



CSAR User Survey 2005

Summary Report

January 2006

1) Introduction

The CSAR User Survey for 2005 was conducted between 12th December and 23rd December 2005. An online form was made available for completion and submission via the CSAR website

(http://www.csar.cfs.ac.uk/project_management/user_survey.shtml).

The survey was publicised through the CSAR Bulletin and by an email from EPSRC. The number of people who returned completed forms increased from the 33 that completed 2004's User Survey to 42.

This number of participants represents approximately 9.4% of all CSAR users (449 in total). Although survey submission was entirely anonymous, users were given the opportunity to provide their name on the form. 24 of the people who submitted chose to do so. 8 of the users who responded act as CSAR PIs (Principal Investigators).

2) Overview

The results show the majority of users to be happy with the CSAR service (60% selected either 'Good' or 'Very Good'), however this was down from the previous year (91%). This result has most likely been caused by the 'security incident'. Various other technical problems occurred soon after this incident. This survey was released just after the whole service became fully operational again. The downtime experienced during these 2 months leading up to the survey is reflected in the user's comments.

In all other areas the CSAR service has continued to receive consistently satisfactory results from those users taking part in the survey when compared with the previous year.

A new question was asked regarding the improved CSAR website and the response found most users to be fairly or very satisfied with the results with all questions on the subject producing results in excess of 90% satisfaction.

3) Systems

Users of the service were asked which of the CSAR systems they had made substantial use of during 2005. 85% of those who answered this question had

used Newton. 40% had made use of Green. 22% had used Fermat and 58% had used Wren.

In all but one provision, 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 the provision for interactive use, with 84% very or fairly satisfied. The least satisfaction was with service availability – 33% very or fairly satisfied.

The full results were as follows:

Aspect of Service	% Satisfied (Very/Fairly)
Service availability	33%
Job turnaround times	68%
Job scheduling	76%
Job time limits	82%
Provision for interactive use	84%
Temporary Disk Space	80%
Archive Facility	61%

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. 3 people were fairly dissatisfied with the promptness of the response, 1 was fairly dissatisfied with the knowledge, and another fairly dissatisfied with the friendliness. There was just 1 person very dissatisfied with promptness. This person provided no explanation or further comments regarding this.

5) Information Provision

60% of users felt that CSAR make sufficient information available. Only 10% of respondents agreed that more information should be made available by different methods to those currently used, however this was a decrease on the previous year's 15%. The number of users aware of the machine status page has increased from 84% to 90%

A number of questions were asked regarding the CSAR website. The majority of users who answered were either fairly or very satisfied. Users were most satisfied with the overall appearance and ease of use

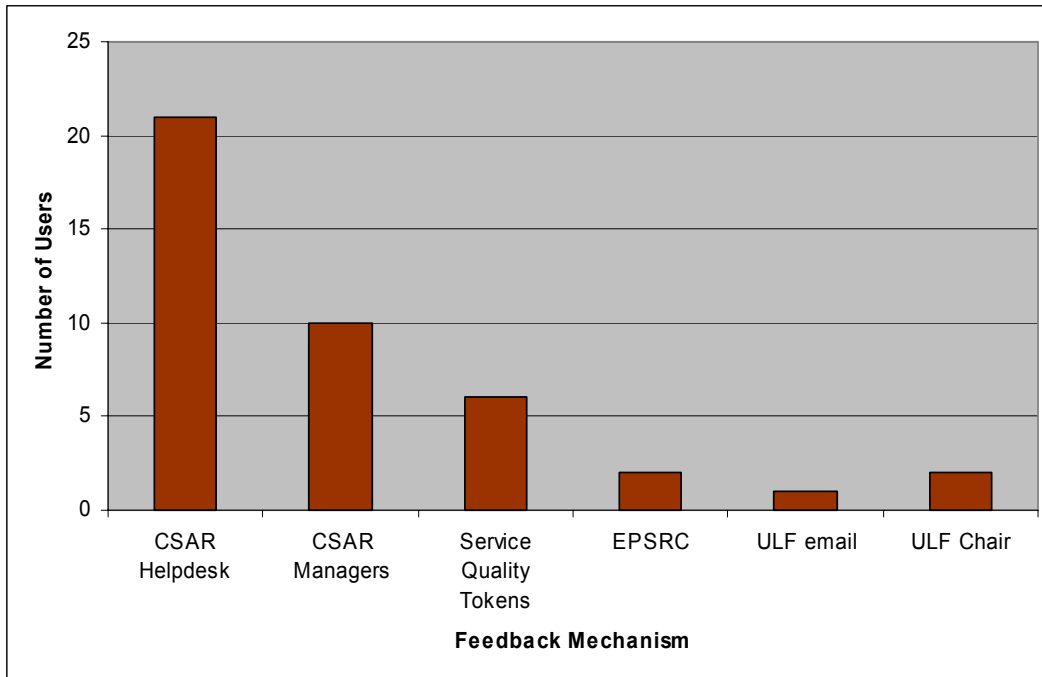
The full results were as follows:

