CSAR User Survey 1999
Summary Report

January 2000

1. Introduction

The first annual CSAR User Survey was conducted between 2nd and 20th December 1999. A form was made available for completion and submission on the CSAR web pages (http://www.csar.cfs.ac.uk/usersurvey99.shtml). Two emails were sent to all users inviting them to complete the survey.

60 completed forms were received, representing approximately 15% of all Class 1/2/3 users currently registered (390 in total). Approximately 25% of the registered users are considered inactive on the machines in that they have no file store usage. Viewed as a proportion of the active users, the response is 21%. This is higher than anticipated, based on the levels of feedback via other mechanisms.

Survey submissions were entirely anonymous, although users were given the opportunity to provide their name on the form. 27 people did this. 14 out of the 60 users act as CSAR PIs (project administrators), 3 of these only occasionally.

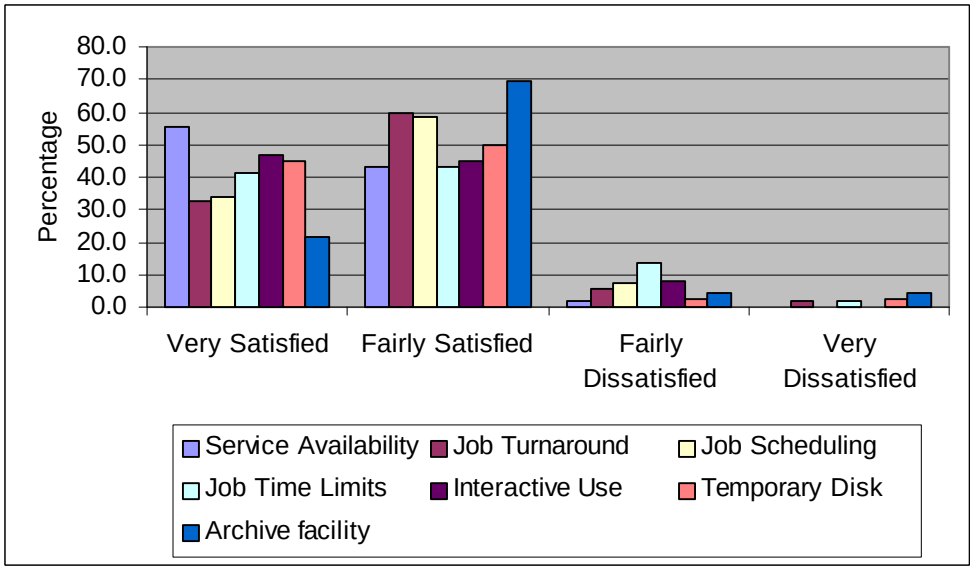
In this report we provide a summary of the responses to the question on the form. Users' comments have not been included in this report but have been collated and distributed within CfS.

2. Systems aspects

Users were asked how satisfied they are with a number of aspects of the CSAR systems (question 3). The following table shows the number of responses in each category:

	Very Satisfied	*Fairly Satisfied*	*Fairly Dissatisfied*	*Very Dissatisfied*	*No View*
Service Availability	32	25	1	0	1
Job Turnaround	18	33	3	1	2
Job Scheduling	18	31	4	0	4
Job Time Limits	21	22	7	1	7
Interactive Use	23	22	4	0	8
Temporary Disk	17	19	1	1	19
Archive facility	5	16	1	1	34

In the following chart we plot the responses in the first four categories as a percentage of the total number *with a view*:



