

# IT SERVICES

PROVIDING YOUR DIGITAL CAMPUS

## ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS 2014/15

This report highlights service delivery and key developments achieved by IT Services for the 2014/15 academic year. Information is presented for the period 30 September 2014 to 1 October 2015, unless stated otherwise.



# NEW BUILDINGS

How we contributed to the Essex Business School (EBS), Silberrad Student Centre (SSC) and Library Extension.

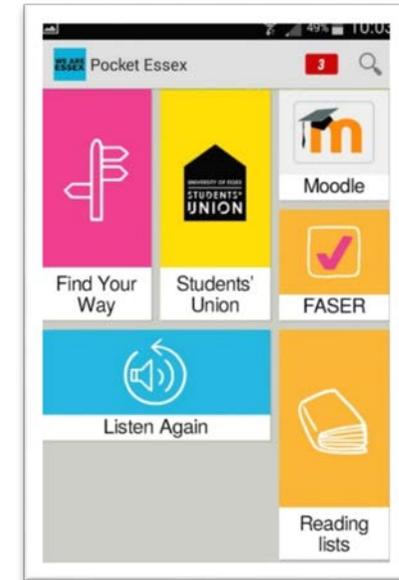
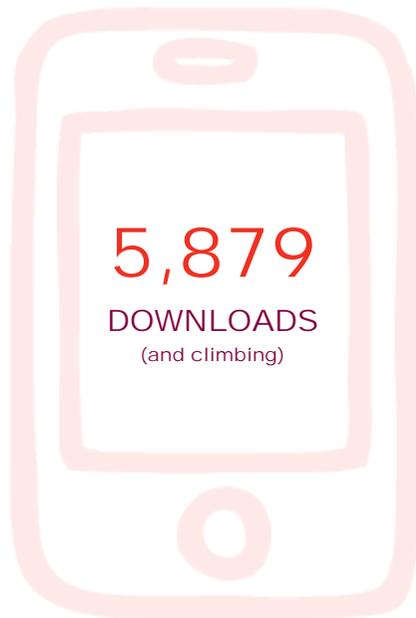


## Key activities

- TEACHING SPACES (EBS) – installed over £600,000 worth of state-of-the-art audio visual equipment including projectors, speakers, microphones, bespoke lecterns with touch screens and visualisers across three lecture halls, eight seminar rooms, two multi campus teaching rooms and various breakout rooms.
- DIGITAL SIGNAGE – in the SSC we installed seven 55” screens. In the EBS we created a large video wall using three 55” screens in portrait mode.
- LAKEVIEW ROOM (SSC) – we installed advanced AV with two 92” screens and sound bars in this prestigious meeting room.
- STUDENT COMPUTERS – in the EBS we created a new 38 seater computer lab (Lab S). In the SSC we installed 80 new computers across two floors, as well as 16 new group study pods in the Learning Hub. We also plan to install a further 90 computers in the Library extension.
- STAFF COMPUTERS – so far we have coordinated the moves of over 275 staff and postgraduate computers into new office spaces.
- NETWORK INFRASTRUCTURE – we installed network hardware at both sites and helped staff connect to the campus network. We also installed wireless access points throughout the buildings to provide ubiquitous wi-fi coverage.
- PRINTING – in the SSC and Library we installed 17 new touch card multi-function devices that can print, scan and photocopy. These machines are 'follow me' enabled, which means you can access your recent print jobs from any touch card printer on campus.
- TELEPHONES – we installed over 200 new SIP (Session Initiation Protocol) telephone handsets for staff; 115 in the SSC and 112 in the EBS.

# POCKET ESSEX

We delivered the University's first official student mobile app.



- Last summer the Students' Union asked around 700 of our students if they would like an official Essex mobile app. **98%** of them said yes.
- We worked closely with the Students' Union and other stakeholders to identify requirements, and then worked with a third party development company (CampusM) to ultimately develop the app. The project took one year to plan and three months to implement.
- Named Pocket Essex, the app provides a comprehensive platform that enables the delivery of integrated mobile services to students, giving them instant access static and dynamic information such as University of Essex events, course info, timetables, modules and marks, library loans, contact details, question of the week, and much more.
- The app officially launched on 17 September 2015 and is free to download for Android and iOS devices via the app store.

