



CSAR User Survey 2004

Summary Report

January 2005

1) Introduction

The CSAR User Survey for 2004 was conducted between 9th December and 22nd December 2004. 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 dropped from the 33 that completed 2003's User Survey to 26. 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 2005.

This number of participants represents approximately 6% of all Class 1, 2 and 3 users (447 in total). Although survey submission was entirely anonymous, users were given the opportunity to provide their name on the form. 17 of the people who submitted chose to do so. 7 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 (92%), however this was down from the previous year (100%). This seems to have been due to some periods of unreliability for Newton and users being unhappy with the amount of compiler changes and the lack of information that was provided regarding this.

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) Newton

We asked various questions about how satisfied users are with the Newton service. 79% were either fairly or very satisfied while 21% were fairly or very dissatisfied. Reasons for the latter included the stability/availability of Newton and the frequency and lack of information about compiler changes.

43% of Newton users had experienced difficulties porting or optimising code and 29% would like to take advantage of free porting assistance to get started on Newton.

4) Systems

Users of the service were asked which of the CSAR systems they had made substantial use of during 2004. 54% of those who answered this question had used Newton. 42% had made use of Green. 35% had used Fermat and 58% had used Wren.

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 archive facility, with 100% very or fairly satisfied. The least satisfaction was with provision for interactive use – 82% very or fairly satisfied.

The full results were as follows:

Aspect of Service	% Satisfied (Very/Fairly)
Service availability	88%
Job turnaround times	92%
Job scheduling	84%
Job time limits	96%
Provision for interactive use	82%
Temporary Disk Space	91%
Archive Facility	100%

5) 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 one person was fairly dissatisfied with the promptness of the response. The person provided no explanation or further comments regarding this.

6) Information Provision

75% of users felt that CSAR make sufficient information available. Only 15% of respondents agreed that more information should be made available by different methods to those currently used, however this was an increase on the previous year's 6%. The number of users aware of the machine status page has increased from 73% to 84%

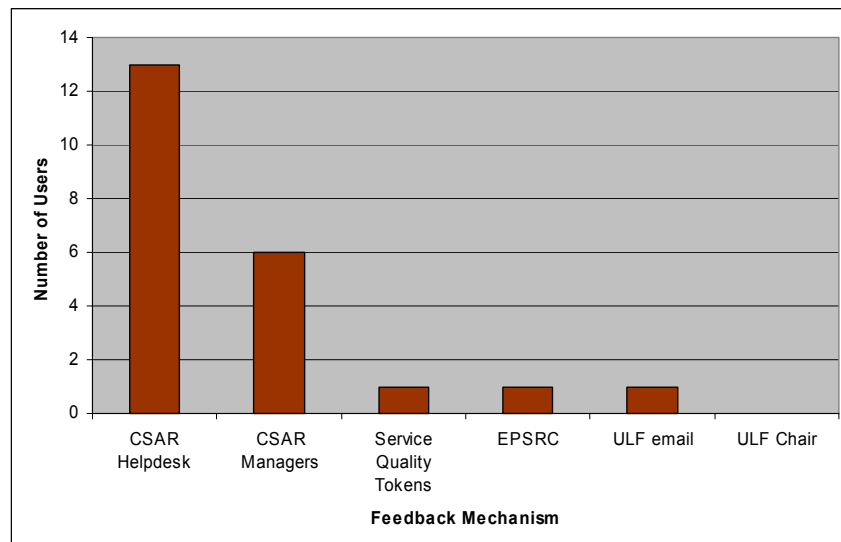
A number of new questions were asked regarding the new CSAR website. The majority of new users answered were either fairly or very satisfied. Users were most satisfied with the overall appearance and ease of use

The full results were as follows:

Aspect of Service	% Satisfied (Very/Fairly)
Overall appearance	96%
Navigation	91%
Content	92%
Ease of use	96%

7) Feedback Mechanisms

The survey asked which of the various feedback mechanisms that are in place had been used over the past year. 93% of those that answered had used the CSAR Helpdesk. 43% had contacted the CSAR management team, 7% had used Service Quality Tokens and/or the User Liaison Forum email. 100% stated that the response that they had received had been acceptable.



8) CSAR Training Services

8 people who replied to the User Survey had used the CSAR training services. 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, 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.

9) CSAR Applications/Optimisation Support Services

28% of the survey's respondents had used the CSAR Applications and Optimisation Support Services, all answered that they had found this fairly or very satisfactory. Those who had not used Applications and Optimisation Support had not done so either because external support was not required (72%) or for other reasons (28%) such as colleagues helping them to optimise code.