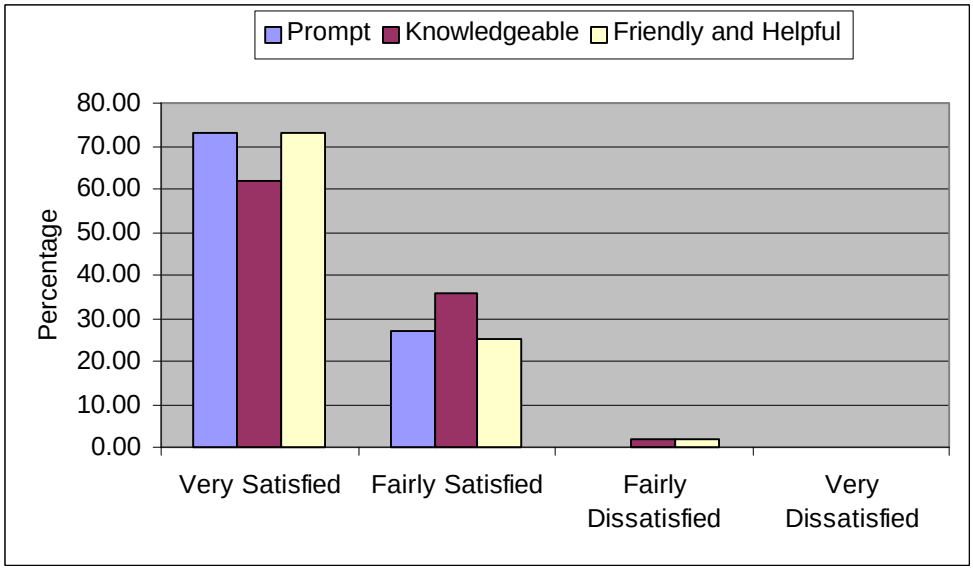
In summary, for all of the above aspects of the systems, over 84% of those who expressed an opinion are very or fairly satisfied. The most satisfaction (98% very or fairly satisfied) is with service availability levels; the least satisfaction (84% very or fairly satisfied) is with job time limits.

3. Dealings with CSAR staff

In terms of their dealings with CSAR staff, users were asked how satisfied they are that the response was prompt, knowledgeable, friendly and helpful (question 4). The following table gives the number of replies in each category:

	Very Satisfied	*Fairly Satisfied*	*Fairly Dissatisfied*	*Very Dissatisfied*	*No View*
Prompt	38	14	0	0	8
Knowledgeable	31	18	1	0	10
Friendly and helpful	38	13	1	0	8

In the following chart we plot the responses in the first four categories as a percentage of the total number *with a view*:



In summary, over 84% of those who expressed a view were very or fairly satisfied with respect to their dealings with CSAR staff (over 60% very satisfied).

4. Information provision

Users were asked a number of questions on the provision of information (question 5). Of those who expressed a view (95%):

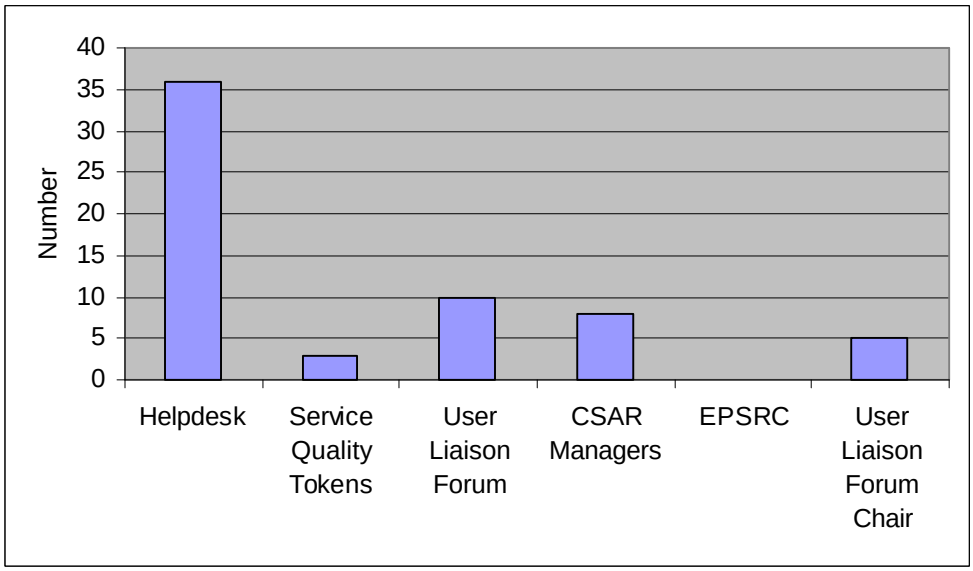
82% state that sufficient information is made available to users.

