

IT provision for remote working for Staff and Students

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Scope: Covers all of QMUL with the exception of BCI and Wolfson Institutes who have local arrangements in place.

Applicable: Until end of April 2020, when we will review and up-issue.

Executive Summary

In the current environment where staff and students are working from home, ITS are receiving many requests for clarification on how to access and fund IT equipment and connectivity. This paper provides advice and guidance accordingly.

For students, those in financial hardship will qualify for up to £500 through the Financial Assistance Fund to purchase a personal device. Other students will use their own devices, peripherals and internet connectivity. ITS are currently ramping up VDI provision for students which will enable access to specialist software not currently available over the internet (AppsAnywhere).

For staff, most QM applications and digital resources are available over the internet, although we are continuing to ramp up VDI access where needed. Requests for financial assistance to enhance broadband packages will not be encouraged, but see below to get the most out of existing internet connectivity.

ITS policy continues to be to provide staff with one primary device from a limited number of options. As our supply chain ramps up, we can dispatch a new primary device from our standard suppliers if there is a significant need.

Any peripherals needed in consideration of a colleague's health and safety would be approved and funded by the School/Directorate concerned. Monitors should be ordered through ITS Service Desk to ensure value for money and asset tagging. Other peripherals should be purchased directly by the School/Directorate.

Provision for Students

Connectivity – AppsAnywhere

Most student applications and resources such as QMPlus are available over the internet, IT Services is currently implementing a VDI platform known as "AppsAnywhere" for students. This facility will allow our students to access a range of hitherto inaccessible applications off campus from their own devices. We are conducting a "soft launch" focussing on a small number of key academic schools, and then will monitor the uptake and any issues for 2 weeks. From mid-April, we hope to actively promote this service to the wider student community.

The University will not provide financial support for students to enhance their broadband package. (There is information [here](#) on how to get the best out of existing internet connectivity.) However, Jisc and UCISA are currently in national negotiations with ISPs to provide free/low cost access to VLEs and video conferencing for students. Some ISPs have announced they will remove usage limits during the current crisis.

Devices and Peripherals

Students registered as being in financial hardship will qualify for up to £500 to support the purchase of a personal device through the [Financial Assistance Fund FAF](#). Other students will provide their

own devices and peripherals (monitors, mice, keyboards) for home use, although some Schools provide devices for PGR students. The minimum device spec that we recommend is an Intel i5 processor with minimum 8GB of RAM.

Please note student discounts are available online through our hardware suppliers, including [Apple](#) and [Dell](#).

IT Provision for Staff

Connectivity

Internet Access

Most of our University applications can be accessed directly over the internet without recourse to Direct Access or VDI (see below). This includes individual file storage options such as OneDrive which is part of Office 365. <https://www.its.qmul.ac.uk/support/digital-workplace/how-to-access-services/>

The University will not provide financial support for staff to enhance their broadband package. There is information [here](#) on how to get the best out of existing internet connectivity. Some ISPs have announced they will remove usage limits during the current crisis.

Staff using Windows devices should ensure their machines have Windows 10 operating system installed. This has “Microsoft Defender” built in, which provides a sufficient level of antivirus/malware protection. Further anti-viral products are not required for Windows 10.

N.B. Devices not upgraded to Windows 10 present a security risk if processing QM data and should not be used.

Apple Macs have a built-in anti-virus solution (XProtect). Colleagues using a Linux distribution with up to date security patches are less prone to attack or viruses, although there are supplementary free solutions which can be installed for that operating system.

Virtual Private Network VPN, known as “Direct Access”

Any staff member who is in possession of a QM managed laptop will automatically connect into the QM environment through the VPN secure tunnel built into the device. This facility is called “Direct Access”. (ITS are currently working to implement a broader cross-platform VPN capability across the University).

Virtual Desktop Interface VDI

For those without a managed laptop, VDI works on most operating systems and devices including iPads, Chromebooks and Android tablets. VDI allows a user to emulate their University desktop on their own device. Most people will not need VDI as the majority of QM applications can be accessed over the internet.

How to request VDI

ITS will continue to ramp up capacity to supply a staff VDI service. New VDI users will continue to be proposed each week by PSLT (or representatives). Please add requests to the shared spreadsheet by Wed, 12 noon. Please email its-vdi-laptop@qmul.ac.uk for more information.

https://qmulprod-my.sharepoint.com/:x:/r/personal/bsw310_qmul_ac_uk/_layouts/15/guestaccess.aspx?e=VCs2cX&share=Efl-BWV72EpMsfACemOtmJOBv3yL6shM5xajNKGz542aw

So far, we have accommodated all VDI requests and have set them up by the end of the week. We have and will accommodate PGR students on the staff VDI service. Adding users in this staggered

way allows ITS to monitor system capacity against usage, ensuring that all business critical activities can be carried out.

