

Policy on Leavers and University-Owned IT Devices

24 May 2016
ISC15: 11

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN Policy on Leavers and University-Owned IT Devices

1. SUMMARY

University purchased staff computing devices are typically licensed to use a significant amount of software. The rights to use this license are often conferred through the user being a member of staff. Additionally there is often significant information and data held locally on these devices, which may be personal and / or sensitive. Again, the right to have possession of this data is often conferred by being a member of staff at the University. This policy proposes to formalise the process and procedures relating to University-owned computing devices where:

Emeritus, and honorary staff request continued use of devices to support their ongoing contributions to the University

Staff leavers request to take such devices with them on departure from the University

The policy attempts to explain the risks around licensing and data security, proposes a simple governance model to deal with requests for devices and also suggests a procedure to deal with the requests above in a way that improves the University information security position and helps avoid any potential for reputational damage around misuse of funds.

2. BACKGROUND

The University currently provides a range of computing and mobile devices to staff to carry out work related activities. This includes laptops, PCs, mobile phones, iPads etc. A significant number of these devices are funded through the IT Services Technology Replacement budget and others are funded via research grants and departmental budgets. All are University-owned devices.

IT Services and HR regularly have to deal with a number of requests from individuals leaving the University to take University-owned devices with them as they leave. It is also clear that a certain amount of local decision-making on such requests is happening at school and department level.

Additionally, there is a steady flow of requests for Honorary and Emeritus staff to utilise University owned devices to continue pieces of work. This, very often, involves the removal of University owned kit.

2.1. Information Security

2.1.1. Information security is a significant concern in such instances, both in terms of protecting the University and individuals; employees, students, or otherwise who may be subjects of the data held on such a device. The University has a legal obligation to

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protect personal and sensitive data, including that which is held on University-owned devices. When we dispose of such devices we must be able to demonstrate a competent data purging processes.

- 2.1.2. The level of sensitivity of data held on a device is not always clear to the device user and this can easily include personal sensitive information (e.g. someone emailing their line manager to say they are ill with a particular condition is both personal and sensitive), but email traffic would not necessarily be the first concern of someone judging the sensitivity of information on a device. It should be noted that, however transient it appears, such data remains on the device until it is rigorously purged.
- 2.1.3. The transfer of data to a third party (anyone who no longer has University status) need not be facilitated by the transfer of device ownership and can form a separate discussion between the individual and Head of School/Department. Data transfer can be facilitated using other mechanisms and Heads of School/Department/Department should consider whether a data sharing agreement is required. The Data Protection Officer can help with this and IT Services can assist with the physical transfer of data.

2.2. Software Licensing

- 2.2.1. In many instances, the software that runs on a University owned device is solely licensed through the user being a member of staff at the University. When this status is removed, the right to run the software is gone and such activity then potentially becomes illegal and could result in breach of the University contract with the software supplier.
- 2.2.2. Legal agreements often mean the University cannot transfer licenses out with the specified user group. These contracts are often complex, typically very specific to each package.
- 2.2.3. If software is illegally used, the software owner can seek compensation from the University (e.g. retrospectively charge the full commercial rate rather than the educational price). This could also lead to the University being prosecuted.
- 2.2.4. It is likely that the individual will also be pursued by the software owner for not having a properly licenced product.

2.3. Asset Management

- 2.3.1. Where assets are not properly disposed of, there is a greater risk, once outside UoA control, that data becomes accessible to other inappropriate parties. This may be inadvertent, but this will not mitigate the potential damage, should such an event occur. Nor, from a DPA (Data Protection Act) perspective, will it mitigate our requirement to adequately protect data where release could be harmful to others. A data breach could result in significant fines to the University, as has happened to a number of other public bodies.
- 2.3.2. To satisfy our financial and legal responsibilities, it is important to have an audit trail to show where assets, written off by the University, have gone. Records allow the

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University to show that activities in this area were appropriate and ownership can be established if queries arise

3. POLICY:

3.1. The University Information Security Policy requires:

- 3.1.1. Departing staff must return all information assets and equipment belonging to the University, unless agreed otherwise with the designated owner responsible for the information asset.
- 3.1.2. When permanently disposing of equipment containing storage media all sensitive data and licensed software will be irretrievably deleted before the equipment is moved off site using procedures authorised by the Information Security Officer.
- 3.1.3. Removal off site of the University's sensitive information assets, either printed or held on computer storage media, should be properly authorised by management. Prior to authorisation, a risk assessment based on the criticality of the information asset should be carried out.
- 3.1.4. Requesters should note that transfer of ownership will be the exception rather than the rule. If the University chooses to facilitate the transfer of ownership or continued use, it will be with a full understanding of the risks and within the context of a common process and procedure. The following process and procedure facilitates University business and interests, whilst aiming to mitigate risks.

