota for all Office 365 users

↑ Up from 2GB



27,615

kiosk print credit transactions



15,896

online print credit transactions

↑ up from 15,707 (2012/13)



629,884

logins to ISS lab computers



300

virtual hosts

▪ running on 37 physical servers



120TB

total disk storage space

▪ 58% in use (70TB)



800

PCs provided for students

▪ in 17 ISS PC labs

Business Systems

SharePoint upgrade

All business-critical applications and individual MySites have been upgraded from SharePoint 2007 to SharePoint 2013.

The project, which started over two years ago, underlines our commitment to maintaining SharePoint as a platform for delivering corporate systems, and electronic document management.

The benefits to our customers include faster hardware, a new look, mobile compatibility, improved resilience and a whole host of new features including in-browser document editing.

Our first iOS mobile app delivered to C&ER

The app, developed in-house by our Web Development Team for the Marketing and Student Recruitment team in C&ER, is used on Apple iPads at student recruitment events to register essential details of prospective students.

Such events often have unstable or no internet coverage so the data is stored locally on the device and uploaded later to our MIS servers once in Wi-Fi range. This is then added to the C&ER Microsoft Dynamics (CRM) database via our first use of the API, for future contact with the enquirer.

A new way to manage groups and lists

Lists and delegated groups can now be managed using a new web form, previously this was done using the Outlook address book. The web form shows you which delegated groups you own and lets you add and remove members. The form also lets you:

- Add and remove other owners – this should help delegate management of the group to others.
- View additional information on what resources the group has access to – e.g. access to role mailboxes, file shares etc.

Quick Log enquiry application for Student Services Hub

An enquiries Quick Log (QL) Windows application has been developed by WDT for use by the new Student Services Hub (SSH) when it opens. Quick Log will be used to collect data on all enquiries received in person at SSH service desks or by phone, by providing a customizable collection of enquiry types.

Team specific enquiries can be created as well as general enquiries, which are made available to all teams. The data collected is available to managers along with controls to add and remove team members, create and archive enquiries, and search the data using various factors.

We keep the University working.

Business Systems

 **1.5**
million files in SharePoint

 **711**
SharePoint MyLife websites

 **1,067**
SharePoint help emails resolved
in the first 9 weeks after
SharePoint update

 **5,439**
students booked an Open Day
online

 **11,294**
students got their exam results
online

 **6,655**
prospectus downloads

 **6,480**
undergraduate applicant portal
users

 **7,927**
postgraduate applicant portal
users

 **7,215**
webpages to date on our
website

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INFORMATION SYSTEMS SERVICES

Our vision is of the University where students and staff are actively supported in their endeavours to excel in creating, managing, communicating, and exploiting information in an information technology environment that is user-centred, flexible, accessible, and resilient.