# PC LAB SIGNAGE

## Helping students find an available computer

- We often hear students say there aren't enough available lab computers. Typically there are, it's just that some are harder to find than others.
- With this in mind, we redesigned our existing digital signage to make it easier for students to find an available lab computer. Using improved graphics and new super-wide 29" monitors, we've managed to pack a wealth of useful information onto one screen.
- We're currently testing the new signage outside of Lab C, and will be installing more at key locations across our campuses over the coming months. We also worked with the Students' Union to get our new signage on the big screens between Square 3 and 4 at Colchester Campus.
- Students are delighted - we've had nothing but positive feedback.

Level 5    4S.5.7    2:34pm    4/11/2015

# PC LAB C

## OPEN

**19** /42 **computers available**

### IT Services: Lab availability

Lab A	Booked for Hands-on 'Train-th until 6pm	4 minutes away via Square 4, 4SW, 4SW.3.9
Lab B	No bookings	18 <sub>18</sub> 3 minutes away via Square 2, 2NE, 2.403
Lab D	No bookings	15 <sub>19</sub> 3 minutes away via Square 3, 3NE, 4N 3.9
Lab E	No bookings	15 <sub>18</sub> 3 minutes away via Square 3, 3NE, 4N 2.6
Lab F	No bookings	53 <sub>73</sub> 3 minutes away via Square 2, 2NE, 3.300
Lab G	No bookings	14 <sub>27</sub> 2 minutes away via Square 3, 3NE, 4N 4.3
Lab H	No bookings	18 <sub>20</sub> 3 minutes away via Square 2, 2NE, 3.403
Lab I	No bookings	15 <sub>18</sub> 3 minutes away via Square 2, 2NE, 3.402

### Lab C schedule

7am - 8am	Open
8am - 9am	Open
9am - 10am	Open
10am - 11am	PS111
11am - 12pm	PS111
12pm - 1pm	Open
1pm - 2pm	Open
2pm - 3pm	Open
3pm - 4pm	Open

# TEACHING & LEARNING

61,865

hours recorded by Listen Again

↓ down 1.36% from 62,720 (2013/14)

81%

of lecturers opt-in to Listen Again

↑ up 2% from 79% (2013/14)

1,663,380

million log ins to Moodle

↑ up 61% from 1,031,706 (2013/14)

952

reading lists now stored online in Talis Aspire

↑ up from 0 (2013/14)

61,025

items of feedback given to students in FASER

↑ up 109% from 29,116 (2013/14)

161

teaching rooms covered by Listen Again

↑ up 15% from 140 (2013/14)

178,090

lecture playbacks

↑ up 23% from 143,935 (2013/14)

2,952

active Moodle courses

↑ up 22% from 2,410 (2013/14)

143,538

FASER coursework submissions

↑ up 30% from 110,076 (2013/14)

206,399

times students viewed feedback in FASER

↑ up 54% from 133,379 (2013/14)

## Highlights

- FASER ENHANCEMENTS – a new design means our online assessment and feedback service is now easier to use, mobile friendly and customisable. A new feedback assistant tool helps staff find submissions and give feedback all in one place. Audio feedback can now be recorded directly from a web browser. New online annotation features lets staff read, comment, highlight and correct work without leaving the web browser. Group feedback lets staff give feedback to all students in one go, or to a select group. Feedback is now displayed on the main page, and students are informed via email when feedback is available.
- READING LISTS REVOLUTION – we helped complete a project to move reading lists into the online world. Using new web software (Talis Aspire), staff and students can now access and manage their reading lists online quickly and easily via a web browser. The new system lets students click on a book to see if it's available in the Library, check prices to buy online, or click straight through to the resource if it's electronic. It enables staff to keep their reading lists up to date throughout the year, quickly alert students when new items have been added and helps the Library manage stock levels. Staff can also find out how much their lists are being interacted with by viewing what items their students have been accessing or are intending to read.
- SUPPORTING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT – we continue to support staff and students in their professional development through the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) qualification. We hold regular IT training clinics for quiet online study with support from a trainer. We've also moved from manual testing to online testing and study materials so we can support multiple exams, assessments and operating systems. This year our students sat a total of 234 ECDL exams, achieving a 92% pass rate.

