



CSAR User Survey 2003

Summary Report

January 2004

1) Introduction

The CSAR User Survey for 2003 was conducted between 26th November and 12th December 2003. An online form was made available for completion and submission via the CSAR website

(<http://www.csar.cfs.ac.uk/admin/forms/usersurvey03.shtml>).

The survey was publicised through the CSAR Bulletin and by an email from Deborah Miller of EPSRC. The number of people who returned completed forms dropped from the 59 that completed 2002's User Survey to 33. It should be noted that users were also consulted at the same time by the Chair of the User Liaison Forum in order to provide feedback for the User Steering Group meeting in January 2004.

This number of participants represents approximately 7% of all Class 1, 2 and 3 users (470 in total). Although survey submission was entirely anonymous, users were given the opportunity to provide their name on the form. 22 of the people who submitted chose to do so. 7 of the users who responded act as CSAR PIs (Principal Investigators).

2) Newton: Technology Refresh

Newton, the new Altix system, was introduced into the service in October 2003. We asked various questions about this technology refresh in our survey. 93% of respondents felt that Newton had been well-advertised and had been advertised at the right time. 23% had tried out Newton or Reynolds as early access users and 72% of those who answered were aware of the free porting assistance provided by CSAR to enable users to get started on Newton.

3) Systems

Users of the service were asked which of the CSAR systems they had made substantial use of during 2003. 26% of those who answered this question had used Newton. 55% had made use of Turing and the same number of Green. 52% had used Fermat and equally Wren and 6% had made much use of Fuji, which was withdrawn from service in March 2003.

The majority of those who answered how satisfied they were on various aspects of using the CSAR systems were either fairly or very satisfied. Users were most satisfied with temporary disk space, with 93% very or fairly satisfied. The least satisfaction was with job scheduling on the systems – 84% very or fairly satisfied.

The full results were as follows:

Aspect of Service	% Satisfied (Very/Fairly)
Service availability	87.5%
Job turnaround times	87%
Job scheduling	84%
Job time limits	87.5%
Provision for interactive use	90%
Temporary Disk Space	93%
Archive Facility	89%

4) Dealings with CSAR Staff

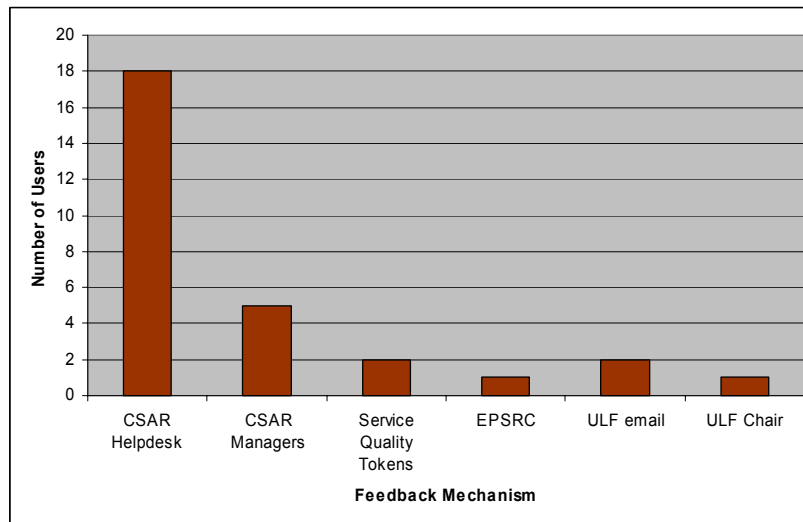
We asked users to rate their dealings with CSAR staff members. The majority of respondents to this question were very or fairly satisfied that the response they had received was knowledgeable, prompt and friendly/helpful. Only two people were fairly dissatisfied that the response had been knowledgeable and one person fairly dissatisfied that the response had been prompt and friendly. Neither of the two who had responded negatively provided explanations or further comments regarding this.

5) Information Provision

85% of users felt that CSAR make sufficient information available. Only 6% of respondents agreed that more information should be made available by different methods to those currently used, with one providing a suggestion – that the queue status information previously provided on the CSAR Machine Status Page be reinstated. This information was removed due to security concerns and ways of reinstating the information in a secure format are currently being investigated.

6) Feedback Mechanisms

The survey asked which of the various feedback mechanisms that are in place had been used over the past year. 90% of those that answered had used the CSAR Helpdesk. 25% had contacted the CSAR management team, 10% had used Service Quality Tokens and/or the User Liaison Forum email. 5% of those who answered this question had used the ULF Chair as a means of feeding back information on the CSAR service and 5% had used EPSRC. 100% stated that the response that they had received had been acceptable.



7) CSAR Training Services

8 people who replied to the User Survey had used the CSAR training services. All had found the training useful. Of those who responded that they had not taken part in the training provided by CSAR, 65% had not because it was not required with the remaining being equally split between taking part in training elsewhere or for other reasons, for example learning from other members of their consortium or not being able to attend training on the dates on which it had been provided.

8) CSAR Applications/Optimisation Support Services

12.5% of the survey's respondents had used the CSAR Applications and Optimisation Support Services, all answered that they had found this useful. Those who had not used Applications and Optimisation Support had not done so either because external support was not required (80%), because they had used an alternative High Performance Computing service (4%) or for other reasons (16%) such as they were unaware that this facility existed.