3.2. Staff Leavers:

- 3.2.1. A clear business case to retain a device must be submitted to IT Services by the relevant Head of School or departmental head. Business cases will be approved by the Director of HR and the Director of IT.
- 3.2.2. Where the business case is approved, the device will be returned to factory settings before it is removed from UoA (e.g. a grant transferring to another HEI would be an example of where this may be justified)
- 3.2.3. As leavers are no longer licenced to use University software, the above action will include the removal of all software applications and data but could leave a base operating system in place, depending on the licensing situation
- 3.2.4. Where the business case is approved and this does not relate to a grant transferring, a charge will be made for the device. This will be based on an IT Services estimate of the device's current market value and resource to return to factory settings. The age of the machine and price paid will be noted in the IT Services asset register (CART)
- 3.2.5. Requirement for data transfer is not seen as a justification for over-riding the above, as this can be facilitated in other ways

3.3. Honorary Staff:

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- 3.3.1. Having been permanent staff, the University recognises that, when status changes to honorary, there may be a requirement to retain a device for a University related agreed scope of work
- 3.3.2. The business case to retain a device and the timescale for retention requires to be approved by the Head of School and submitted to IT for approval. Business cases will be approved by the Director of HR and the Director of IT.
- 3.3.3. Requests are restricted to a single device
- 3.3.4. Only authorised users may use such devices and they remain bound by the “Conditions for using IT facilities”
- 3.3.5. Such devices are to be returned, at the end of the agreed scope of work/agreed timescale, to UoA Service Desk for appropriate disposal
- 3.3.6. Should a subsequent request for retention of the machine be received then the process for staff leavers will be followed.
- 3.3.7. Emeritus Staff:
- 3.3.8. The process for staff leavers will be followed with Emeritus staff as there is no agreed
- 3.3.9. Issues:
- 3.3.10. Issues may be raised by Head of School/Department, and will be jointly dealt with by the Director of HR and Director of IT Services

4. PROCEDURE:

4.1. LEAVERS AND EMERITUS STAFF: TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP WHERE A LEAVER WISHES TO TAKE RESOURCE WITH THEM ON DEPARTURE)

- 4.1.1. It is proposed that IT Services respond to requests for transfer of ownership in the following way:
- 4.1.2. Advise staff that all resources must be returned to IT Services on their last day of work. Where still in warranty, these are resources that can be redistributed to other UoA staff and students.
- 4.1.3. Initially, refuse all requests for devices, giving an explanation as to why it is not in the University’s interests to facilitate this
- 4.1.4. Where the individual wishes to pursue this further, refer them to their Head of School/Department for approval (based on above process)
- 4.1.5. If decision is to transfer ownership, the Head of School/Department requests IT Services restore the device to factory settings, thereby removing all data and University-owned software
- 4.1.6. The IT Services asset register is updated to reflect transfer of ownership and approver, age of machine and price paid
 - The user will be required to sign a receipt confirming transfer of ownership
 - The device is given no further support from IT Services

4.2. HONORARY STAFF: CONTINUED USE OF DEVICES FOR UNIVERSITY RELATED ACTIVITIES

- 4.2.1. It is proposed requests for continued use are responded to in the following way:

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- 4.2.2. IT Services directs all requests to Heads of School/Department for an assessment of the business case relating to the continued use of resource
- 4.2.3. Heads of School/Department make it clear that, should such use be approved, the device remains the property of the University and all work undertaken on the device is subject to all relevant University policies (e.g. Information Security Policy, Conditions for using IT Facilities)
- 4.2.4. The Head of School/Department advises IT Services in writing of decision and agreed timescale
- 4.2.5. IT Services update the asset register to reflect continued use and name of approver
- 4.2.6. The device will continue to be supported by IT Services, in respect of security updates and fixes, for as long as it is in warranty. This includes on-campus and telephone support only
- 4.2.7. When the agreed scope of work is completed, the user returns the resource to IT Services for appropriate disposal
- 4.2.8. If device is not returned and timescales are not revised by Schools, IT Services will disable the device
- 4.2.9. Subsequent requests to retain the device will go through the procedure for staff leavers.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION:

Further information is available from:

- Brian Henderson, Director of IT Services (b.henderson@abdn.ac.uk) and
- Debbie Dyker, Director of HR (d.dyker@abdn.ac.uk)

6. Version	7. Details	8. By:	9. Date
10. version 1.0	11. Approved	12. ISC	13. 24 May 2016
14. Version 1.01	15. Minor amendments as required by ISC	16. DBrian Henderson, Director of IT Services	17. 30 August 2016
18. Version 2.0	19. Minor amendments	20. Garry Wardrope/Gail Smillie, IT Services	21. 16 September 2016
22. Version 2.1	23. Minor amendments	24. Brian Henderson, Director of IT Services	25. 17 September 2016
26. Version 3	27. Amended to policy format for publication (approved by HR)	28. Gail Smillie, IT Services	29. 13 June 2017

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Title	Policy on Leavers and University-Owned IT Devices
Author / Creator	Gail Smillie, IT Relationship Manager, IT Services
Owner	Brian Henderson, Director of IT Services Debbie Dyker, Director of HR
Date published / approved	24 May 2016 (ISC)
Version	V3
Date for Next Review	24 May 2020
Audience	<i>All users/recipients of University-owned IT devices</i>
Related	N/A
Subject / Description	The University currently provides a range of computing and mobile devices to staff to carry out work related activities. This includes laptops, PCs, mobile phones, iPads etc. All are University-owned devices. This policy deals with requests from individuals leaving the University to take University-owned devices with them.
Equality Impact Assessment	24 May 2016
Section	IT Services/HR
Theme	N/A
Keywords	Laptops, computers, mobile devices, software, hardware, licensing, license, leavers, leaving, honorary, IT security

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