# CONNECT & COMMUNICATE

3,040,000

emails sent and received in October 2015

65,438

research papers downloaded  
↑ up 33% from 49,142 (2013/14)

244,691

phone calls made & received in October 2015

15,777

people connected to eduroam wifi  
↓ down from 16,445 (2013/14)

26,000 (approx.)

Find Your Way users

22,678

mailboxes on Office 365  
↑ up 18% from 19,060 (2013/14)

6,381

people read their email on a mobile device in October 2015  
↑ up 14% from 5,569 (2013/14)

4,414

telephone extensions

4,501

devices connected at peak  
↑ up 30% from 3,450 (2013/14 peak)

566

wi-fi access points  
↑ up 96 from 470 (2013/14)

## Highlights

- **WI-FI UPGRADE** – in December we completed a £300,000 project to upgrade the wireless network across all three campuses, and we continue to upgrade the network as and when new technology becomes available.
- **FIND YOUR WAY** – Find Your Way has been updated with improved graphics and waypoints for new buildings at Colchester and Southend Campus.
- **OFFICE 365** – all mailboxes belonging to staff based at Colchester Campus have been moved to Office 365. Our Webmail sign in page has been updated to an all-new responsive design featuring Ralph (the Lego model). Role mailboxes can be now requested online.
- **CHANGE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS** – we introduced a new web service that lets staff choose a preferred email address.
- **TELEPHONE SERVICE** – we continue to deploy modern Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) telephone handsets across campus. This year we installed and set up a total of 312 handsets. We supported Clearing by creating a temporary call centre for 60 people in computer lab J, handling total of 6,894 calls.



# CORPORATE INFORMATION SYSTEMS

## Highlights

- **APPLICANT PORTAL** – our Web Development Team helped complete a yearlong project to deliver a new and improved My Essex for Applicants website, which all prospective students use to manage their Essex application. The main objectives for this project were to reduce the number of student ‘no shows’ by delivering a more engaging user experience in the build up to the start of term, make it easier to use for both students and staff administrators and update the back-end code to reduce the overhead of making future changes.
- **TIMETABLE INTEGRATION** – we’ve introduced a new timetable integration service for students that automatically puts centrally timetabled events in personal calendars. This means all events can be viewed in a single calendar without the need to check timetables separately. Data from the central timetable database is automatically exported to personal calendars overnight, which means students no longer have to manually keep their calendar up-to-date. This integration makes it easier to avoid clashes when arranging meetings in Outlook. Calendars can also be synced to smartphones and tablets for anytime, anywhere access.

## Key numbers

- **WEB SHOP** – we processed 32,212 transactions of 270 different products totalling £6,436,827.
- **WEB PAYMENTS** – we processed 15,193 student fee and accommodation invoice payments totalling £22,306,225.
- **ATTENDANCE MONITORING** – we processed 937,588 count-me-in card swipes.

2,060,835

files on SharePoint

↑ up 30% from 1,576,659 (2013/14)

2,291

SharePoint sites

16,282

applicant portal users

↑ up 13% from 14,407 (2013/14)

120,676

applicant portal log ins

5,101

open day bookings made online

↓ down 6% from 5,439 (2013/14)

12,014

sets of exam results published online

↑ up 6% from 11,294 (2013/14)

6,014

prospectuses ordered online

↓ down 9% from 6,655 (2013/14)

14,718

queries logged in CRM

# COMPUTERS & PRINTING

1,487

requests logged by the IT Helpdesk in October 2015  
↑ up 14% from 1,300 (Oct 2014)

50,108

kiosk transactions for student print credit totalling  
↑ up 81% from 27,615 (2013/14)

172

student computers replaced with newer models

466

staff and student printers supported  
↓ down from 576 (2013/14)

1,810,442

sheets of paper printed by our printers  
↑ up 16% from 1,556,450 (2013/14)

17,356

online transactions for print credit  
↑ up 9% from 15,896 (2013/14)