Aspect of Service	% Satisfied (Very/Fairly)
Overall appearance	97%
Navigation	87%
Content	79%
Ease of use	89%

6) Feedback Mechanisms

The survey asked which of the various feedback mechanisms that are in place had been used over the past year. Of the 23 users who answered this question, 91% of had used the CSAR Helpdesk, compared to 93% last year. 43% had

contacted the CSAR management team, which was the same value as the previous year. 26% had used Service Quality Tokens, which is an increase from 7% last year. Only 4% used the User Liaison Forum email. 73% stated that the response that they had received had been acceptable. This figure was 100% last year.



7) CSAR Training Services

8 people who replied to the User Survey had used the CSAR training services, which is no change from last year. All had found the training either fairly or very satisfactory. Of those who responded that they had not taken part in the training provided by CSAR, 59% had not because it was not required with the remaining being split almost equally between taking part in training elsewhere or for other reasons.

8) CSAR Applications/Optimisation Support Services

10% of the survey's respondents had used the CSAR Applications and Optimisation Support Services, which was a decrease from last year's 28%. Of the 4 people who used the applications services, 2 answered that they had found this very satisfactory, and 1 answered that they had found this fairly dissatisfactory. Those who had not used Applications and Optimisation Support had not done so either because external support was not required (67%) or for other reasons (23%).

9) Code Efficiency and Analysis

79% of the 34 who answered question 8 on code efficiency are aware of how efficiently their code is running. 18% are not aware of their code's efficiency but would be interested in their code being analysed. The remaining 3% are not aware of how efficiently their code is running and are not interested in having

their code analysed in order to find out. These figures suggest that the proportion of users who are aware of their code efficiency has doubled.

10) Applications Software

90% are satisfied with the applications software currently provided on the CSAR systems. This is roughly the same result as last year. One dissatisfied user commented that "It is always too difficult for the support staff to do porting".

11) Administrative Tools

This section of the survey was only applicable to Principal Investigators. In question 10, they were asked to rate their satisfaction with the web-based tools provided. 8 PIs responded to this section. 1 PI was very dissatisfied with the tools provided, giving the following comments: "It's not so much that CSAR's interface is bad (although it is)...I do not want to re-learn some well-meaning person's attempt at a user interface unless it will be a simple, extensible interface common to all HPC services..."

The rest were fairly or very satisfied. If given the choice for a centralised resource management of previous services 92% of the PI's answered no.

For some reason, quite a few non-PIs answered this question as well, despite it stating "PIs only". These results were not counted.

