Edge Hill
University

Learning Services: AV/Classroom Support Survey

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1. Introduction

Learning Services ran a short online survey from 14 May to 14 September to obtain staff feedback on their use of classroom AV and/or accessing technical support over the telephone or via a call out from one of our technical teams on the Ormskirk campus. [Note: AV refers to the audio visual equipment used in teaching spaces e.g. data projectors, interactive white boards, sound quality]. The survey aimed to expose issues and inform improvements to existing services and new developments. It contained a mixture of closed questions and opportunities for free text responses which explored staff experiences or ideas. As 98 members of staff completed the survey (a response rate of approximately 12.25%) it offers a useful snapshot of staff experience and views.

2. Survey Findings part 1: Experience of using classroom AV

We wanted to know from an AV technology perspective what classrooms, lecture theatres and teaching spaces staff least enjoy using. The chart below shows the number of comments for each building/room.
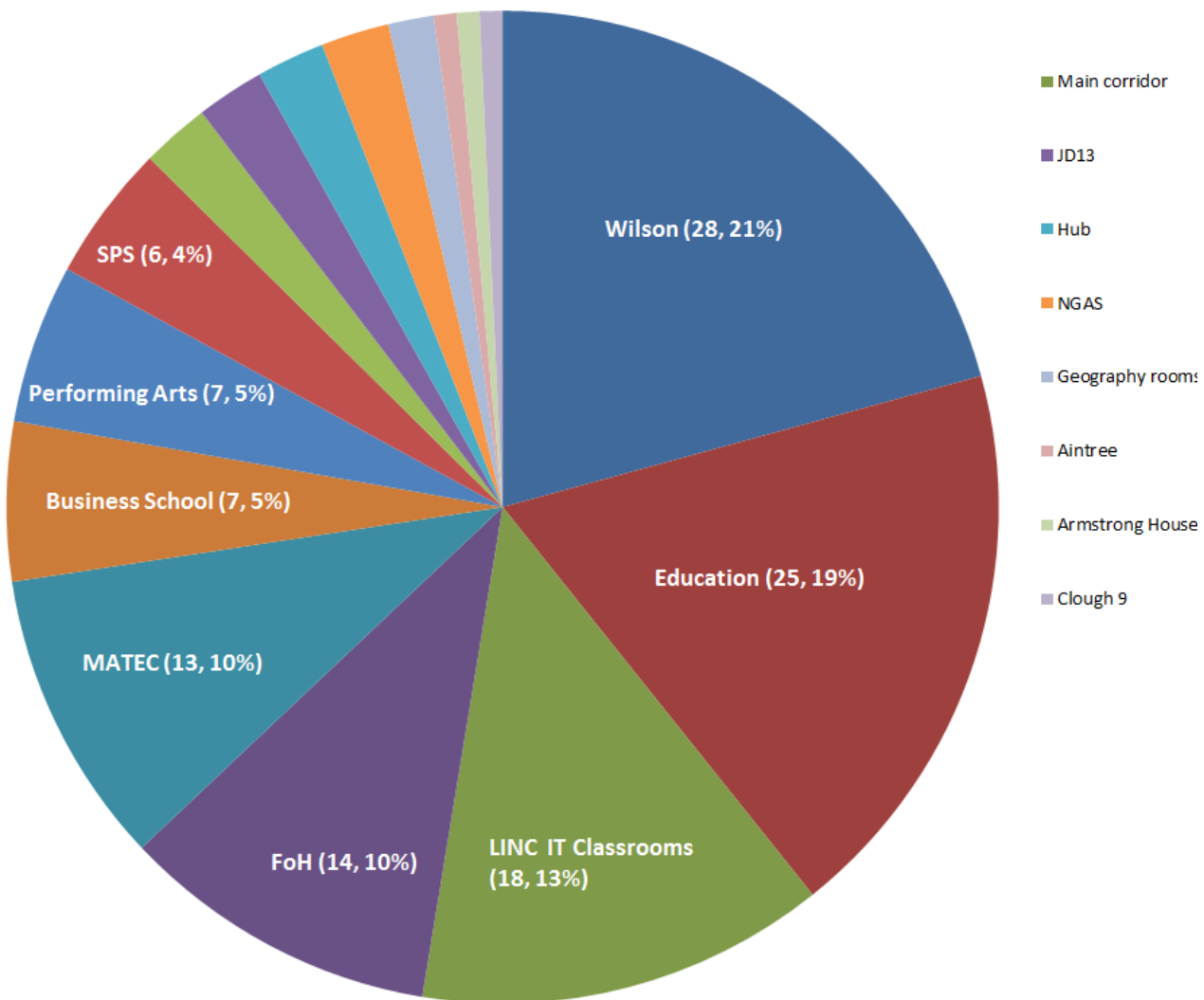
2.1 Buildings and classrooms