1,385,937

log ins to student computers

1,006

student computers

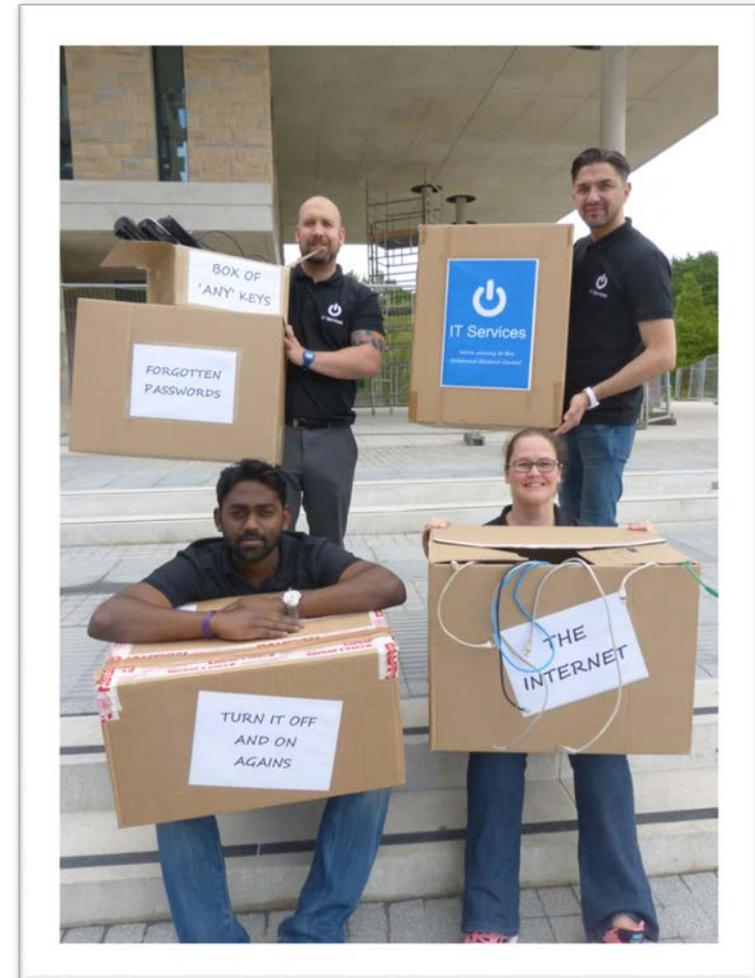
## Highlights

- SOUTHEND MAC LAB – a new 16 computer Mac lab has been installed to the fifth floor of the Gateway Building at Southend Campus (for East 15).
- FREE OFFICE FOR STAFF – staff can now download the latest version of Microsoft Office 365 for free on up to five computers and mobile devices. Previously this was only available to students.
- LAB REFURBISHMENTS – over the Easter break we completed a £180,000 project to refurbish computer labs F and M. Both labs were fitted with brand new audio visual equipment, furnishings and desk-level power sockets making it easier for students to plug things in. The layout of computer lab F was changed to make better use of the space, allowing us to create a comfortable seating area for laptop users. Computer lab M had a complete refit including new flooring, lighting and a fresh lick of paint. Over the last 12 months we've also replaced computers with newer models in labs G, H, M, O, and in the Albert Sloman Library.



# ENGAGEMENT

- UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN VISIT – in January, our Learning Technology Team hosted an event for visitors from the University of Bergen. Bergen were looking at open source Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) and were interested in how Essex chose, maintained, and supported Moodle. This is the second visit from a Scandinavian University (University of Linköping, April 2014) and demonstrates that Essex is high profile in its IT and e-learning systems.
- MAKE A DIFFERENCE DAY – we've temporarily abandoned our traditional 'show-and-tell' staff meetings and replaced them with MAD days (Make A Difference). MAD days bring the whole section together to discuss ideas about how we can improve our support processes and service delivery. It gives our staff an opportunity to share knowledge, voice opinion, think creatively about solutions to everyday problems and work on cross-section projects with colleagues who they wouldn't usually work with. This year we held two MAD days and both led to some good ideas being put forward, which included changing our name to IT Services.
- NATIONAL UCISA CONFERENCE – in March 2015, we delivered a talk and poster presentation at the national UCISA conference about the Making Electronic Feedback Effective project, with particular focus on how we have significantly improved staff engagement with our online assessment and feedback service, FASER.
- SECTION NAME CHANGE – our section name change from Information Systems Services to IT Services is mostly complete.
- GROUP NAME CHANGES – Management Information Systems (MIS) is now **Corporate Information Systems (CIS)**, Systems and Networks is now **Infrastructure**, Customer Services is now **Client Services**.
- NEW HOME FOR IT HELPDESK – the IT Helpdesk have moved in to the Learning Hub at the Silberrad Student Centre.



