

How is IT for you?

Online survey of 1st yr undergraduates - Dec 2009

Purpose of survey

ITS again invited all 1st yr undergraduates to complete an online survey at the end of their first term at university to get feedback on their first experiences of using IT.

This was the second year we had run the survey, and following the most useful feedback last year we repeated the survey this year, with similar, but updated where appropriate, questions.

The online survey, using Study Direct, consisted of 39 questions including 2 free text questions for additional negative and positive comments.

Advertising survey

An email, containing a direct link for filling in the survey, was sent to all 1st yr undergraduates on Wednesday Dec 2nd, 2009. As an incentive/thank you we offered 50p printing credit to each student who completed the survey, and we highlighted this in our email and advertising.

The survey was advertised in the student newspaper – the Badger, on the university student web pages, ITS web pages and Latest News, ITS status screens, and posters in ITS, Library, and PC rooms. Students also saw the survey when they logged in to Study Direct.

The survey closed on the last day of term, Friday Dec 11th and by then **640** out of possible 3670 students had completed survey, so **17%** response.

As last year we followed the replies as they came in, and noticed that after the first 100 the pattern of their responses was similar, with no great change as more replies were received, so we consider 640 replies are representative and give us good feedback. (This compares with 1088 out of possible 3223 students, 33% in Dec 2008.)

As well as answering the questions, most of the students also added constructive comments and suggestions, which we are following up.

Publishing feedback from survey and actions proposed

This summary report is published on the ITS web pages at

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/its/cs/documents/survey2009-summary.pdf>

A spreadsheet containing the full **640** replies, (names removed), is published on the ITS web pages at

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/its/cs/documents/survey2009-replies.xls>

The list of proposed actions to be taken by ITS, and passed on to other groups, will be published on the ITS web pages at

<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/its/cs/documents/survey2009-actions.pdf>

Summary

The following comments are grouped by topic picking up responses and comments from different parts of the survey, so this does not follow the order of the questions in the survey.

Not all % add up to 100% as it was not compulsory for students to enter a response for each question.

The main figures for this year are shown in bold, with figures for last year, Dec 2008, included in italics if a similar question had been asked.

Number of responses

There was a good response, **17%**, of all 1st yr ugs, **640** out of a possible 3670, (*34%*, *1088* out of *3223*).

There were a few more responses from female students (**60%**, *65%*) than male students, and again responses from students in all departments. As last year **80%**, (*79%*) of the responses were from UK students.

Introduction to using IT

Most students, **85%**, (*78%*) had found it straightforward to obtain their computing account as part of online registration.

1402 students had attended the 45 min practical IT induction session "Using IT@Sussex", offered to all new students in Freshers' Week in Autumn 2009. This year more students had found the IT induction session useful, **43%**, (*38%*) or were neutral **25%**, (*45%*). Some students, **20%**, had not attended, and **10%**, (*15%*) had not found it useful.

This year Sussex Direct, closely followed by "word-of-mouth", then the printed ITS leaflets with the ITS web pages were the most popular ways of getting information about using IT. (*Dec 08 - printed leaflets, "word-of-mouth", Sussex Direct, the ITS web pages.*)

More students **53%**, (*47%*) were satisfied with the face-to-face assistance and advice they had received at ITS Enquiries and the Helpdesk which seemed low considering all the comments about helpful staff, but then **41%**, (*44%*) students had not yet visited ITS Enquires and Helpdesk. There were many comments on the helpfulness of the staff, although a few **4%**,(*5%*) were dissatisfied.

At this stage **85%**, (*72%*) said they had not used the telephone / online assistance from the ITS helpdesk. **66%** had not used the email or online web forms, but **29%** had and were satisfied with the advice.

Own computers

Nearly all students owned and used computing equipment. As last year only **1%**, (1%) had neither a computer or web enabled mobile phone.

These students again owned more PCs than Macs, **569** compared with **103** (966 v 152) so showing a slight increase in Mac ownership, **16%** (14%).

Students also owned other equipment – **22** netbook, **116** iPhone or iPod touch, **9** Windows mobile phone, **11** Android mobile phone, and **89** games consoles.

