IT Induction

Keith Gillow

http://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/members/it/info-new-users

Support/Help

- Web pages — http://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/members/it
- Office mates, other academics and colleagues
- Computing officers
  - Visiting in person - however being a large team we do not all know everything about everything!
  - **Request system - it-support@maths.ox.ac.uk** (gets to all IT staff and the problem is properly logged and tracked). Some key points:
    - only one problem per email
    - always keep the ticket so you can reply later to chase it up or add info
    - always describe the problem clearly and concisely
    - give it a sensible subject line so it can be easily understood in the long list of requests
    - remember to be clear about where the problem is/you are as there are over 1000 users, over 300 offices, and people contacting us from all over the world
    - the more clearly you report the problem the better chance you give yourself of a quick and accurate response that resolves the issue

Request system info and IT policies and notices —
http://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/members/it/it-notices-policies

Facilities Access

- Most accounts are preopened
  - Postgrads - can be collected with welcome pack
  - Staff - given out as part of induction on first day
- Account will typically be closed 1 month after course/contract ends but you will be warned near the time and can ask for an extension
- Account details explain how to log in, change your password, and point you to
  http://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/members/it/info-new-users

Account application process and form if required available at

http://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/members/it/it-facilities-access

Network

The department provides many services in house as with most of the other large departments in the division.

- Username/password will work on
  - all departmental Windows, Linux and Mac machines
  - departmental website (which also provides email access, file access, other restricted web materials)
- The majority of desktop machines are running Linux - aimed at academic research with about 5000 packages installed.
- Linux machines are all remotely accessible
- There is also a Windows Terminal Server (wts) that provides easy remote access to windows only applications, e.g. MS Office
- There are a number of departmental Linux compute servers
- Remote Access Portal (RAP) etc: see
  http://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/members/it/remote-access which list the various ways to remotely access applications, email, files and journals
- Reasonable personal use of departmental systems is fine: common sense but see rules for details

The importance of your password

Computer systems in general are moving towards single sign on services whereby you have one username and password to access all the providers facilities (and ideally only need to enter your password once per session regardless of how many services you access). Typically the provider is also offering a wider range of means of accessing those services, in particular web and remote access.

With this greater ease of access comes ever greater personal responsibility. You should never tell anyone else your password. Ideally use a different password for different service providers and change your password from time to time.

With the great ease of web and remote access there is also a greater need to consider when and where you use your password and remember to close applications and log out after using them, e.g. do not leave yourself logged in on a web browser in an internet cafe etc (and be wary of systems that cache your password).

Remember to lock the screen or logout if going away from your computer!

For the more security conscious/paranoid also consider that if you are using strange systems that others have access to the system itself may be compromised, e.g. a key logger recording everything you type or some other rogue application/change giving the person access to your password or materials.

Privacy

Material/email in your own account is in general private. Material in a pseudo account/file share is open to those with access permission which will generally involve the immediate team and other relevant staff.

Although IT staff have the technical means to grant access to others or obtain things from within an account/share this is not done in general regardless of who makes such a request. Wherever possible people will be asked to reconsider the need for the material, whether it is urgent, can they obtain explicit permission from the owner/holder etc. Only in extreme and clearly justified situations will IT staff provide access without explicit permission of the owner/holder. If in doubt IT staff would refer the matter to the Director of IT whom in turn could refer the matter to the Head of Department.

Information Security

Information security will be more relevant to some than others. For many the only information they have access to will be their own and will not contain information about others.

For others, often support staff or those with particular research data, they may have access to confidential information. If so it is important to consider how you access it, where it is stored and that it remains secure. The departmental systems are in general managed and secure. However you may consider working remotely or accessing data from a mobile device. In such situations you should consider the risk of such access, e.g. remote access/working may be best done via the remote access portal so the data stays on the maths system rather than transfering it to your local device.

All staff should be aware of the Information Security Policy at

http://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/members/it/it-notices-policies/information-security-policy

and are required to take the Information Security Awareness Module at

http://www.it.ox.ac.uk/infosec/module/

The short refresh materials and test must then be taken every yaer thereafter.

Phishing and other scam emails

It is not uncommon to receive phishing and other scam emails. Some may be well written, potentially link to external sites, and claim to come from the department or university.

They may claim you need to reply with confidential information or go to an external link and login to confirm details, ensure a service continues, gain more quota, update your password etc.

In general **these emails are not from the department** and can simply be deleted.

Similarly these emails are not from the central university, with one exception, each year they will send an email reminder requiring you to change your central university SSO password. Be careful to spot this one exception!

If unsure please do ask IT support.

If you happen to reply to such an email or visit such a site and enter in details then please let IT support know so they can advise and check for any further compromises.

