

ECA IT Resources 2020

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Contents

Contents.....	1
Introduction	1
IT Labs	2
Open access.....	2
Teaching labs.....	2
Specialist IT workstations.....	2
Software.....	2
Printing.....	3
Scanning.....	3
Apple computers	3
Helpdesks.....	3
Equipment Loan	3
Support for teaching.....	3
Learning Design.....	3
Support for teaching activities	3
Seminar/tutorial	3
Studios and Crit rooms.....	4
Workshops	4
Virtual gallery	4
Remote working	4
Home Studio.....	4
Support for drawing.....	4

Introduction

This document gives an overview of how we see our IT services looking at the start of session 2020. It is naturally an evolving situation and subject to change, please check here for the latest version: <https://edin.ac/3ec13E>

In line with the online first approach to teaching that has been adopted by ECA, we will focus our effort on reducing dependencies on our estate wherever possible, while at the same time maximising opportunities for the use of physical resources for those who are able to attend campus.

Below we list our ambitions for the broad areas of our service, given the situation as we currently understand it. Questions and comments on the content of this document are very welcome, to g.lee@ed.ac.uk.

Please address any general technology support requests, as ever, to is.helpline@ed.ac.uk.

IT Labs

Open access

We do not intend to provide open-access IT labs in ECA next semester. The logistical challenges are considerable, and building on the UoE-level expectation that students will have access to a laptop, we intend to maintain remote access as being the primary way for students to access our lab PCs.

Information Services will be providing a vastly increased laptop loan service, and we believe that open-access labs will be operational at a reduced capacity in the central area. We do anticipate making monitors and keyboards available to students who wish to use them with laptops.

Through remote access, either from a personal laptop or a centrally provided lab computer, students can access the full power and software selection of the ECA IT labs from a safe and convenient location.

Teaching labs

No IT Labs will be available for timetabled teaching, and ECA's Hybrid Teaching advice will reflect that IT teaching events in semester 1 need to be delivered entirely remotely.

Specialist IT workstations

Some specialist, technician-supported, workstations operated by Technical Learning Services will be available, at a reduced capacity. Please see the documentation from TLS regarding specific areas for further details.

Software

Adobe

We believe that the best way to ensure that our students have access to the critical Adobe CC suite is to make available licenses so that students can use the software on their own computers (or indeed any UoE lab computer). **We have secured funding to make Adobe Creative Cloud licenses available to students at a nominal cost for 2020/21. All students continue to have access to the Adobe Creative Cloud through the free offer from Adobe until 14th August.**

Other specialist software

The majority of software available in our open-access labs is available to students for free for their own computers, and where this isn't the case it will be available via remote access. However, there are a number of technical areas (notably Music, Film & TV) where students are used to having access to other software titles that would cost significant sums for them to provide for themselves. In the case of Avid Pro Tools and MaxMSP we expect to be able to make these available for remote students to use on their own computers.

The list of software here will shortly be updated to reflect expected availability in Semester 1.

<https://uoe.sharepoint.com/sites/hss/eca/covid-19/student/SitePages/Remote-Access-to-Hardware-and-Software.aspx>

Printing

We are exploring making a limited lab printing service available to students in QDigital, both for A3/A4 and Large Format.

Scanning

We intend to make a limited number of IT workstations (probably with a system of booking a keyboard and mouse) for activities such as scanning that require access to a physical machine.

Apple computers

At present, the remote labs service does not extend to Apple Macs, due to technical issues with making them available remotely. In general, the software available in our open-access Macs is also available on the PCs, so this is not seen as a problem in the open-access context. We are investigating options for technical areas which may wish to make Macs available remotely.

Helpdesks

We do not intend to provide a physical helpdesk but will instead provide a web-based 'instant chat' help service for students using our virtual labs or equipment. IT staff will be able to use screen sharing to help students with computer issues.

Equipment Loan

Our intention is to operate an enhanced equipment loan service from QDigital in Evolution House, expanding into some of the space normally occupied by lab computers to facilitate social distancing. The enhanced loan service will incorporate a selection of equipment from various technical services areas, as well as standard QDigital loan equipment, with the aim of offering a value-add service with as wide a relevance as possible to ECA students.

Support for teaching

Learning Design

Access to our support for Learning Technologies will continue to be via the IS Helpline. We are co-ordinating with CLAM and subject-area groups in the production of the ECA Hybrid Teaching guidance, which will be released shortly and will provide a framework within which colleagues can work to construct their courses in Learn. Our adoption of the Learn Foundations project means that we can call upon a large number of interns from ISG to assist with the migration and alteration of content as required to support hybrid teaching.

Support for teaching activities

Seminar/tutorial

All *general teaching* spaces will continue to be supported centrally by Information Services. We assume that small group teaching will happen in these rooms and that supported mechanisms and in-room equipment will be used to make these activities available (mostly asynchronously) to participants who are not present on campus.

Studios and Crit rooms

We assume that some learning activities will take place in studios, crit rooms and workshops, and we are working on processes and technology kit lists to facilitate making this activity available to remote participants, most likely using Microsoft Teams for synchronous activities.

It is important to remember that these spaces generally lack fixed infrastructure, and there will be little capacity for in-person support, so our recommended processes must be as simple and robust as possible.

Workshops

We believe the general approach for studio/crit activities can be expanded to workshops for the demonstration of processes or other learning activities. The focus is on using mobile equipment that is not reliant on fixed infrastructure, so should transfer to workshops where (for example) network ports may be limited.

Virtual gallery

We are working with ISG's uCreate Studio to provide online 'virtual gallery' spaces for students which can be viewed from a web browser or in a VR headset. There are specific courses in Art / HoA which have these as a requirement but they are likely to be available more generally in some form.

Remote working

Home Studio

We are working to provide guidance on a 'home studio' setup; essentially a kit list and set of procedures that staff can use to demonstrate small processes from home should they need to.

Support for drawing

We are aware that the move to hybrid teaching in many cases involves a requirement to draw digitally onto student work. We are currently investigating how to provide support for this activity at scale – please check back for updates.