

News from IT Services: Michaelmas 2018

[◀ Previous Newsletter](#) [Next Newsletter ▶](#)

Improving working relationships



Would you like an IT Services representative at your IT meetings?

The IT Services rep scheme provides departments and colleges with a named person who will attend your IT meetings, provide updates on IT Services activities,

answer questions, and take feedback to feed into service improvements. They may also be able to offer advice on specific local issues, or assist in recruitment activities. We are keen to expand to even more areas.

'M's reports at the IT Forum have always been hugely welcomed by all members of the group, and his participation in the meetings has meant that the IT Forum felt like it was fully connected to the central IT services of the University, we could have questions answered directly at the meeting and get explanations for complicated issues or procedures.'

From experience, we know departments appreciate being able to build up a relationship with a specific IT Services employee who can develop an understanding of their particular environment and challenges, and ultimately help shape future services in order to better meet your needs.

Focus on

[Improving working relationships](#)

Highlights

[Data centres progress](#)

[University IT Strategic Plan – the next five-years](#)

[Predictable delivery - What is it, why is it important, and what will it mean for you?](#)

[More programmes of study go live in Canvas early adopter phase](#)

Stay Secure

[Best practice in information governance](#)

Learning, Teaching and Research

[Benefits to all from latest hardware co-investment](#)

[Super-sizing performance at ARC](#)

[Electronic lab notebooks success](#)

Engagement and Global Reach

[Annual report available](#)

The benefits to a department vary from improving engagement with central IT activities to directly impacting local issues:

'A's input in addressing a serious issue in relation to an ERC-funded project helped us to address concerns raised by the ERC. If the concerns had not been satisfactorily resolved, it could have cost the University between £50k and £500k.'

For IT Services, we benefit from having direct interaction with end users, developing a better understanding of your needs and how services impact you. If you want to find out more about having an IT Services rep, please email jan.teasdale@it.ox.ac.uk.

[Back to top](#)

[IT Innovation Challenges scheme 2018/19](#)

Other news

[Service Desk – how are we doing?](#)

[Graduate Supervision Reporting now live for use on all graduate courses](#)

[Nexus365 rollout](#)

Events

[WebLearn User Group](#)

[Turnitin user group](#)

[Meet SharePoint users in the SNUG](#)

Highlights

Data centres progress

The project to consolidate and support two inter-connected data centres for the University continues on schedule. The expansion of the University Shared Data Centre (USDC) in Oxford is complete. The commissioning and testing of the high speed (Oxide) connection to the Jisc data centre (JDC) in Slough is well under way and scheduled for completion by the end of November.



USDC Oxford

← Oxide →



JDC Slough

Planning and pre-requisite activities continue, so that migration of existing services from legacy machine rooms in Banbury Road and the Human Anatomy department, to the JDC, can commence from December, leaving the legacy spaces free to be re-allocated and better serve the needs of the University.

Ahead of migrating systems to the JDC the project team is collaborating with service owners to agree a migration plan that avoids service outages, or high risk, during critical periods in the academic calendar.

For further information please see the [project website](#) (requires Single Sign-On) or contact the project manager, Gavin Eadie, via datacentreprojects@it.ox.ac.uk.

[Back to top](#)

University IT Strategic Plan – the next five-years



The University, under the auspices of IT Committee, is currently working on drafting a new strategic plan for IT. It is important to note this plan is for the whole of the University, not just IT Services, and will take its lead from the emerging priorities in the new University Strategic Plan.

The planned timetable is to have the IT Strategic Plan completed for Easter and ready to present to Council in Trinity Term 2019. IT Services has been asked to facilitate the drafting of the plan by providing support and organising feedback and analyses mechanisms. In particular a series of workshops involving stakeholders from across the

University are being planned.

A trial workshop with IT Committee was run in September and further workshops with stakeholders will progress through Michaelmas term to provide opportunities for representatives from across the collegiate University to input and shape the plan. These workshops will look at key priorities for the delivery of IT, governance and finance, the issues around data, security, and innovation. We are also assessing the expected technical developments over the next 3-5 years and how they might affect Oxford.

If you wish to be involved or have any questions, please contact Dr Stuart Lee, Deputy CIO, IT Services at stuart.lee@it.ox.ac.uk.

[Back to top](#)

Predictable delivery - What is it, why is it important, and what will it mean for you?

Predictable delivery continues as a core theme for IT Services in the coming year. The ideas behind predictable delivery and the approaches we're undertaking to achieve it are nothing new, however, by bringing them together under one banner, we can improve our focus, consolidate actions and work towards being an even more supportive partner for our colleagues and departments across the University.