47 colleagues went to the IT Services 'Mad Hatter Christmas Party'



# REPORTED SERVICE DISRUPTIONS

When	Service	Campus	What
7/10/2014	Eduroam wi-fi	All	The service became oversubscribed due to a lack of available network addresses. During this time users may have experienced problems connecting. Additional IP addresses were made available on 9 October to prevent this happening for the foreseeable future.
9/10/2014	Network	Colchester	A brief power outage in the Social Studies building (Colchester Campus) at 14:50 caused network switches in that area to restart. This resulted in a few minutes network downtime.
6/11/2014	Telephone	Southend	An intermittent fault occurred causing telephone extensions in the Gateway Building at Southend Campus to be unable to dial internally (using just the 4 digit number) to extensions at The Forum, Loughton or to SIP handsets in Colchester. External dialling was not affected. The fault was reported to our maintainer for urgent attention. The system was restarted overnight to minimise further disruption and following a series of test calls we declared the problem resolved.
26/11/2014	Network	Loughton	Maintenance work was conducted by our ISP (JANET) on the external network link that feeds Loughton Campus. The link was 'at-risk' between 00:00 to 08:00.
6/12/2014	SharePoint	All	Due to important scheduled maintenance work SharePoint was unavailable 09:00 to 13:00. This disruption was necessary to allow us to install a Service Pack Upgrade to improve stability of the service, and bring in new functionality.
10/12/2014	SharePoint	All	There was a problem with SharePoint search facility. Users of PG/UG EAF and ESF could only see documents uploaded in 2014. After detailed investigation the problem was resolved on 15 December.
11/12/2014	Telephone	All	We experienced a problem with users of SIP telephones not being able to log into their handsets to make or receive calls. Anyone attempting to call a SIP extension would have received a permanently engaged tone. This problem was resolved within the hour.
6/1/2015	Telephone	All	A planned essential upgrade to the telephony service disabled telephony services for all campuses between 6am and 8am.
12/1/2015	FASER	All	A large number of coursework submissions occurred all at once caused a problem affecting performance. This may have resulted in some students not being able to submit coursework. We contacted all departments to let them know what happened.
17/1/2015	SharePoint	All	Due to important scheduled maintenance work our SharePoint service was READ-ONLY for approximately one hour. This disruption allowed us to upgrade the database servers which host SharePoint.
4/2/2015	Telephone	All	We experienced a problem affecting external callers to some University extensions. Callers were not hearing a dial tone, however the phones were ringing. An engineer was called onsite to resolve the problem.

