

Policies and Procedures Regarding Computer Resources of the Mathematics and Statistics Department, University of New Mexico

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The purpose of this document is to establish the policy and general operating procedures governing computer resources and support for the Mathematics and Statistics Department of the University of New Mexico (referred to as the department). Additional information referred to in this document can be found on the department website, www.math.unm.edu or www.stat.unm.edu, under the computer support link.

1 Policy

The Mathematics and Statistics Department provides computer resources to promote excellence in research and education through cooperative use of digital technology. This policy covers

1. access to a stable digital infrastructure
2. intended use of the basic resources provided by the department
3. the role of department computer support staff
4. hardware and software provisions

Access to Computing Resources.

The department provides access to its computing resources for faculty, staff, research assistants, long-term visitors, external collaborators, graduate students, and other students taking at least one class offered by the department for which the instructor determines that department computer resources are necessary. Provisions are made on a case-by-case basis for short-term visitors, or other persons with a need for access to department resources.

Intended Use of Computing Resources.

Computing resources are intended for the purpose of conducting business related to the department missions in research, teaching and service. Such use includes research in mathematics and statistics, course preparation and instruction, coursework, department administration and computer support.

Computer Support Staff.

The department hires computer support staff to provide advice, instruction and assistance to department computer users. The support staff is responsible for maintaining computer accounts, installing and updating software, protecting and backing up data, maintaining computer hardware, peripheral devices and networks, and generally insuring that adequate and stable computer resources are available to the department. They are also responsible for basic instruction and advice related to technical use of these resources. The obligations of the computer support staff extend only to support related to the department missions.

Hardware and Software Provisions.

Computing equipment and software will be provided by the department, within the financial constraints imposed upon it, for use consistent with this policy. Every effort will be made to limit the number of different platforms (hardware architectures / operating systems) that the department computer support staff has to support. Similarly, every effort will be made to incorporate hardware and software required to support the overall department mission.

2 Operating Procedures

Website.

The computer support staff will supply up-to-date information for a computer support weblink under the the department webpages, www.math.unm.edu and www.stat.unm.edu, detailing operating procedures and providing access to information as indicated below.

Accounts.

Forms for requesting new accounts are available online. The real name field of the account must correspond to the name of the user, the short username (login ID) is chosen by the user. The username is unrestricted except to bar obscenities and to adhere to length, uniqueness, or other system requirements.

Computer Security.

Passwords should be chosen so as not to be electronically guessable. Specifically, dictionary words of any language, names, dates, keyboard patterns, or permutations of the letters of the username or any other information about the user are not to be used. Accounts are issued to an individual and are intended for that individual exclusively. Sharing of passwords is forbidden.

Physical access is controlled by issuing keys to rooms containing computing resources. Keys are issued by personnel in the main office for the use of an individual. Loaning of keys, or otherwise granting access to unauthorized users is forbidden.

User accounts can access data created by the user and commonly installed application software. In general, the computer support staff will retain control of the so-called ‘root’ access for machines provided by the department. If a user installs software, it must be properly licensed.

Remote Access.

Access to specific machines from outside the department is allowed over secure communication channels. Users may request that remote access be enabled to their desktop computers, or to other special resources under their control, as long as they are willing to accept the associated risk. A description of this risk, and of how to establish a secure communication channel, are provided on the website.

Backups.

The department provides two types of data storage, temporary and permanent. Temporary storage is not backed-up and users should be aware that lost data in these storage areas cannot be recovered. Data in the permanent areas are backed up regularly so that most data in these areas can be recovered. Furthermore, full copies of all the permanent data of the department are rotated with older copies in an offsite location.

The website lists all storage areas, and their designation as temporary or permanent. Details about current backup procedures are also provided on the website.

Scheduled Downtime.

System downtime for maintenance and upgrades may be regularly scheduled. Users are encouraged to consult the website for this schedule so that work can be planned to avoid conflicts.

Requesting help.

