INNOVATION

Updates for University staff from the IT Service

A word from the editor.

It's been a productive summer for the IT Service and our teams have been working diligently to ensure that IT resources are in place to support the University during the new semester.

This edition of Innovation includes a feature on **Generative AI**, highlighting its potential to transform how staff work and interact with students. From automating repetitive tasks to enhancing creativity, we're excited to explore how AI can be leveraged with guidance available on our new SharePoint site.

We're also thrilled to announce that the IT Service Desk team has been awarded the **Customer Service Excellence award**. This recognition reflects our commitment to continuously improving the support we provide to the University community. Your feedback has been key in helping us achieve this, and we look forward to further enhancing our services to you as we seek to retain this year on year.

Sustainability remains a key priority for us, and we're continually working towards a greener IT estate. This includes ensuring our devices have the longest service life as possible by **promoting the reuse and recycling of University IT equipment**.

Finally, we remind staff of the importance of data security. Safeguarding University data is everyone's responsibility, and we've provided updated guidance on **data retention best practices.**

We hope you find this edition informative and we look forward to supporting you as we embark on another academic year.

For an easier to read plain text version of this newsletter, please contact *t.green@worc.ac.uk*

The Noticeboard

File Sensitivity Labels

A new feature making it easier to label and control how sensitive or confidential content is shared has been added to Microsoft 365 applications. This feature compliments the University's existing approach to data protection for further information can be found **here**.

Start of Semester IT Service Phoneline Options

As we approach our peak support period for the IT Service Desk, we have made changes to the call options you receive when contacting the IT Service Desk by phone (01905 85 7500) during core hours (Monday to Friday 08:30-17:00). These are:

- Option #1:   Teaching space support
- Option #2: Glide support
- Option #3 Account enquiries, password resets and Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) support (these will go through to our external support provided by Norman Managed Services, the service that normally handles our out of hours calls)
- Option #4: Standard requests and incidents via the onsite IT Service Desk team as normal.

These revised call options will be in effect until October 11th after which all call options will return to normal.

A note on Power Adaptors

Those staff issued with laptops by the University should ensure that the laptop, power adaptor and bag are kept together at all times. Lost or damaged power supplies should be reported to the IT Service immediately. Depending on the cause, there may be the need to recharge departments or schools for replacement power supplies and bags..

Upgrade to Windows 11

We're aware that there are still quite a few staff with computers running Windows 10. Microsoft has informed us that they will not be extending the grace period for supporting Windows 10 any further, including essential security patches. Therefore it is becoming pressing for staff to update their machines as per our previous communications.

To do so simply follow our guide **here**. The process is straight forward but can take approximately 45 minutes so it is best set running during a lunch break or at the end of the day. It will not be much longer before we have to enforce this upgrade automatically so it is in colleagues interest to proactively run this upgrade if they haven't already to prevent undue disruption.

New staff portal

myday

In August, the IT Service relaunched the University's Staff Homepage via the MyDay platform that has already used by our students for many years now. The original page was beginning to look quite outdated and was limited in its functionality. We hope staff are finding the new portal useful. If you would like more information regarding this change including how to request new tiles and banners, please see our web post **here**.

The right balance

Over the past few years, the IT Service has made several refinements to how University IT equipment is utilised. This has allowed us to ensure a high quality computer estate that remains sustainable over time:

High specification reliable devices as standard...

The specification of computer hardware procured as standard by the IT Service is maintained at a high level so that staff and students have the computing power and performance they need for work and study.

...with greater scrutiny of bespoke hardware requests.

This is balanced against greater scrutiny for requests that fall outside of our standard offerings. MacBook Pros for example, are lovely devices but there is very little they can do that can't be done or done better on our Windows machines and for far less cost.

A longer device lifecycle...

We aim to keep our computers running for 7 years; 5 years under warranty, then 2 years best endeavour. We retire any device that can no longer receive updates and so can't operate securely.

...but with a commitment to maintain devices to expectations.

The trade off for this longer lifecycle is that we will repair or replace any device that no longer performs or operates as it should. We encourage staff never to sit in silence and put up with IT issues on their University equipment that could otherwise be resolved by contacting us. We even have a pool of loan laptops so you can continue working whilst your device is being worked on.

Responsibly reuse what we no longer need...

When it's time to decommission devices from the University estate we offer over these to IT administrators in local schools and charities. All devices are securely wiped beforehand and we only offer equipment that is genuinely useful to these organisations.

...and then sustainably recycle anything left over.

Anything that remains is sustainably and responsibly recycled by our partner Stone Technologies.

Seen our new posters?