28% would like more information by email, the rest would not.

71% are aware of the machine status page.

5. Feedback mechanisms

Of the various feedback mechanisms provided, users were asked to indicate which they had used (question 6). The following chart shows the numbers of users who ticked each:



Over 95% out of a total of 41 who have used one or more of these mechanisms replied that they were satisfied with the response they have had to complaints and/or suggestions.

6. CSAR Training Services

Users were asked if they had used CSAR training services and if they had found it useful (question 7). 17% had, and 85% of these had found it useful.

Of those who hadn't used the training services, the reason given was as follows:

Not required: 68%
Obtained elsewhere: 17%
Other: 15% (e.g. Not convenient to travel to Manchester.)

7. CSAR Applications/Optimisation Support Services

Users were asked if they had used CSAR applications/optimisation support services and if they had found it useful (question 8). 16% had, and 78% of these had found it useful. Some said it was too early to comment on the results.

Of those who hadn't used the support services, the reason given was as follows:

Not required: 67%
HPCI support: 8%
Other: 25% (e.g. Not aware of the support services.)

8. Free analysis of code efficiency

Of the 54 responses, 43% said they would be interested in a free analysis of the efficiency of their codes, 15% would not, and the rest would possibly be interested.

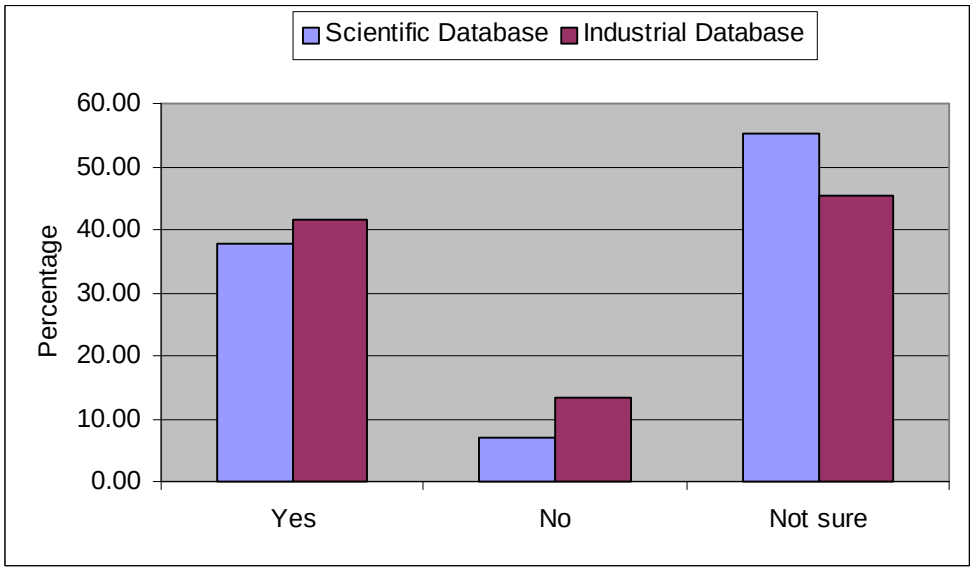
9. Administrative tools

This question was for CSAR PIs (project administrators) only, who were asked if they were satisfied with the web-based tools provided, given the devolution of resource management to projects (question 9). 50% of the responses (of the total of 8) were 'Yes', and 50% 'Reasonably'.[1] It was commented that the tools had improved significantly since the start of the service.