The computer support staff is responsible for prompt professional support of everyone that has been granted access to the department computing environment. The method for requesting support can be found on the website. All problems will be responded to within one working day, unless extenuating circumstances prevent it. Problems will be prioritized and worked on in that order. Users will be able to access a log of their support requests with their designated priorities.

Misuse of Computing Resources.

The department reserves the right to restrict access to its resources after it is determined that those resources are intentionally being used in a manner inconsistent with this policy. Examples of misuse are included in Appendix 1 of this document. Repeated intentional misuse could result in permanent denial of access to department resources. Such decisions will be made by the Chair, possibly in consultation with the Computer Use Committee.

The computer support staff is authorized to disable an account or disconnect equipment immediately, in an emergency. An emergency might be when a user’s activity threatens system security, or is interfering with proper use by other users. In the event that an account is disabled or equipment is disconnected, the computer support staff will contact the user as soon as possible to explain the reason for disabling the account or disconnecting the equipment, provide instruction to ensure that the misuse is not repeated, and to reinstate

the account. After the computer support staff takes emergency action, it will deliver a report to the Chair, and/or the Computer Use Committee, at the Chair's discretion, describing the circumstances leading to the determination that an emergency existed, and what actions were taken to resolve the situation.

In non-emergency situations, the computer support staff will contact the user, explain the problem, provide instruction, and submit a report to the Chair and/or Computer Use Committee, as above.

Purchase Review.

Hardware or software purchased with department funds is automatically reviewed. New hardware or software should be requested with a minimum of 6 weeks lead time. The computer support staff and the Computer Use Committee will evaluate the request based on the intended use of the hardware and software, and balance the need with available resources. Considerations include system requirements, maintenance requirements, and financial cost. The procedure for obtaining this purchase review is available on the website.

It is suggested that anyone purchasing computer equipment or software with university funds check with the support staff prior to purchase for their recommendation as to the suitability of the system, its compatibility with existing systems, and the ability of the staff to provide proper support.

Generally, requests for hardware or software installation are prioritized along with other requests for help.

Maintenance.

Typically, computing equipment or software purchased by faculty with university funds after prior consultation will be managed by the computer support staff. Alternatively, faculty members may choose to manage these resources themselves. As long as the equipment or software is being used in a manner consistent with this policy, and does not interfere with the overall performance and security of the department resources, the equipment or software will, if needed, be allowed access to the department computing infrastructure. Faculty who manage their own machines are responsible for consulting with the staff on potential problems their equipment could cause and following reasonable requests to avoid such problems.

Computing equipment or software purchased by faculty with personal funds will, in general, not be managed by the computer support staff. If such equipment is used at the university for department business, the faculty member can request that the equipment or software be managed by the computer support staff.

Faculty advisors can grant permission for network access of devices or software owned by students when such devices or software are used as intended by this policy.

Dispute Resolution.

In the event that the user is not satisfied with the response to his/her request for help or that a problem is not satisfactorily resolved, the complaint should be registered at the lowest level in the chain of authority. The proper chain of authority is

1. Faculty Advisor, in the case of a student
2. Chief of the computing staff, in the case of a dispute with one of his or her subordinates
3. Chair of the Computer Use Committee, if the department Chair so designates
4. Department Chair

This process is not meant compromise the ability of users to accomplish department business. If the situation is critical, the matter should be immediately brought to the attention of the Chair.

Appendix 1

Examples of misuse of department resources include, but are not limited to:

- activities unrelated to department business that interfere with the ability of others to get their work done, such as overloading the network with downloads of large files that are unrelated to department business
- deliberate or repeated breach of security, including account sharing, attempted gain of privileged access, attempted access to data created by someone else without the express permission of that other person, attempted unauthorized access to other systems both inside and outside the department LAN, attempted unauthorized physical access to computing resources, or allowing unauthorized persons such access, unauthorized connection of computing equipment to the department network, or any action that results in anyone gaining unauthorized access (physical or electronic) to any computing resource within or outside the department
- use of department resources for commercial gain
- physical abuse of computing equipment
- mass mailings to department members of material unrelated to department business
- forging electronic mail
- failure to keep virus definitions or security patches up to date on self-managed machines accessing the departmental network