Predictable delivery means:

- delivering services to stated availability, responsiveness, and resilience goals, even allowing for the unexpected

- having known levels of safety and security, and hence clear risks and mitigations
- delivering projects on time, on cost, to specification, and to the required quality
- having a predictable responsiveness to service incidents or to requests for new or changed services



These will allow you:

- to build and develop your own business processes and services, confident in the knowledge that the underpinning IT applications and platforms will be there for them
- to predict your resource commitments into IT projects
- in the event of service incidents or interruptions, to be aware of any likely delays before normal service so you can judge whether to activate your own business continuity arrangements

What are we doing to achieve this? Current activities include:

- migrating the Banbury Road and Beach data centres to the Jisc Data Centre (in Slough) will bring a step change in the environmental resilience (power and cooling) and hence greater reliability
- reviewing the cooling and power provision at Begbroke and the University Shared Data Centre, again aiming for greater reliability and resilience
- improving our internal resource planning to avoid work overloads or bottlenecks for our staff
- establishing key metrics and service level agreements for our services and tracking service responsiveness

Much of this is nothing new, and is simply a continuation of initiatives we have been working on for years. However, with this renewed focus, we aim to add clear value for the University.

[Back to top](#)

More programmes of study go live in Canvas early adopter phase



The [Canvas@Oxford](#) Programme is making significant progress in its early adopter phase.

Twenty-one programmes of study are now being taught in Canvas, and a further six will be going live in the coming weeks. It is expected that approximately 1,000 students will be using the platform by the end of October.

Early adopters are being closely supported by learning technologists throughout the phase, with many also attending Learning Design workshops which support academic course teams with migrating to Canvas. Find more information and how to register for a workshop on

the [workshop web pages](#). Alternatively, to arrange a custom workshop in your department or faculty, email tel@it.ox.ac.uk.

Oxford University Language Centre was the first of our early adopters to use Canvas to deliver its pre-sessional Academic English courses to students during August. Feedback was extremely positive, with students in particular impressed by the software's usability.

The early adopter phase will undergo a rigorous evaluation which will be used to inform the wider rollout, expected to take place from summer 2019.

More roadshows and related activity is planned for Michaelmas term. Dates will be communicated as soon as they are confirmed.

More information about Canvas can be found on the [Canvas pages of the Digital Education website](#). For details about what will happen to WebLearn, please refer to the [What will happen to WebLearn?](#) page.

Contact canvasoxford@it.ox.ac.uk for more information, or if you would like to join our mailing list.

[Back to top](#)

Stay Secure

Best practice in information governance

The Information Governance Office (IGO) has been working with the Medical Sciences Division (MSD) for just over a year to provide expertise in information security and governance. We have developed and maintain a divisional information governance framework and helped [unlock the red tape around accessing research data](#).

Much of the work involved navigating new territory, where corporate laws are catching up with the research sector's embedded practices. We need to not just be aware of the research projects and the risks within, but also work with national data custodians and their requirements as they respond to the changes to law and a diminishing public trust. Alongside this are the unwritten, but important, laws of medical science that govern practitioners worldwide.

In the past year, we have:

- Engaged with research community and departmental stakeholders
- Established internal and external processes to streamline data application processes for research staff, and helped 27 research projects obtain data from NHS Digital
- Responded to over 110 support calls relating to information governance



- Delivered face to face training sessions to over 90 people and over 3700 online training sessions
- Set up an online platform to share [good practice](#) and [guidance](#) from external bodies

The IGO provides operational support and liaises with departments on all data governance issues to develop good practice, help manage risk and work with external bodies and agencies. If you would like to find out more, please see the [service page](#) or contact grc@infosec.ox.ac.uk.

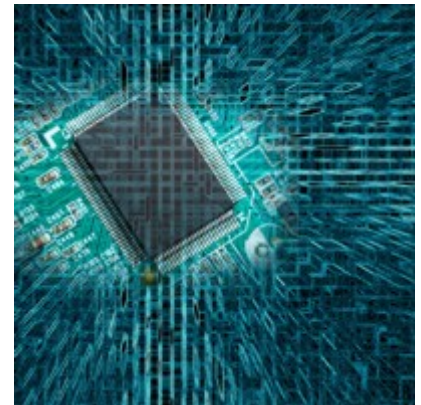
[Back to top](#)

Learning, Teaching and Research

Benefits to all from latest hardware co-investment

Under the ARC's co-investment scheme, researchers investing in hardware benefit from their equipment being professionally maintained as part of the ARC High Performance Computing (HPC) service and the wider University benefits from being able to use that hardware when it is not scheduled for use by the research group.

In the most recent co-investment arrangement, the Torr Vision Group from the Department of Engineering Science have co-invested in hardware that will be used in Deep Learning research for Computer Vision. The funds are for the purchase of a general-purpose graphics processing unit (GPU) cluster which will be hosted and supported by the ARC team. A general-purpose GPU performs non-specialized calculations, similar to those which would be done by a central processing unit (CPU) on a regular computer. However, GPUs are built to allow massive parallelism and so give even better calculation rates than even the most powerful CPUs for certain types of parallel processing tasks.