Laptops

As last year most students **95%**, (94%) owned a laptop or netbook.

The majority of these 1st yr ug students did not take their laptops into lectures, **79%**, (85%).

This year we added the question, “If you do not take your laptop or netbook to lectures, please could you say why not?”

Most of the 600+ reasons can be summarised with the following quotes

- *“Do not want to carry around my laptop everywhere”*
- *“takes too much effort to carry it around. fear of being stolen”*
- *“It rains here...I am afraid of messing up my Macbook”*
- *“i just have insurance for it in my room.”*
- *“the battery wouldnt last”*
- *“Lecturers have requested not to have them in lectures.”*
- *“because i print the lectures out before and annotate them so there is no need”*
- *“I take in the information better when i take written notes”*
- *“prefer to handwrite notes and then type up, so that it sinks in!”*
- *“The battery charge doesn't last long enough. If lecture theatres had power points... but it would also be really annoying if everyone was typing so no thank you!”*
- *“No point - all of lectures online, desks too small, and is too much of a distraction in lectures and too slow to jot down diagrams etc.”*
- *“Would spend my entire time on facebook. Pen & paper much better.”*
- *“Used to but got distracted”*
- *“I find that laptop screens are incredibly distracting for myself and others.”*
- *“It's annoying when other people are sat there clicking away!”*
- *“expensive to print notes”*
- *“I prefer writing than typing in lectures and seminars however i take my laptop to essay tutorials”*

It was alarming that **11%**, (10%) of students still do not use anti-virus software on their own computer. ITS have purchased virus protection software, Kaspersky, which students (and staff) can install for free, and this is advertised at induction and on all ITS information – leaflets, web pages etc.

Of the virus software used, the most common were Norton, AVG and Kaspersky.

ResNet and Wireless

This year we asked separate questions about internet access in the campus residences, ResNet, and the “eduroam” wireless network.

45% of students were satisfied with the reliability and speed of ResNet, although **35%** were dissatisfied, and **8%** did not use.

32% of students were satisfied with the reliability and speed of eduroam, although **17%** were dissatisfied, and **39%** did not use.

This year we added the question “Are there any other areas on campus where you would like wireless coverage?”.

A few said

- *“No, there is wireless coverage where I usually work on my laptop”*
- *“everywhere i have needed it, it has been there”*

but many more would like wireless coverage in the residences

- *“Residences - so multiple people can work on the internet in the same room”*
- *“In the communal areas of the accommodations”*

with others

- *“Everywhere - studying takes place all over campus”*
- *“Up on the hills - it would be nice to be able to work up there in the summer”*

Configuring own computer to connect to Internet

This year ITS provided "pink" cables in each bedroom for students to use to connect their laptop to ResNet, so they did not have to bring a cable with them, or find one to buy if they had forgotten.

Nearly all students who lived on campus, **73%**, had found this useful, (**19%** did not live on campus).

With the “pink” cable ITS provided a “pink sheet” of instructions for connecting to ResNet. These instructions were much shorter and simpler this year as they used the Xpress Connect configuration application with Sussex settings that ITS had purchased.

Students mainly used the ITS information, **48%**, to configure their laptops to connect to the ResNet. They also helped each other, **9%**.

The “green sheet” of instruction for connecting to the wireless network – eduroam were also much simpler with Xpress Connect.

Students used the ITS information, **30%**, to configure their laptops to connect to the eduroam, as well as helping each other, **9%**.

This year ITS ran drop in sessions for connecting to ResNet and eduroam on the Saturday of Freshers' Weekend, as well as on the Sunday like last year. The drop in sessions continued into Freshers' Week as usual.

12% students came to these drop in sessions, (+ their parents, siblings!), and of these **7%** needed longer one-to-one sessions for connecting to ResNet. Similarly 5% with 2% needing one-to-one sessions for eduroam.

This year there were only 19 comments from 640 replies, (*compared with 114 from 1088 replies in Dec 08*) about the complexity/difficulty of connecting their own computer to the Internet, i.e. setting up own laptop for Resnet or wireless.