A follow-on question asked if they would prefer - given the choice - the centralised resource management of previous services. 75% (of the total of 8) said 'No', 12.5% 'Yes' and 12.5% 'Not Sure'.

10. Scientific databases

Users were asked if they would be willing to contribute to a scientific abstracts and results database and an industrial database of research results/topics of interest to industry (question 10). 58 people responded to the first, 53 to the second. The following chart shows the distribution of the replies in terms of the percentage of those who answered:



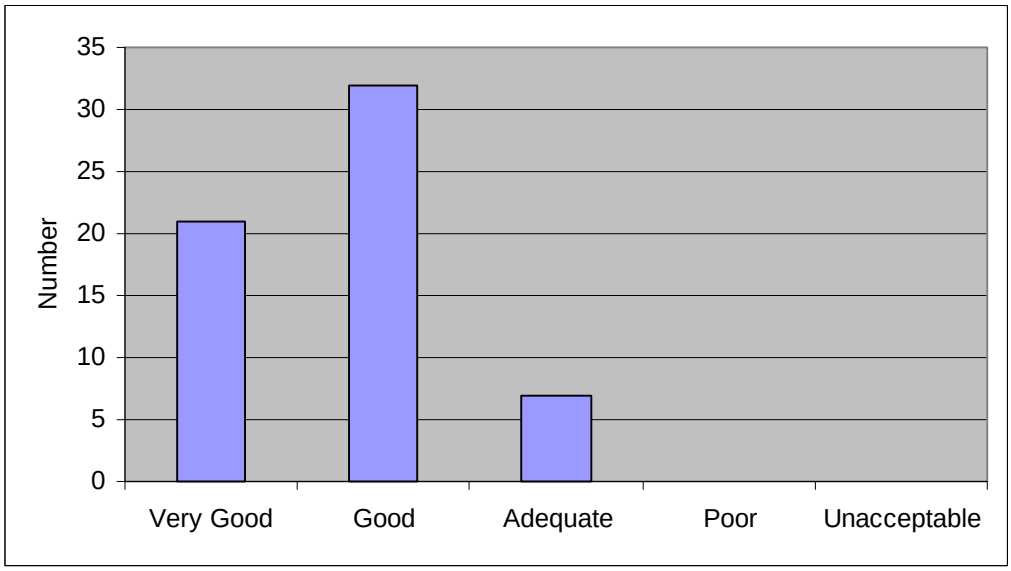
11. Research benefits

95% of the 56 who responded to this question (number 12) stated that access to the CSAR systems had contributed to advancements in their research; 5% said not.

[1] We have been able to accurately determine only 8 responses to question 9 out of the 11 received due to a problem with the HTML form affecting this question only.

12. Overall view of CSAR

Users were asked for their view on the overall level of HPC Service provided by CSAR (question 13). The following chart shows the number giving each of the five responses:



In summary, over 88% replied in the top two categories (Good or Very Good).

13. Conclusions

We believe this to have been a successful first annual user survey, with the level of response being higher than any of the other feedback mechanisms available to users (see Section 5). However, the response was still only 1 user out of 5, and we can only speculate on the views of those who didn't respond. It is probably safe to assume that users who are not satisfied with the service would have taken this opportunity to give their views (anonymously or not).

The response has shown a generally good level of satisfaction with the service, and no major issues have come to light as a result of the survey. All comments made by users have been noted, and any issues raised will be addressed and resolved where possible. During the last twelve months we have made significant improvements in areas where we have received feedback via the User Liaison Forum and other mechanisms - the archive facility and the administrative tools for example - and we are continuing to monitor and improve these aspects as far as possible. For some systems aspects there are diverse needs within the user community (job time limits, interactive use, and job scheduling for example) and it is unlikely that we will ever reach full satisfaction levels. Decisions to make significant changes such as an increase in job time limits have to be driven by the user community.

The next survey will be carried out in December 2000, and is likely to follow a similar format.

We would like to thank all the users who contributed to the survey this year.