It is worth noting that 17 of the 98 respondents found no issues to report. The following five buildings generated the most comments.

Wilson: The classrooms in the Wilson building produced the most comments. The classrooms were described as the 'poorest on campus' containing 'antiquated' AV technology. Specific issues included slow

PCs, 'wobbly projectors', poor sound quality, daylight interfering with screen quality (especially where film is being taught).

Education: Education classrooms received similar comments to Wilson in terms of 'dated' AV equipment. The quality of audio-visual output on interactive whiteboards (IWB) was a frequently expressed concern, as were issues of calibration i.e. it makes it difficult to write/type onto the screen. Staff found the old system of using remote controls to work the AV more likely to cause problems than the now standard wall panel controls in new buildings.

LINC IT Classrooms (LINC IT1, 2, 3): These classrooms contain the same 'dated' AV and IWBs as the Education building and drew similar comments.

Faculty of Health and Social Care: Comments mostly related to issues with H1, 2 3 as a major repair to the screen was undertaken in August. Microphone quality/reliability was commented upon. Other comments were: monitors in teaching pods e.g. H203 do not allow the whole screen to be seen; no phones in classrooms; no IWB in any classroom.

MATEC/MASS: Overall this building drew several negative comments about dated equipment but specific issues relate to the IWBs and the lack of projector/IWB in the CAD/CAM room (computer suite).

It should be noted that since the survey was conducted, the AV in Geography (4 teaching spaces) and SPS (2 IT classrooms have been upgraded. Some Performing Arts teaching spaces are to be upgraded shortly (managed by Performing Arts with AV installation in consultation with Learning Services).

2.2 Common AV issues

These can be separated into the following themes

- (i)   AV/classroom design
- (ii)   (ii) technical problems
- (iii)   (iii) training and support

2.1.2 AV/classroom design

Standard AV installation: There were a number of negative comments about older installations – they are complex to use and difficult to set up if a previous user had unplugged the PC and used their own device. No AV issues were reported where AV is controlled by a standard wall panel as provided in all new and upgraded classrooms.

Whiteboard location: this is not an AV issue but a number of comments stressed that when teaching, the optimum place for whiteboards is adjacent to the projector screen.

Light intrusion: this causes problems when viewing projected content. In some classrooms it is poorly fitting blinds and in others the sun comes in from two sides or skylights, which exacerbate the problem. This is a particular issue for the showing of films and other multimedia.

Acoustics: some of the larger classrooms have poor acoustics. Microphones can be booked out from Media Loans for classroom use but this option was either not known by the respondent or was not a preferred option. Good quality, permanent microphones were requested.

2.2.2 Technical problems

IWB configuration: the survey revealed that there is an issue with running the Smart Notebook software from the network and an immediate outcome of this survey is that rooms with IWBs in now have copies of Smart software installed locally.

Blown projector bulbs: Delays in replacing bulbs due to late reporting or the need to observe health and safety requirements were a cause of frustration although some respondents acknowledged that it is the responsibility of classroom users to report problems at an early stage and that this does not happen often enough.

WIFI: there were a number of references to poor WIFI reception in some buildings being a problem for students wanting to access resources on Learning Edge in teaching spaces.

Playing multimedia: issues of bandwidth for YouTube videos, poor sound quality (or no sound) and PCs not supporting Quicktime/Realplayer formats were an issue.

Slow computers: time taken to log in and access files was a common theme. Also noisy machines are a distraction.