If you would like to find out more about co-investment or the new GPU cluster, please contact support@arc.ox.ac.uk

[Back to top](#)

Super-sizing performance at ARC

The Advanced Research Computing (ARC) team has procured a new storage system to provide a high performance filesystem for use with its High Performance Computing (HPC) and High Throughput Computing (HTC) services.

The storage is currently being installed and should be available to users in late October. The total usable storage capacity of the new storage system is two petabytes (2000 terabytes or around 7 years of 24/7 full HD video recording). In addition to an increase in capacity (around four times the capacity of the current ARC filesystem) the new storage system will provide better overall performance which will help



with the analysis of large data sets and other data-intensive research activity taking place on ARC's systems.

In addition to a new storage system, ARC is also introducing a new High Throughput Cluster (Arcus-HTC), replacing Arcus-A. This system, available from late October, is designed for users with non-traditional HPC requirements. For example, users who have smaller or parallel workloads, or who wish to use the novel architectures available such as GPU and Xeon Phi compute systems. The system allows more efficient use of the compute hardware by packing users' jobs together to increase utilisation and job throughput. It will provide a complementary capability to the Arcus-B system which will be used to facilitate user jobs scaling over many hundreds of cores.

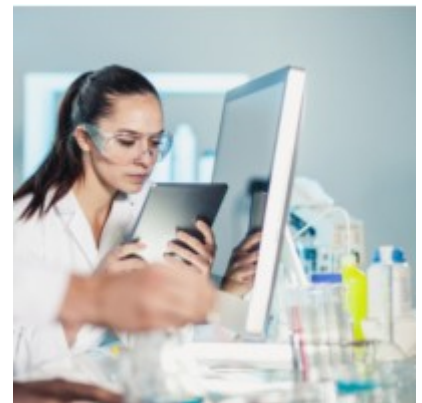
See the [ARC website](#) or contact support@arc.ox.ac.uk for further information.

[Back to top](#)

Electronic lab notebooks success

At the beginning of the summer, Oxford signed up to a site licence for LabArchives, a cloud-based electronic lab notebook solution. Electronic lab notebooks replace the traditional system of recording data and activity in scientific laboratories in paper ledgers. Used correctly, they make searchability, preservation and compliance much easier than their paper counterparts.

Since the June launch, research groups from around the University have moved to the LabArchives system to store their daily observations, protocols and data. By the end of September, there were over 400 active user accounts in Oxford's instance, performing an average of fifty thousand 'activities' (such as creating a new page or uploading a data file) a month. IT Services has been working with these research groups to help adapt their workflows to the new system.



Rowan Wilson, of our Research Technology Consultation team, said: *'We have been working closely with academics and LabArchives to accommodate the wide range of working practices in labs across Oxford, and so far the reactions have been overwhelmingly positive. Researchers are using phones, tablets, laptops and desktops to capture data in new ways and organise their work more efficiently. In some cases we are close to labs becoming fully digital.'*

If you would like to try LabArchives, visit our [Help pages](#) for information on getting started. If you have questions about LabArchives at Oxford, or would like to meet to discuss your requirements, please email researchsupport@it.ox.ac.uk.

[Back to top](#)

Engagement and Global Reach

Annual report available

The IT Services Annual Report 2017-18 is now available and provides an overview of the department's achievements in the past year. The examples selected for inclusion give a taste of the many services and projects we deliver on behalf of the collegiate University.



Interesting facts for the year include:

- 10 million phone calls made through Chorus
- 44% annual increase in calls to the Service Desk
- 68 terabytes of data downloaded
- 514,000 spam emails rejected each day

A PDF of the full report is available on our [website](#) and a limited number of printed copies are being distributed.

[Back to top](#)

IT Innovation Challenges scheme 2018/19



We are pleased to announce that the IT Innovation Challenges scheme will be inviting both staff and students to submit project ideas to be considered for funding by the scheme in early 2019.

This year we are introducing the Summer of Innovation for students. It will be similar to doing a paid internship, and students will be offered training and guidance to gain project management and digital skills and realise their idea.

While the staff round of challenges will retain the format from previous years, there will be a new platform for ideas submission. This platform provides the space for discussions and unprecedented collaboration, thereby encouraging cross-institutional innovation.

For more details on the scheme and regular updates, visit the [IT Innovation Challenges blog](#) and our [Facebook page](#).

[Back to top](#)

Other news

Service Desk – how are we doing?

Every year, we look at our data to see how the Service Desk is performing. This year, we'd also like to hear from you!