Again there were many, 74, comments about the helpfulness of ITS staff.

Computer clusters

The most popular place for working on computers was the Library, (**79%** students used them, **71%**) followed by ITS, (**42%**, **36%**) then York House (**22%**, **.%**). JMS, which is 24 hr, was only (**4%**, **5%**) and Bramber House was slightly higher this year at (**6%**, **3%**).

79% (**80%**) students were satisfied with the computer clusters, although **11%** (**13%**) did not use them at all.

This year we did not ask about 24 hr access taking it for granted that it was still popular. (*Dec 08 - 71% students liked 24 hr access*)

This year there were only 26 students, from 640 replies, (*Dec 08 82 from 1088*) who said that there were not enough PCs, or they had difficulty finding a free PC, or finding the PC clusters, and there were other students who said there were plenty of computers.

This year we added the question "Do you find the plasma screens that advertise PC availability useful in helping you find a free cluster room PC?" **40%** students said yes, but more, **53%**, said they did not look at them!

Lecture and Seminar Rooms

Most students **77%** (**80%**) thought the teaching environments were well supported with projectors, smartboards and other audio visual equipment.

49% students thought the new lecture capture service introduced in Autumn 2009 helped support their learning, although **36%** of students had not had opportunity to judge as their lecturers did not use it.

Sussex Direct and Study Direct

As last year over **93%** students strongly agreed/agreed that Sussex Direct was useful for finding information. **86%** students thought that Study Direct helped support their learning, and was easy to use, **88%** and performance, time to load pages, was acceptable, **88%**.

External web sites and services

As last year Facebook (**89%**, 86%) was the site that many students said they used regularly, followed by YouTube (**66%**, 71%). **44%** (27%) students used Skype regularly too.

We added Sussex webmail to the list this year, and **66%** students used Sussex webmail regularly, which matched responses about the email service. Only 4% had used SPLASH.

Printing

66%, (62%) students were satisfied with the printing service with a further **19%**, (22%) students who had not used the printing service yet, (so assume they had printers of their own)

This year ITS introduced a double sided printing service which **73%** said is useful.

As last year though there were many comments that the cost of printing was too expensive, and that they should not have to print out so much course material themselves.

File Storage

64% of students are satisfied with the 1GB of backed up file storage they are given, although still **33%**, (43%) students have not used their N:drive for storing their files yet.

This year students can more easily access their N: drive files from their laptops or home computers.

Email Service

This year ITS introduced a new webmail service. **86%**, (82%) students were satisfied with the email service, and only **7%**, (14%) dissatisfied. Most students do use their Sussex email, only **6%**, (2%) do not.

This year we asked if students logged in to their Sussex email directly or set up forwarding to a personal email account. Over **78%** students do login to their Sussex email, with only **20%** redirecting their mail.

(Dec 08 - 50 students made negative comments about email, mostly saying it was it out of date or difficult to use or slow.)

Comments and Suggestions

The last two questions asked students to list their comments and suggestions for improvement, and to list the aspects of IT which are good.

As last year, most students completed these questions and their very valuable comments and suggestions will be followed up by ITS.

The list of actions that ITS are taking, or passing on to other departments for action, is being compiled and will be published and reviewed and updated through the year, as last year.

Comments and suggestions for improvement

There are some areas that were frequently mentioned, in decreasing order they were: Showing % of students who filled in survey (*with Dec 08 in italics*)

(NB. Not all students filled in comments, and some included several areas so will not add up to 100%)

- | | | |
|--|------------|--------------|
| • <i>Unreliability/speed of Resnet</i> | 14% | <i>(32%)</i> |
| • <i>Extend wireless coverage</i> | 13% | |
| • <i>Unreliability/speed of eduroam</i> | 5% | |
| • <i>Complexity configuring computer to connect to the Internet</i> | 2% | <i>(10%)</i> |
| • <i>Printing –
too expensive, have to print online course material
unreliable, need more printers</i> | 10% | <i>(10%)</i> |
| • <i>Computers -
not enough, difficulty finding a free PC
or finding the PC cluster rooms</i> | 4% | <i>(8%)</i> |
| • <i>Email service</i> | 2% | <i>(5%)</i> |
| • <i>Sussex Direct</i> | 1% | <i>(3%)</i> |
| • <i>Study Direct</i> | 0% | <i>(2%)</i> |
| • <i>ITS staff</i> | 0% | <i>(4%)</i> |
| • <i>Other</i> | 13% | <i>(12%)</i> |