17/2/2015	Eduroam wi-fi	Colchester & Southend	There was a problem with eduroam wi-fi at Colchester and Southend campus which affected all users who were trying to connect. The problem was resolved the following day.
25/2/2015	Network	Southend	An unforeseen side-effect of some preparatory work for the use of the new Southend Campus backup link caused a problem with all network communication to/from Southend Campus between 14:55 and 15:00.
12/3/2015	Authentication	All	An automatic Microsoft update that occurred overnight caused a problem with some online services that required authentication. The problem was resolved within the hour.
13/3/2015	Network	Southend	At around 15:25, off-campus network connectivity to the Southend campus was briefly lost. The problem was caused by a problem with JANET equipment at Chelmsford, which caused an automatic switch-over to the backup link.
23/3/2015	Compute server	Colchester	One of the four compute servers, unix2, went offline due to a hardware failure. The hardware vendor was contacted and after lengthy troubleshooting the problem was resolved on 31 March.
23/3/2015	Eduroam wi-fi	All	There was a problem with eduroam from 06:34 on Sunday 22 March until 08:45 on Monday 23 March. The problem was caused by both of our authentication servers going offline at 06:34 on Sunday morning. We have applied a patch to prevent this from happening again.
9/4/2015	Network	All	An update to core network firmware caused a problem with many services that relied on the network. The problem was reported sometime in the morning and resolved at 13:44.
9/4/2015	Mailshot	All	There was a problem with the mailing list service, Mailshot, when creating new lists. A patch was deployed the following day.
27/5/2015	Network	Colchester	Some users at Colchester campus in the area of 5A.3xx and 6.3XX (mostly Maths and Sociology) would have had trouble accessing the network from the afternoon until around 17:00. The problem was due to a member of staff in that area connecting several pieces of home network equipment to the University network.
29/5/2015	SharePoint	All	It was necessary for the health of our SharePoint servers to clear the current search index, and to full restart it. Between 17:00 on Friday 29 May and 09:00 Monday 1st June users would have seen fewer documents than normal.
2/6/2015	Telephone	All	Urgent maintenance tasks and testing on the telephone system required a system restart at Colchester between 06:00 and 07:00. There was a period of approx. 30 mins when all internal analogue and digital telephone services at Colchester and access to voicemail from Southend and Loughton were unavailable.
6/7/2015	SharePoint	All	SharePoint suffered performance issues and had to be rebooted overnight. This resolved the problem.
10/7/2015	Network	Colchester	At 2.50pm the network link which feeds the building called the Network Centre on the Colchester campus failed. Connectivity was restored at 3:50pm by way of a second (resilient) link.
14-16/7/2015	Moodle	All	Several of our Moodle services were unavailable for short periods whilst we undertook necessary annual software upgrades and archival activities.
15/7/2015	Network	Colchester	An electrical power failure cause a problem with the network that affected many services. The problem was resolved within the hour.
29/7/2015 & 30/7/2015	Eduroam wi-fi	Southend	Southend Borough Council performed a survey on the wireless network in The Forum which resulted in a few hours downtime from 6pm onwards on both days.

17/8/2015	Email	All	Following a change by Microsoft to their Office 365 spam filters on Monday 10 August, an increased number of legitimate emails had been marked as spam. After being alerted to the problem, IT Services took action and implemented a patch on Monday 17 August.
24/8/2015	Network	Colchester	Water from flooded toilets in the Computing Building got into several network devices which meant we had to replace damaged equipment. This resulted in network downtime for several hours.
15/9/2015	Telephone	All	Some users experienced a problem making a call and found it to be engaged or silent. Our system maintainer was contacted and the telephone system was reset on 17 September at 06:00 but unfortunately another problem was unmasked: operators were unable to transfer external calls to SIT main number 4000. A software upgrade was subsequently recommended by the system developers and deployed on 28 September at 06:30. The upgrade was not successful and the software was rolled back to the previous version. Following a lengthy period of disruption the service was restored on 28 September at 13:10 to pre update performance. The original problem was resolved; the call transfer problem remains unresolved.
16/9/2015	SharePoint	All	Essential planned maintenance work on SharePoint servers disrupted the service between 7.30pm and 9.00pm.
16/9/2015	Library	All	After moving the Library website to a new server users reported they could not access it off-site. The problem was resolved within 8 hours.
17/9/2015	Email	All	At around 16:45 on 16 September a problem developed with an on-site email server. The problem was resolved by 07:00 the next morning but any email sent via smtp.essex.ac.uk during this time may not have been delivered. We looked at what systems may have been affected and resent emails where appropriate.
18/9/2015	Email	All	After an email server software update, some users reported problems signing in to Webmail. After investigating the problem, we believe the cause was due to certain web browsers storing old server addresses and credentials. The problem was resolved by users either deleting or resetting their web browser's cache. This workaround was communicated to users via the IT Helpdesk.
21/9/2015	Moodle	All	Moodle was briefly unavailable due to a long-running query which blocked other interactions with the Moodle database.
28/9/2015	Telephone	All	Problems transferring external calls to SIT main number 4000 – Since the upgrade failure there have been extensive discussions with our system maintainer regarding improvements to delivery of service; how to ensure an upgrade will fit our system profile and level of support available during major system upgrades. The latest recommendations from the system developer identifies an upgrade level higher than the previously attempted version and another upgrade attempt is planned to take place no later than 13 December 2105