The IT Service has been collaborating with colleagues in Estates to refresh campus signage in teaching spaces where IT equipment is present. Amongst other topics the posters contain helpful information on how seek support in the event of an IT related problem and reminders on how we can all lower the University's energy costs and reduce its carbon footprint by ensuring lights and devices are powered off when not in use.

It's all about the **Data**

Are you aware of **the impact of** storing University data and why it's worth reguarly reviewing **what you store**?

Green Impact

Every file, email and even teams message you store online takes up file space on servers in the cloud. These facilities require colossal amounts of **energy to run** and **water to cool**, generating significant enviromental impacts.

Data Security & Retention

Storing certain types of data for longer than is nessecary may not be appropriate or legal if in breach of the UK GDPR. Legacy file structures without proper permissions or access restrictions increases the **risk of a data breach**.

Save Time & Reduce Risk

Having fewer files and emails makes it easier and faster to find the information you need and reduces the risk of inadvertently using the previous version of a file or outdated content.

What can I do?

- **Declutter days:** Consider departmental declutter days during quieter periods to keep on top of shared files and removing those no longer needed or appropriate to retain. It is important to consider everyone's access and make sure anyone that may be relying on content that is due to be deleted is engaged with before removing shared files.

- **Use Data Labels:** Microsoft 365 now has convenient data labels built into their apps to categorise types of files. You can also set conditions that stop the unauthorised sharing of these files to help prevent accidental data breaches.

- **Consider further training:** If your role involves working with lots of University data, particularly if it is sensitive, it will be worth your time registering for the university's UK GDPR and Cybersecurity training workshop that provides further guidance and tools to help protect and inform those working with data.

- **Automated schedules:** Various aspects of Microsoft 365 can assist with keeping on top of organising your files. This could be via existing automation schedules that delete unused content automatically such as with Teams sites and recordings, as well as more manual processes like setting recurring Outlook reminders can be used to ensure data is removed when it should be.

Generative Artificial Intelligence:

What is it and what does it mean for my role?

Generative AI, often abbreviated as GenAI, refers to a subset of artificial intelligence technologies designed to create new content, ranging from text, images, and music but can also include videos and animation or computer code.

GenAI operates by 'learning' from vast amounts of existing data that is uploaded to it via a training model. GenAI then identifies patterns, structures, and relationships within that data to be able to answer complex questions and deliver novel, creative responses to user prompts.

What's happened recently?

Significant media interest was generated in 2022 / 2023 around one algorithm developed by an organisation called OpenAI. The specific tool is ChatGPT and a lot of focus has been on version 4 released in March 2023. But there are a vast number of tools including Google's Gemini (formerly Google Bard).

Generative AI is capable of understanding complex, multifaceted requests for information and can maintain a coherent thread of a conversation over extended periods of time. It can also source and synthesise vast datasets (e.g. the public Internet) to produce unique, carefully worded answers.

How do I use AI?

There are many ways you can use AI but the simplest is to go to Copilot (microsoft.com) and type in a request.

The more information you give the AI the better the reply will be. For example if you requested a meeting agenda, including the meeting title will provide greater context for its response.

You can also ask it to illustrate things for you and these can be used in PowerPoint slides to make your presentations more engaging.

This is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of how AI can be used so the University has put together a comprehensive SharePoint site providing guidance on working with GenAI, available to all staff which can be found here:

https://uniworcac.sharepoint.com/sites/generative-ai

Championing sustainability through the reuse of decomissioned IT Equipment

When a computer, monitor or iPad comes to the end of it's lifecycle at the University, that dosen't mean it's destined to be broken up for parts. The IT Service partners with the IT administrators of local schools and charities, where the capability exists for these devices to be reused for other purposes, extending their service life.

James Bayliss, IT Manager from The Chantry School had this to say:

"We have benefitted from [the scheme] twice now which has allowed us to update our Library computing suite which previously was up for a review to see if we could keep it running. This is a place where pupils can stay late after school to get help with their homework and is vital to help those in need.

We have also managed to update a meeting space with a display screen. Neither of these would have been possible without the donations from the University."

The breakdown of devices donated by the IT Service this year are:

- Desktop PCs: 214
- Apple iMacs: 125
- Laptops: 27
- MacBook: 2
- Monitors: 22
- Scanner: 1
- Displays: 21
- Switch 33
- Tablet 37
- Trolley 1
- UPS 6
- DVD Players: 3

Total: 492 Devices

How did we do?

A look back over the IT Service's performance during the past academic year.