Some examples of comments are:

- *“Improvement of speed to Resnet service. Wireless in residences.”*
- *“The wired residence internet streams video so slowly--please consider speed improvements!”*
- *“Increase speeds for video streaming websites like YouTube and BBC iplayer”*
- *“wireless everywhere”*
- *“I feel that calls to the IT centre from your room on campus should be free, as it is with inbound calls to other rooms within your building. This is so IT issues with your connection to the internet can be resolved quickly over the phone,*

instead of having to physically go to the IT building and queue and make the centre even busier than it already is.”

- *“free printing for studies (essays etc)”*
- *“Shouldn't charge for printing. Obviously there should be a record of how much people print and if its being abused then they could be punished. Or have a certain amount of free prints a week.”*
- *“I find that there are not enough computers available sometimes, when students need to print something (essay, presentation handout, tickets, letters...). Also, there are usually queues in order to access conouters, or print, which can be very bothering.”*
- *“Though very many PCs, not many places for group discussion work whilst on pc.”*
- *“More on-campus information about the placement of computer rooms (for when frantically dashing about searching for a printer an hour before the deadline) would be excellent. “*
- *“Stopping people from accessing Facebook in the cluster rooms, they're on ther FB accounts when you need to use a computer to do work.”*
- *“I would prefer it if there were people checking that the computers were being used for work, not facebook and other non-academic uses.”*
- *“have IT induction earlier in freshers week than friday as have to already be using it and sorted by then but no worries wasnt difficult and theres obviously alot of people.”*

Positive aspects

This year we counted the positive comments, (in Dec 08 we had not) and the areas that were most praised were:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------|
| • <i>Helpfulness of ITS staff</i> | 11% |
| • <i>PCs – number, 24 hr access</i> | 9% |
| • <i>Sussex Direct</i> | 8% |
| • <i>Study Direct</i> | 8% |
| • <i>Internet access</i> | 5% |
| • <i>Other</i> | 13% |

Some examples of comments are:

- *“The computers are easy to use, always working and there is alot of advice and support available.”*
- *“Sussex direct is brilliant, and the pink cables we received and how to set up network sheets were very useful.”*
- *“The instructions for connecting to the network are easy to follow step by step and I like that I can have emails to my sussex account forwarded to my own email.”*
- *“I'm very impressed at mobile phone access and connection. I also like the fact I can connect to my account anywhere in the world.”*
- *“Sussex direct / study direct is awesome, works really well. Webmail and webdrive are also really cool.”*
- *“the printing service is good”*

- *“ITS support is good and am very happy with both study and sussex direct. the fact that lectures are made available before the actual lecture and podcasts after is very very useful”*
- *“ITS FAQs are fantastic”*
- *“the service is very good considering the number of users!”*
- *“The staff are particularly positive and helpful at sorting out even the most rudimentary issue for students which I have never seen before in any IT department. Other departments usually tend to be condescending and not dissimilar to the IT crowd.”*
- *“I think the 24 hour opening times are great, and that the displays showing computer availability are really useful. I was pleased with the offering of Kaspersky as it is much better than my previous antivirus software.”*
- *“24 hour computers and printing are very useful when my own computer has problems.”*
- *“I also like the cost of printing, black and white printing is very cheap.”*
- *“I regularly use the 'small training room' at shawcross at the weekends as I can discuss work with my friends/class mates and I find this very helpful.”*
- *“Good Mac support - usually institutes that run PCs in the computer rooms are unable to deal with Macs, but at Sussex I found it easy to find information on setting up my Mac, and didn't have to struggle trying to translate PC to Mac!”*
- *“The staff at IT know what they are talking about and are happy to help.”*