Connections for iPads: The necessary leads to connect to the projector are not available in classrooms. Leads can be booked out from Media loans but this option was either not known by respondents or were not a preferred option.

2.2.3 Training and support

Lecture theatre AV is perceived as more complex and difficult to operate than that in classrooms. Unfamiliar rooms and especially those with an older AV installation or an IWB present difficulties for staff.

2.3 Suggested improvements to teaching spaces

Whilst we considered it important to identify issues, the survey also provided us with an opportunity to ask for comments about other technologies or improvements that staff would like to see in teaching spaces. The following is a summary of comments received:

More IWBs
More permanent microphones in classrooms
Better blackout blinds in rooms used for film screening
Consistent WIFI across campus
Better support for Apple Mac products e.g. cables to connect Mac laptops and iPads to projectors available in classrooms
PCs formatted to play Realplayer and Quicktime
Video link to projector in laboratories for demonstrating practical techniques via live video
Mobile facilities to allow group-work from laptops or tablets to be displayed on the main screen and to allow more flexible control of IWBs from other parts of the classroom
Loans of up-to-date hand-held video and audio recording devices to use in classrooms
Classroom lighting controlled by dimmer switches
iPads and other tablets available for short term loan to staff
Webcams and microphones for recording sessions
Text wall (a web page that learners can send questions or messages to via their mobile phones and which can be displayed on the large screen)

3. Survey Findings part 2: Experience of classroom support

In the past 12 months we have introduced a new telephone system to reduce call-waiting times and direct calls to a technician without having to go through a triage process. We have also standardised the AV installations in new buildings and classroom upgrades which are (we hope) easier to use and which will enable more remote diagnosis of classroom AV problems. To see how we are doing, we asked a series of questions to find out more about the experience of staff who have to call upon the Learning Services Classroom Support service and to identify ways in which the service can continue to be improved.

How would you rate your experience of support in terms of helpful staff? (1= very poor and 5=excellent)

1	6.1%	6
2	5.1%	5
3	3.1%	3
4	21.4%	21
5	42.9%	42
n/a	21.4%6	21

How would you rate your experience of support in terms of service provided? (1= very poor and 5=excellent)

1	5.1%	5
2	5.1%	5
3	11.2%	11
4	25.5%	25
5	31.6%	31
n/a	21.4%	21

If a technician came out to assist in resolving the AV issue how would you rate response time? (1= very poor and 5=excellent)

1	4%	3
2	8%	6
3	8%	6
4	25.3%	19
5	20%	15
n/a	34.7%	26

The free text comments were mostly positive and there was acknowledgement that some delay in resolving problems is inevitable and that this can seem like a long time when waiting to start teaching a class. Pleasingly, a number of comments indicated that the service has improved over the last 12 months. Nevertheless, responses also suggested that more improvements are needed in order to speed up the time taken from reporting a problem to a technician arriving/resolving the problem.

4. Next steps

Classroom AV upgrades: Wilson classrooms are due to be upgraded commencing early January 2013. Specific comments relating to Wilson classrooms will be fed into the planning process. LINC IT1, 2, 3 are due to be upgraded within this academic year. We will communicate the results of this survey to Faculties to consider next steps (if any) in relation to other buildings/classrooms with dated AV.

Technical issues: all quick fixes have been identified and where practicable are being resolved and we will feed these back in due course. Longer term fixes will feed into the LS planning cycle. Those issues outside the remit of Learning Services will be passed to the appropriate department for consideration.

Training and Support: Learning Services do offer training in the use of classroom and lecture theatre AV. We target new teaching staff and are now promoting this training through the LS Digital Classroom strand of staff development. We will also seek the views of faculties in how we can better prepare staff to use lecture theatre/classroom AV.

Improvements to teaching spaces:
We will investigate and implement all suggested improvements where possible and ensure these are disseminated back to staff.

Classroom support: We are actively exploring (i) how we can encourage classroom users in earlier reporting of technical issues in classrooms and lecture theatres and (ii) how we can further reduce response times.

Lindsey Martin
eLearning Strategy and Development Manager
Learning Services

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