Supporting Non-Standard Computers Guidance

Currently it is not clear what level of support researchers can expect from IT Services when it comes to non-standard computers. IT Services tends to use terms such as “reasonable” or “best endeavours” for such devices but from the researcher’s point of view this isn’t specific enough. The following guidance attempts to clarify who should be expected to provide various aspects of support that a non-standard computer might require.

1. Purchase
   1.1. Initial discussion
   The researcher(s) should raise a ticket for all purchases of non-standard computers. Initial discussion can take place before or after the ticket has been raised but such discussion typically makes the whole purchase process smoother.

   1.2. Obtaining a Quote
   Either the researcher(s) and/or IT Services can obtain a quote for such a computer. This should be agreed during the initial discussion and detailed in the purchase request ticket.

   1.3. Warranty
   The University’s procurement contract with Dell specifies all devices having a 5-year warranty as standard, which includes onsite support/fix, whereas non-standard computers often have a much shorter warranty and only remote/long distance support. Therefore, it is strongly advised that the warranty of a non-standard computer be enhanced to include on-site support, and, if possible, be extended up to 5 years.

   The addition of on-site support avoids all the overhead and inconvenience to the researcher(s) associated with having to return a computer to the supplier for repair.

   1.4. Placing the Order
   IT Services will purchase such computers following standard University finance procedures, i.e. using Proactis.

   1.5. New Supplier
   If the supplier is not on Proactis then the researcher(s) will need to contact their Faculty Finance team to arrange for the supplier to be added.

2. Set-up and Configuration
   2.1. Initial Build
   IT Services will typically build and configure the computer. It is possible that the researcher(s) perform the initial build and configuration but only if the computer is not being placed on the main campus network. This should be agreed in the purchase request ticket, preferably during the initial discussions.

   2.2. Factory Installed Hardware
   Any factory installed hardware components that are removed by the researcher(s) post-delivery should be retained by the researcher(s) in case they need to be re-installed. The researcher(s)
is/are responsible for ensuring that these components are not lost or damaged. (It is conceivable that a supplier will only perform a warranty repair on a computer that is as originally supplied).

2.3. Additional Hardware
The researcher(s) can request IT Services purchase additional hardware, e.g. extra RAM or hard disk capacity. This can be installed by IT Services and/or the researcher(s) but this should be agreed in the purchase request ticket.

2.4. Packaging
Whilst IT Services has access to some protective packaging this typically only fits standard Dell computers. The researcher(s) are strongly advised to retain at least one set of packaging relating to any non-standard computers they have purchased in case of return to the supplier.

3. Fault/Issue Resolution
3.1. Support
IT Services can only ever offer a reasonable level of support to non-standard computers, where IT Services will try to help and offer advice but there may be a point where IT Services cannot do any more.

If the computer is very specialised, runs niche software and/or has been built and configured by the researcher(s) then support will be further limited, not only in terms of what IT Services can be expected to do but also in terms of how quickly it can do it. It is likely that such requests will have a lower priority.

IT Services can only provide hardware support for non-standard computers that are in warranty.

Operating system and application support will vary but will be much more limited if these have been installed by the researcher(s).

3.2. Requesting Support
The researcher(s) should contact IT Services to request support by raising a ticket. All dialog relating to the issue will occur via this ticket to maintain an auditable record of events.

If IT Services is unable to resolve the issue, then the researcher(s) should contact the supplier and/or software vendor directly to request assistance.

3.3. Returning the Computer to the Supplier
If the computer needs to be returned to the supplier:

- IT Services can, at the request of the researcher(s), package the computer. This could utilise packaging as retained by the researcher(s) but it could also be packaged using packaging specifically dispatched by the supplier to aid the return. NB lack of suitable packaging will likely delay the return of the computer to the supplier.
- IT Services will contact the supplier to ascertain if the computer needs to be reverted to its factory supplied specification before return. If this is required, then the researcher(s) will need to re-install any components they have removed. NB contacting the supplier will likely result in a delay.
• The researcher(s) must ensure that there is no sensitive or confidential data on the computer’s hard disk(s). This is not the responsibility of IT Services to ensure.

The researcher is responsible for funding and arranging delivery of the computer to the supplier. Such delivery must include insurance against loss and/or damage in transit. IT Services cannot pay for the cost of return and is unable to take any responsibility for such loss or damage.

Whilst the computer is with the supplier IT Services will liaise as necessary. However, it should be recognised that the researcher(s) may also need to speak directly with the supplier to aid diagnosis.

3.4. Supplier Returning the Repaired Computer to the University
The computer can either be returned to IT Services or direct to the researcher(s). This depends on whether the researcher(s) require IT Services to replicate the original build. However, if it is returned direct to the researcher(s) then the researcher(s) must update the ticket to state that they have the computer back.

If the computer is returned to IT Services from the supplier:
• IT Services will replicate, if required, their original set up and configuration when the computer was originally purchased.
• IT Services will inform the researchers when the computer is ready for collection.

If the computer is returned to either IT Services or the researcher(s):
• The researcher(s) will re-install any hardware that was removed immediately prior to the computer’s return to the supplier.
• The researcher(s) will replicate any configuration changes or software installations as performed after the original delivery of the computer.

1 On request Overclockers will provide return packaging free of charge for a warranty repair.