10) Code Efficiency and Analysis

38% of the 21 who answered question 9 on code efficiency are aware of how efficiently their code is running. 43% are not aware of their code's efficiency but would be interested in their code being analysed. The remaining 19% are not aware of how efficiently their code is running and are not interested in having their code analysed in order to find out.

11) Applications Software

92% are satisfied with the applications software currently provided on the CSAR systems. Reasons given for dissatisfaction were that the Unix setup is annoying (can't use tab or esc to scroll up commands or complete commands).

12) 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. 2 PI's were fairly dissatisfied with the tools provided, giving the reason that the web pages were a little confusing and that training would be helpful. The rest were fairly or very satisfied. If given the choice for a centralised resource management of previous services all the PI's answered no..

13) Usage Reporting Facilities

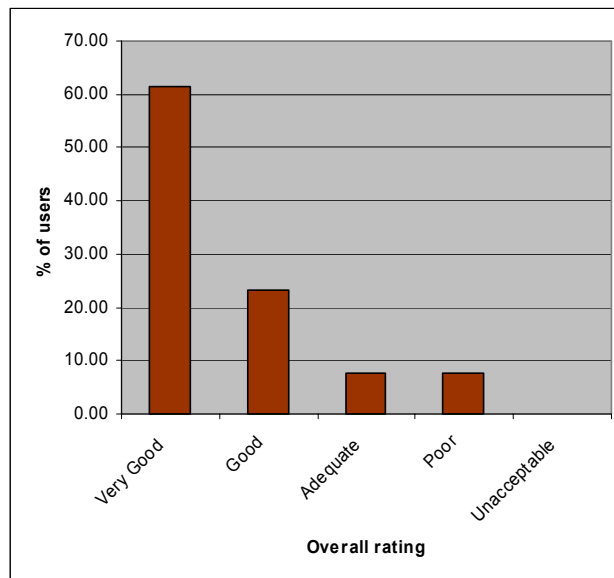
When asked which of the various usage reporting facilities they used the PIs answered as follows:

Type of Reporting Facility	Yes	No
Web-based usage reports	6	1
Web-based summary accounts	6	1
lac command	3	3
Quarterly usage report email	5	2

5 PIs responded that they had used the quarterly usage report email, 3 felt that it helped in monitoring and keeping their project's capacity plan up to date. 2 did not believe that it assisted them.

14) Overall view of CSAR

We asked users their rating of the overall level of High Performance Computing Service provided to them by CSAR. The majority of respondents viewed CSAR in the top two categories (good and very good) 85%. A further 8% felt the service to be adequate while the same number felt the service was poor. This was mostly due to some instability issues with Newton and the number of compiler changes and the lack of information provided regarding these changes.



15) CSAR's contribution to research

When asked whether access to the CSAR systems had contributed to advancements in their research 92% of the 25 respondents agreed that it had. Users were also asked if they could have carried out their research without using the CSAR systems, 27% felt that they could have whilst 73% expressed that they could not have carried out their research without using CSAR.

16) Comparison with 2003

The number of users who submitted their views through the User Survey was lower than for 2003 – approximately 5% of the CSAR user community had completed and submitted a survey, compared with 7% in the previous year.

Users were more satisfied in 2004 than they had been in 2003 with job time limits, the archive facility and service availability. They were as satisfied as they had been in the previous year with job scheduling. The satisfaction level with regards to two aspects of the service – interactive use and temporary disk space - had decreased from 2003 to 2004. A number of comments were made by users in the overall comments field regarding a desire to see an increase in temporary disk space.

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%. Users are just as satisfied with the response they have received from CSAR this year as in 2003 with 100% viewing the response as acceptable.

There has been a decrease in the percentage of users who feel that sufficient information is made available with 75% falling into this category, this was 10% higher in 2003. Awareness of the Status Page has increased by 11% to 84%.

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 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 being fairly or very satisfied. Again the main reason for not using the Support Services is that external support is not required.

In 2003, 61% of users were aware of how efficiently their code was running, this has now fallen in 2004 to 38%. The result for those satisfied with the applications software provided has risen from 87% in 2003 to 92% in 2004.

Last years survey showed 100% of users believed that using CSAR had contributed to advancements in their research, this year the figure had fallen to 92%. The percentage of users who felt that they could have carried out their research without using the CSAR systems has risen from 68% to 73%.

In conclusion, the overall level of satisfaction with the level of the HPC Service has fallen from 100% in 2003 to 92%. The amount of users who placed the service in the top two categories (good and very good) also fell from 91% to 85%. However the number of users who rated the service as very good actually increased from 44% to 62%.