12) Usage Reporting Facilities

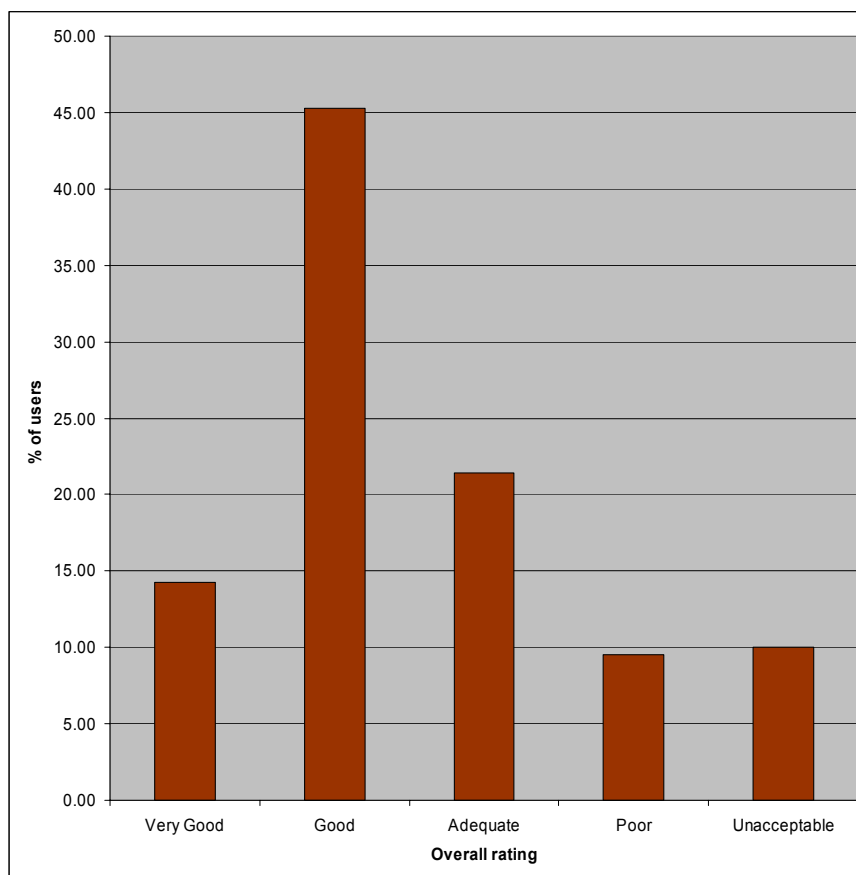
When asked which of the various usage reporting facilities they used the PIs answered as follows:

Type of Reporting Facility	Yes	No
Web-based usage reports	4	7
Web-based summary accounts	6	6
lac command	5	6
Quarterly usage report email	4	9

This year's survey received twice as many answers to this question compared to last year. But unlike last year's mainly positive answers, there was a swing towards mainly negative answers this year. However, the amount of PIs who answered 'yes' stayed roughly the same.

13) Overall view of CSAR

We asked users their rating of the overall level of High Performance Computing Service provided to them by CSAR. 60% of respondents viewed CSAR in the top two categories (good and very good). This is a drop from 85% last year. A further 10% felt the service to be adequate while 4% felt the service was poor, and the same result was recorded for very poor. This was probably due to continued issues with the stability of Newton, the 'security incident' and overall reliability.



14) CSAR's contribution to research

When asked whether access to the CSAR systems had contributed to advancements in their research 86% of the 42 respondents agreed that it had. Users were also asked if they could have carried out their research without using the CSAR systems, 23% felt that they could have whilst 77% expressed that they could not have carried out their research without using CSAR.

Comparison with 2004

The number of users who submitted their views through the User Survey was higher than for 2004 – approximately 10% of the CSAR user community had completed and submitted a survey, compared with 5% in the previous year.

Overall, users were less satisfied in 2005 than they had been in 2004 with all services. The largest drop in satisfaction is reflected by the decrease in service availability from 88% satisfied to 33%.

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 the exception of users contacting the CSAR management team which has risen from 25% to 43%.

There has been a decrease in the percentage of users who feel that sufficient information is made available with 60% falling into this category. This was 15% higher in 2004. Awareness of the Status Page has increased by 6% to 90%.

In 2005, users were less satisfied with the response they have received from CSAR with 73% viewing the response as acceptable, compared to 100% in 2004.

100% of users remain either fairly or very 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 proportion of satisfied users of the CSAR Applications/Optimisation Support Services has effectively decreased from 100% to 66%. This result has arisen because only 3 users replied to this question, and one of those chose 'fairly dissatisfied'. Again the main reason for not using the Support Services is that external support is not required.

The amount of users who were aware of how efficiently their code was running had fallen to 38% in 2004, but has now risen up to 79% in 2005. The result for those satisfied with the applications software provided has dropped slightly from 92% in 2004 to 90% in 2005.

Last year's survey showed that 92% of users believed CSAR had contributed to advancements in their research, this year the figure had fallen to 86%. The percentage of users who felt that they could have carried out their research without using the CSAR systems has risen slightly from 73% to 78%.

The amount of users who placed the service in the top two categories (good and very good) fell from 85% to 60%. The number of users who rated the service as very good has significantly decreased from 62% to 14%.