17625
TOTAL IT SERVICE DESK TICKETS RESOLVED

166
IT CHANGE REQUESTS PROCESSED

76%
FIRST TIME FIX RATE
(NO ESCALATION TO 2ND/3RD LINE SUPPORT)

8683
TELEPHONE CALLS ANSWERED

Average Staff feedback score:
4.85/5.00

Average Student feedback score:
4.89/5.00

Number of Staff feedback responses across the year:
2483
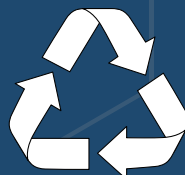
Number of Student feedback responses across the year:
316

2063
LAPTOP LOANS ISSUED
[SHORT & LONG TERM]

£66,000
FUNDS SAVED THIS YEAR THROUGH SUSTAINABLE IT EQUIPMENT PROCESSES

Customer Service Excellence Award

Earlier this year the IT Service Desk was awarded the Customer Service Excellence Accreditation following an in depth assessment of a body of work submitted by our wonderful Service Desk Team.

University Staff and Students were independently interviewed by CSE assessors to measure effectiveness across five areas: Customer Insight, Organisational Culture, Information and Access, Delivery and Timeliness, and Quality of Service.

Pleasingly, the team scored the highest possible rating across multiple areas and we hope to improve upon this score even further at the next assessment, which must be maintained annually to continue the accreditation.

Congratulations to all colleagues involved in this exercise!

New AI Powered IT Service Desk

Sysaid, the product that powers the IT Service Desk Portal is getting an overhaul with a long overdue upgrade. They'll be new features to help us to better support staff and students, including integration for logging IT incidents and requests directly via Microsoft Teams and to introduce "Ask Toby", a helpful new AI powered chatbot to help triage and route basic IT enquiries.

We'll post further updates regarding this on our website and the Staff Daily Update as we prepare to launch this, with a rollout expected early in 2025.

How can I help today?

Cyber Security Updates

Recent Cyber Attacks in Higher Education

As colleagues return from their summer breaks to begin the new semester, it's crucial that we remain vigilant about cyber security. With the university's growing reliance on constantly evolving digital technology to recruit and educate students, cybercriminals are continually refining their tactics. Protecting our systems and personal data is more important than ever, as breaches can have serious consequences for both individuals and the University.

Earlier this year, it was reported that a Fortune 50 company paid the Dark Angels ransomware gang a record $75 million—the highest ransomware payment to date. In the past month alone, threat actors targeted 12 UK universities, including three in the West Midlands area.

If you are unsure or need more guidance on Information and Cyber Security, consider attending some of the training courses offered by the University; please see the end of this article.

Legacy Storage: N Drives

If you still use the N drive to store your data, consider moving to Microsoft OneDrive. We encourage you to contact the IT Service Desk for assistance with migrating your data to OneDrive, which offers more storage, enhanced security, and access from anywhere in the world with a Wi-Fi connection.

Cyber Essentials Recertification

The University successfully achieved Cyber Essentials certification for the entire organisation. This certification provides confidence that our defences are robust enough to protect us against the vast majority of common cyber-attacks, as it addresses the vulnerabilities that attackers typically exploit when targeting systems.

Penetration Test

The University engaged a third-party service to conduct an IT infrastructure penetration test (pen test) aimed at identifying vulnerabilities within our systems and networks, enabling us to pinpoint areas for improvement. This process involved two engineers who ethically attempted to breach our infrastructure over an eleven-day period. Although they eventually succeeded in accessing a few of our systems, their overall feedback was highly positive. Some of their comments are as follows:

"Kirk, Pen Tester 1: The Worcester external infrastructure was found to be in very good order."

"Daniel, Pen Tester 2: Internal network vulnerability scanning results showed that, relative to its size, the number of vulnerabilities is generally fairly low."

Information Security Training

If you're unsure about cyber threats and how to protect yourself, consider attending our Cyber Security and Information Security training sessions designed to enhance your awareness and skills in protecting sensitive information. These sessions will cover essential topics, including how to identify cyber threats, best practices for safeguarding data, and practical steps to improve your online security. Whether you are new to these topics or need a refresher, our training offers valuable insights to help you stay safe in today's digital landscape.

- Essential for all staff: UCISA Security Training can be found **here**.
- GDPR, Data Protection, FOI and Information Security Training can be found **here**.

Toby cats aplenty at Welcome Fayre

The IT Service had a fantastic turnout at the University's Welcome Fayre in September at the Arena! Over 120 students stopped by to share valuable insights on how they prefer to connect with us and their awareness of our support services. As always, our beloved Toby Stress Cats were a huge hit, so don't be surprised if you spot them popping up all around campus! There was even an attempt to build a small tower of them...