9) Code Efficiency and Analysis

61% of the 31 who answered question 10 on code efficiency are aware of how efficiently their code is running. 29% are not aware of their code's efficiency but would be interested in their code being analysed. The remaining 10% are not aware of how efficiently their code is running and are not interested in having their code analysed in order to find out.

10) Applications Software

87% are satisfied with the applications software currently provided on the CSAR systems. Reasons given for dissatisfaction were that the Grid package Condor is not supported (1 user) and that it is hard to find out what applications are available (1 user).

11) Administrative Tools

This section of the survey was applicable to Principal Investigators only who were asked to rate their satisfaction with the web-based tools provided. 7 PIs responded to this section. 1 PI was dissatisfied with the tools provided, giving the reason that the web pages were too difficult to use. The rest were equally split between being satisfied or reasonably satisfied. 1 PI responded that they would prefer the centralised resource management of previous services, 2 were unsure and 4 prefer the devolved management of resources.

12) Usage Reporting Facilities

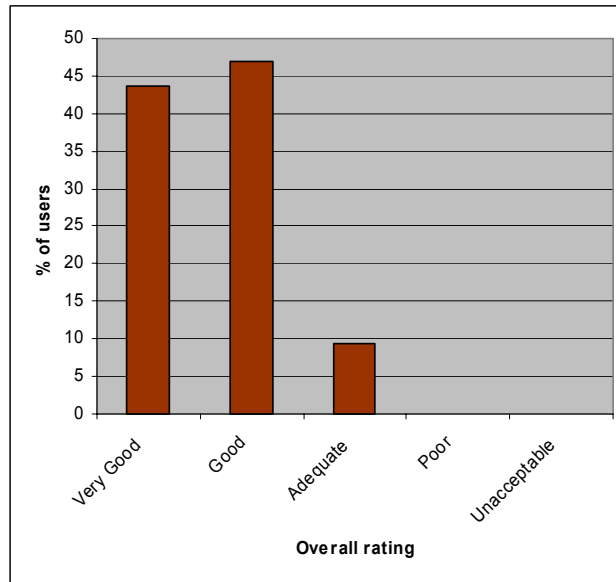
When asked which of the various usage reporting facilities they used the PIs answered as follows:

Type of Reporting Facility	Yes	No
Web-based usage reports	4	3
Web-based summary accounts	4	2
lac command	4	3
Quarterly usage report email	5	1

Although most of the PIs responded that they had used the quarterly usage report email, only 1 felt that it helped in monitoring and keeping their project's capacity plan up to date. (2 were unsure and 2 did not believe that it assisted them).

13) Overall view of CSAR

We asked users their rating of the overall level of High Performance Computing Service provided to them by CSAR. 9% rated the service as adequate whilst the remaining respondents viewed CSAR in the top two categories Good and Very Good (44% and 47% respectively).



14) CSAR's contribution to research

When asked whether access to the CSAR systems had contributed to advancements in their research 100% of the 31 respondents agreed that it had. Users were also asked if they could have carried out their research without using the CSAR systems, 32% felt that they could have whilst 68% expressed that they could not have carried out their research without using CSAR.

15) Comparison with 2002

The number of users who submitted their views through the User Survey was lower than for 2002 – approximately 7% of the CSAR user community had completed and submitted a survey, compared with 11% in the previous year.

Users were more satisfied in 2003 than they had been in 2002 with job turnaround times, the provision for interactive use and temporary disk space. They were as satisfied as they had been in the previous year with the archive facility at CSAR and job time limits. The satisfaction level with regards to two aspects of the service - service availability and job scheduling - had decreased from 2002 to 2003.

The majority of users again remain fairly or very satisfied with the way they have been dealt with by CSAR staff. The feedback mechanisms that have been used

are very similar to last year with most users having used the CSAR Helpdesk, followed by the CSAR managers. Users are more satisfied with the response they have received from CSAR this year with 100% viewing the response as acceptable as opposed to the 94% who believed they had received an acceptable response in 2002.

There has been a slight decrease in the percentage of users who feel that sufficient information is made available with 85% falling into this category, this was 2% higher in 2002. Awareness of the Status Page has increased by 7% to 73%.

100% of users remain satisfied with the training services provided by CSAR. The main reason for not using CSAR training services is still that the training is not required. The level of satisfaction with use of the CSAR Applications/Optimisation Support Services also remained the same as for the previous year with 100% of those who have used it having found it useful. Again the main reason for not using the Support Services is that external support is not required.

In 2002, 62% of users were aware of how efficiently their code was running, the same percentage of respondents to the 2003 survey are aware of their code's efficiency. Likewise, the result for those satisfied with the applications software provided at 87% mirrors that for 2002.

Whereas 97% of the last survey's users agreed that using CSAR had contributed to advancements in their research, this year's reflected an increase to 100%. The percentage of users who felt that they could have carried out their research without using the CSAR systems has dropped from 75% to 68%.

In conclusion, the overall level of satisfaction with the level of the HPC service provided by CSAR has improved with 100% satisfied and 91% viewing the service in the top two categories (good and very good). These figures were 100% and 84% respectively in 2002.