

## SCHOOL OF INFORMATICS

### Strategy Committee

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### School Response to Proposed One Device Policy Consultation

#### Author

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#### Background

The University recently launched a consultation on the proposed introduction of a 'one device' policy whereby, by default, staff (including academic, research and professional services) would be issued with one computing device (desktop, laptop, tablet). The proposed policy proposed certain grounds for exceptions; such exceptions to be approved by the Head of College.

#### Action requested from the committee

Strategy Committee is asked to note this response to the University's consultation on the introduction of a 'one device' policy.

#### Response to consultation

The School of Informatics is very supportive of the aims of the policy. Improving sustainability and resource efficiency is clearly very important, but any improvements should not come at the expense of staff efficiency or negatively impact on our teaching and research activities.

The School has already made some progress towards the aims of the proposed policy:

- We have recently adopted a policy where the expected 'norm' is for professional services staff to be issued with one device - a desktop by default, upgraded to a laptop and docking-station where approved by a senior manager - with exceptions to this 'norm' being approved, based on evidenced need, by the relevant senior manager.
- Many academic staff already have only one device - typically an Apple MacBook with an external monitor.
- We have introduced a remote Linux desktop service. This allows those academic staff who use a Windows PC or Mac as their main computing device, to develop course material for their students using the School's Linux PC labs without requiring their own Linux PC.

We believe that the University should be aiming to promote a culture of improving sustainability and resource efficiency through guidelines and documented good practice, and not through apparently arbitrary, overly bureaucratic policies which are un-responsive to individual staff or research student needs.

With regards to "cost reduction", our view is that the small amounts of likely savings will be dwarfed by the impact on staff and student productivity. Staff and students should have the appropriate tools to perform their role or studies effectively. For many, the proposed single device will ably meet their needs, but for a substantial minority, the policy will not.

We believe that the proposed replacement cycle is not evidence based - computing equipment should be replaced once it is no longer supportable or no longer fit for purpose and not at the end of an arbitrary fixed period. The vast majority of the desktops in Informatics are running Linux, and can do

so securely for 10 years. Similarly Apple laptops are supported by the manufacturer for considerably longer than the proposed 4 years. We believe that this aspect of the proposed policy will increase, not reduce costs and will negatively impact on sustainability.

If the policy is implemented as currently proposed, we believe that there will be the following repercussions for the School of Informatics:

- Limiting the choice of computing devices will directly impact on our ability to perform research (and sometimes teaching). Laboratory based computing, e.g. Robotics, will be particularly impacted as they require a wide variety of equipment specifically matched to their research needs. Equipment available through existing frameworks, such as SelectPC, has historically been too "low end" for many of our needs, and where there have been suitable offerings they have usually not been cost effective.
- As earlier stated, we believe that the proposed accelerated replacement cycle will increase the costs, to the School, of providing client devices. At best, we expect the costs to remain static.
- It is likely that if people are limited to one computing device, they will purchase kit (particularly lower end kit such as tablets) out of their own personal money to use for University business. Whilst this might result in some small cost savings, it will not improve net sustainability and arguably will worsen both sustainability and information security as the University will have even less influence on the devices chosen and how they are managed.

**Equality and diversity implications – None**

**Resource implications (staff, space, budget) –** The proposal posits that financial savings would be made through introduction of the proposed policy.