VDI requires 2 factor authentication, i.e. a code is delivered to the user's smart phone before a user can access VDI. If colleagues do not have a smart phone, ITS can post them a token to access a code. Please contact the Service desk if you need a token. servicedesk@qmul.ac.uk

Devices

ITS funded devices

ITS fund the full cost of our standard Dell models of PCs and laptops for staff. Our policy remains that the University will supply one primary device per staff member, replacing when they are "no longer fit for purpose" (see below). We are also subsidising the costs of other manufacturers and models.

Going forward ITS will only fund the following devices for staff:

- **Managed Windows Dell laptops and desktops of ITS agreed specifications**
- **Apple MacBook Air (or similar Apple 21.5" iMac or Apple Mini) – where the FOO/COO concerned can support the need (e.g. desktop publishing; video production or application development environment) with the view to central device management in the future.**
- **Dell laptops and desktops of a similar specification that support Centos Linux and that will be compatible with our managed Linux laptop project.**

Devices for PGR students are supplied via Schools and Institutes. We would encourage Schools and Institutes to adopt the device options above and order through ITS.

All other devices (e.g. MS Surface, HP, Lenovo, tablets) are to be funded by School or directorate budgets, research grants and EDAs etc. and should be ordered through ITS.

For professional services staff, through the PS2020/DWP programme, we had planned to supply each colleague with a new QM managed Dell laptop as their primary device. This is in support of "agile working". In the current situation, we will continue with this approach, but at a rate commensurate with supply chain availability and based on critical need.

For Academic staff, we assume that most are able to work on their own devices or are in possession of a QM device at home. However due to the current situation, we will consider the provision of managed devices according to critical need to support the business. Such a device would then become the colleague's primary device.

For PS and academic staff requesting a device, we propose the following priority:

- 1) Those with no device at home (although we should have supplied most of these people with existing stock). This might be because their QM device has developed a fault.
- 2) Those without a QM laptop struggling to access a home device (e.g. now sharing with family members).
- 3) Those without a QM laptop, but have an older device at home that is not performing well or is not upgradable to Windows 10 (i.e. is a security risk).

Our suppliers are currently doing their best to ramp up provision. We are researching the options of shipping devices straight to colleagues' homes. There have been some laptop hardware failures and we're working with Dell to see if these can be repaired by an engineer home visit.

Staff funded devices for personal use

There are QM staff discounts available through our hardware suppliers, including [Apple](#) and [Dell](#) allowing staff to buy devices for their own personal use.

N.B. These devices will not be asset tagged or “imaged” for Queen Mary, and are ordinary “shop build” computers without QM software installed.

How to request Devices

For Windows devices we are placing batch orders with our supplier Dell. We will organise requests in a similar way to VDI through the circulated [shared spreadsheet](#):

Please email its-vdi-laptop@qmul.ac.uk for more information.

Apple Devices and **Linux machines** should be ordered through raising a ticket with the Service Desk. servicedesk@qmul.ac.uk

Apple requests should include evidence of management approval as stated above.

There should be no need for Schools/Directorates and to order devices directly with other suppliers.

Peripherals

We propose that home peripherals such as mice, keyboards and monitors are purchased by the member of staff without recourse to QM funding. If there is an H&S concern, colleagues should follow the guidance provided by the H&S Directorate at <http://connected.qmul.ac.uk/news/items/home-working-guidance.html> then, if peripherals are still required, request approval at School/Directorate level with the purchase to be covered by consumables budgets. Expensive items such as chairs should not be purchased without consulting the H&S guidance and the advice of Occupational Health.

We strongly discourage the purchase of printers on School/Directorate budgets unless there is a need due to disability or impairment.

How to request peripherals (once approved)

Monitors are normally asset tagged by ITS and we request that these are ordered through ITS by raising a ticket with the Service desk servicedesk@qmul.ac.uk. ITS will then re-charge the School or Directorate concerned. Any monitors purchased in this way will need to be returned to IT Services once we return to campus. Any monitors that have been removed from campus before the closure should be registered with the service desk via a ticket and returned to the office or lab once we return to campus.

Other peripherals (mice, keyboards, stands) are not normally tagged or registered by ITS and can be ordered by each department using purchasing cards if required. There should be no need to raise the limit on purchasing cards as these items are not expensive.