From October onwards, invitations to participate in a short customer satisfaction survey will be emailed to every fifth incident logged and resolved by our Service Desk. Invitations will only be sent to people who have reported issues with an IT service, not for quick queries or service requests, such as requesting access to a system.

The email will come from notifications@it.ox.ac.uk and will include a link to a survey with a single satisfaction scoring question, plus options to provide further details or request a follow-up discussion. As part of our desire to deliver excellence, we would like you to tell us how well a particular incident was handled and which areas we should focus on improving.

Results from the satisfaction surveys will form part of service management reporting, enabling us to analyse and improve our processes. We also plan to publish the results from the surveys so that customers are kept abreast of developments.

From our current data, we know that support calls from all channels have increased by around 10% in the last three years. We are also delighted that the percentage of calls solved on first contact continues to increase and is now at 60%. The average time to resolve more complex issues has improved by 25% over the same time frame. You may also be interested to know that Tuesday is the busiest day for support calls!

[Back to top](#)

Graduate Supervision Reporting now live for use on all graduate courses



On 15 October, all enrolled graduate students and relevant staff were given access to Graduate Supervision Reporting (GSR), which has replaced the Graduate Supervision System (GSS). Access was provided early in term so that users could login and take a look around GSR in advance of Michaelmas term reporting.

The launch of GSR follows a pilot during the summer with 19 courses and 6 colleges. Feedback from participants was positive, and a number of suggested improvements have also been made.

This replacement was required because the vendor had withdrawn support for GSS which provided an opportunity to implement the process changes, intended to improve reporting participation and quality, previously approved by the Education Committee following a consultation exercise with the collegiate University. Technical

improvements have also been made, to eliminate the downtime and data problems that were associated with GSS.

Students access GSR from within [Student Self Service](#), which they already use to register for the new academic year, enter for examinations, view their results, and more. Training Needs Analysis forms for research students are included within GSR. The relevant academic and administrative staff have access to GSR from [eVision](#), which is the main student records system for the University of Oxford.

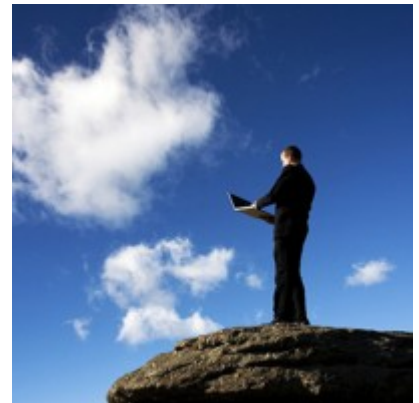
GSR automated email notifications to users will include details of how to log in at the start of each reporting window and support contact details. Details are on the [Student Systems GSR](#) web pages.

[Back to top](#)

Nexus365 rollout

The project to deliver cloud-based Nexus365 to the collegiate University is now coming to a close following the successful transfer of approximately 64,000 email accounts to the new service in a few months, and the delivery of functionality so new users have their email accounts set up directly in Nexus365.

Early lessons were learned so the vast majority of users had a smooth transition to the new service. Close co-operation between the Nexus team, the project's migration team and our central Service Desk delivered an effective support system for users with questions or issues. Given the vast array of systems and devices in use at the University, the challenge was to get people up and running with their emails as soon as possible after migration. Feedback from colleges and departments has generally been positive.



'Overall the migration went really smoothly and we are very grateful for the timely and patient support of all involved.' Personal Assistant to Laura How, Chief Operating Officer, Bodleian Libraries

'Just to say how impressed I've been with the transfer to the new system. Clear instructions and everything worked first time. Excellent job!' Matt Eaton, Project Manager, Estates Services

'I think this project has, overall, been a great example of how a major IT service transition can, and should, be handled within this University.' Brian Marsden, Principal Investigator, Research Informatics (Kennedy Institute, NDORMS & SGC, NDM), Medical Sciences Division

The project team would like to thank IT support staff from across the University and key contacts within UAS for their support in making this happen. To learn more about Nexus365 please see our [support web pages](#).

[Back to top](#)

Events

WebLearn User Group Turnitin user group



Meet with members of the WebLearn team, give feedback and share ideas. "All the talks were very good. It is inspirational to hear of others' uses". Book for WLUG Tuesday 6 November.

[Back to top](#)

Meet SharePoint users in the SNUG

All



staff users of Turnitin are welcome at the TUG to share ideas and practices and to inform institutional practice in the use of Turnitin. Please book and join us on 9 November.

[Back to top](#)



The

SharePoint Nexus User Group (SNUG) is meeting on 23 November, 12:30 -14:30, IT Services, 13 Banbury Road. If you would like to attend, please book via the Courses booking page (lunch included).

[Back to top](#)

Keep in touch

We hope you have enjoyed this edition of our newsletter. For contributions or comments, please contact the Communications and Web Office via communications@it.ox.ac.uk.

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[Back to top](#)