For further info see https://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/members/it/faqs/communication/phishing

Email

In general it is up to you to decide which email services is right for you. Some choices are

- Departmental Zimbra email service - local support, backups, 1 year forwarding after expiry
- University Nexus email service - remote support, no user backups, 2 months forwarding after expiry
- External services such as Gmail

It is important to remember to set mail forwarding on official email accounts you have but do not regularly check (e.g. forward from nexus to maths or vice versa).

Note if you choose an email system outside the university you may need to think further about data protection and information security.

For more details see

http://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/members/it/faqs/communication

The web interface to maths email (linked from the members page on the website) is

https://zimbra.maths.ox.ac.uk

Data Storage

Storing data safely is vital. Each user has a home directory. This has an initial limit/quota of ~15GB. When you reach that limit you can ask for more and all reasonable requests will be actioned if possible. Home directories are backed up to two separate backup systems every night. Users email is stored separately.

Each Linux machine has the spare space on the local disk accessible as /scratch. This is typically 50-300GB of space. It is purely local to the machine and is backed up weekly. Linux machines also have a /tmp directory. This is not backed up and is automatically emptied whenever the machine is rebooted.

Windows machines are much harder to lock down and hence protect the user from storing data on the unbacked-up local disk. In general nothing is backed up from the local disk of a windows machine so never try to store files there.

There is also a central scratch system accessible from all maths machines which may be more appropriate in some usage situations.

For more details see

http://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/members/it/faqs/files

Web

The departmental website provides information about the department and its activities. There are contact and profile pages for those that give permission for their contact data to appear. You can manage your personal data via the website, for more details see

http://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/members/it/faqs/www/editing-personal-data

If you log in to the website you can access services and additional information for departmental members (e.g. mathematical software downloads, web based email access, green IT system etc).

As well as the main departmental website there is a people web server on which you have file space and can place additional material beyond that in your main site profile. For more details see

http://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/members/it/faqs/www/maths-webpages

Green IT / Machine Shutdown

The department's current desktop PCs use about 50% less electricity than those from 5 or so years ago. Historical standard policy in large networks has typically been to ensure all machines stay running 24x7 to ensure remote availability, data integrity, security updates applied in a timely fashion, ease of management etc. As such **policy was users should not in general shutdown machines**.

The department runs a power management system for the desktop PCs as part of a green IT programme. Currently the machines automatically shutdown between the hours of 10am and 8am if not in use. This has reduced the department's electricity bill by about 25% without noticable changes for the majority of users. This is an automated/managed system and thus **the policy remains that users should not in general shutdown machines directly**.

For more details see

http://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/members/it/it-notices-policies/green-it

Personal Machines

Can connect a laptop (or other personal device) wirelessly

With a personally managed machine always remember to think about:

- backup - e.g. use the university HFS
- anti virus - e.g. sophos freely available
- maintenance - e.g. warranty or university maintenance scheme
- support and management - e.g. it is generally your responsibility to run the machine and resolve any issues although we may be able to provide some advice.

  In particular this includes if you do some work from home where you are then responsible for the support and management of that machines.

Compute Systems

If you need computational resources beyond those of the standard desktops then the department has a number of larger systems that you can remotely access. At an even larger scale there is the university Advanced Research Computing facilities.

The compute facilities provided by the department are essentially interactive systems that are scaled up versions of the computational environment users are used to using on the desktop systems.

In contrast the facilities at ARC tend to use a job scheduler whereby you submit your job to a queue and then it is run based on priorities and resources available rather than in the more familiar interactive way.

For more info see

https://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/members/it/machines/compute-terminal-services

Equipment Purchases

In general if you wish to purchase IT equipment using funds held in the department (e.g. through a research grant) then you must liaise with the departmental purchasing staff and IT staff to ensure the order is raised via the university purchasing system, purchased where appropriate under a relevant pricing agreement, and any other relevant advice and guidance given.

Ordering direct personally and then claiming the money back is not generally permitted and will lead to issues and costs and typically result in you not being reimbursed the full amount.

Mailing Lists

See http://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/members/it/faqs/communication/mailing-lists

for full details on best practice for using the lists and the names of the 80+ lists.

For most people the short summary of appropriate lists names to use is very helpful

http://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/members/it/faqs/communication/which-lists

This includes **members-announce@maths.ox.ac.uk** which will pass a message on to all departmental members (excluding undergraduates). Membership of the lists that make up this list is automated against departmental records.

Note the lists in general are for announcement purposes and posting is moderated by a list owner. Any message not relevant to the list is thus likely to be rejected (e.g. messages about items for sale are generally not acceptable).

Note there is also a support-staff-discuss@maths.ox.ac.uk list that some support staff choose not to be on.

If you are a list owner then you are responsible for managing the addresses subscribe to a list. For lists used for internal departmental or university business you should only subscribe people with their university email address. Such addresses expire automatically, including any forwarding, after a someone has left the university for a while. This reduces the risk from a failure to remove someone from a list in a timely fashion. List membership should regularly be reviewed and people removed as soon as possible after they should no longer be receiving that information.