

# IT NEWS

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Welcome to our third edition of the IT Newsletter. It's hard to believe that we are nearing the end of the 2019 first semester of the academic year. It has been a very busy year and the IT team has made some great achievements. We have successfully moved our Student and Finance system to the Ellucian cloud, and the upgrade to version 9 is progressing well. A big shout out to Aisha, Reem, Dr Hussein, Heba and Helen & Hasan and the broader Academic Services and IT teams who have worked incredibly hard to achieve an amazing shift in capability for the university. The UoS is the first in the region to move to the Ellucian cloud and our phones have been ringing hot from other universities in the region that want to follow our lead. We have also finalized and had approved the new IT organisation structure, and we will begin appointing for the new roles which will strengthen the IT capability ensuring our staff and students get the services they need. The world is changing rapidly and we need to change with it, I read a great quote recently from the CEO of General Electric 'If the rate of change on the outside is faster than the rate of change on the inside, the end is near' and UoS is changing rapidly. The vision for the university is to be a world class university, and with the right technologies and the amazing academics and researchers that we have, this is achievable.

We have also completed the first ever version of the IT Architecture for the university, this will provide clarity on how we develop the IT services to meet the exact needs of the university. We will share this with staff and students so that you can have direct input into the direction of the technologies that best enable you to be successful. Thank you to my team and the support and vision of senior management to drive the technology strategy forward. [Enjoy the newsletter.](#)



### Microsoft Azure

As we move to more cloud services there are a range of supporting capabilities that the university needs to develop, including policies, service catalogues, accounting & billing, expense management, contract management, metering, auditing and training. It's essential that the university has these capabilities to ensure IT services meet the expectations (which are high!) from staff, students and researchers. To support this the IT Team participated in a three day Microsoft Azure training course earlier this year. Developing unique skills that enable a whole new way of delivering capability to the university, quickly, reliably and cost effectively. You could say that we are in the process of re-tooling our IT teams, and the benefits for UoS will be significant.

### IT Architecture

The IT systems have developed rapidly over the universities 20 year history, and in that time we have seen significant changes in the types of technology available. Over time this can lead to software and hardware that duplicate each other or conflicts. The IT services provided by our department are highly complex and always changing. As a result we have for the first time completed a full IT architecture for our applications, our hardware and our information. There are over 120 applications being managed by IT on a wide range of hardware platforms. The documents developed can feel a little over whelming when you first look at them as there is so much information in front of you, but as you better understand the principles of how the information is displayed you can easily see the areas that our department needs to focus. This is version 1.0 of our IT architecture and over time we will further refine these plans to ensure the right investments in technology are made and any waste is taken out of our services





### Blackboard Ultra

Our Blackboard environment is going to the cloud and will be on the latest version so that staff can use the new Ultra platform. We are busily working through the project to have our Blackboard environment managed in the cloud by August this year, taking advantage of the cloud reliability and elasticity, so that our staff and student experience is the best in the world. Again, the UoS will be the first in the region to make this leap, as we continue to outpace our competing universities.

### (In Progress) Project Updates

- WiFi – We are at finalizing commercials with two vendors, and will award the contract soon. The procurement has taken longer than expected due to the size of the project. We are hoping to commence the rollout of the new Wifi over the summer, but it may take a year or two to complete. So we will prioritise key areas for early installation.
- MFD – Project had been put on hold whilst we completed other projects, we are re-commencing the procurement phase.

### Security Training

Earlier this year we launched the IT Security awareness training with the support of the Chancellor. This training is critical to the success of the university and it is essential that all Staff complete this training. If you haven't already done so, please complete this training before you leave for the summer break!

### (New) Project Updates

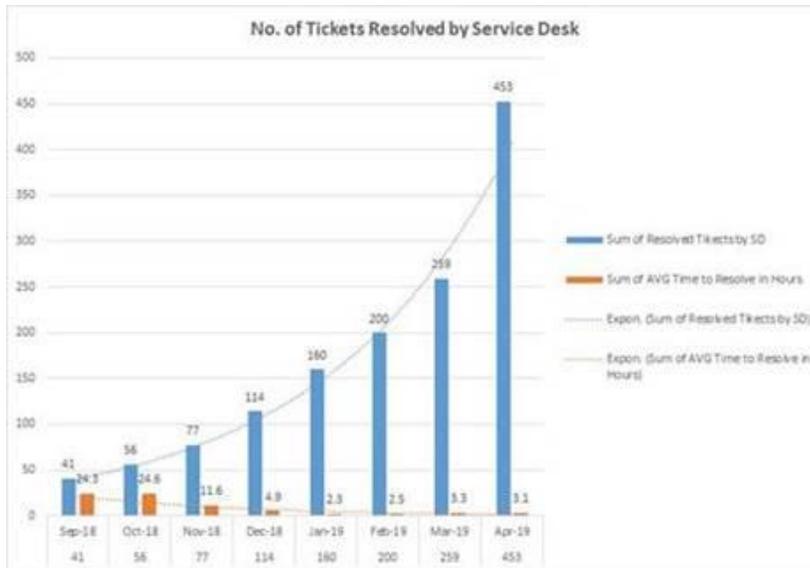
- The University is providing significant funding for teaching space upgrades. High quality AV in teaching spaces to be implemented.
- Digitization – The university is funding a range of digital initiatives to significantly improve operational efficiency and the quality of services to staff and students.

### Linked In Learning

Earlier this year we also launched LinkedIn Learning. This is an amazing resource for staff to develop their digital and business skills in almost any area. We strongly recommend that you give it a go, once you try it you'll be hooked!

### University of Sharjah participating in blackboard Teaching and learning conference 2019

Members from IT Center along with Deanship of Academic Support Services presented University of Sharjah case study about Online exam with title: University of Sharjah experience with online exams highlighting impact on performance and student perception, at Blackboard Teaching & Learning Conference held in Dubai on March 11-13, 2019.



### IT Service Desk

Last year we re-launched the IT Service Desk, making this the central point of contact for raising incidents and service requests. This is critical to providing high quality IT services. I am pleased to advise that this is going very well as the chart opposite indicates.

Please ensure that any support you need is requested via the service desk. This allows our team to work in an optimal way which benefits staff and students. Please do not contact IT staff directly without going through the Service Desk. This allows us to log every call, prioritise it and assign it to the most qualified available IT staff member. [HYPERLINK "mailto:servicedesk@sharjah.ac.ae"](mailto: servicedesk@sharjah.ac.ae) [servicedesk@sharjah.ac.ae](mailto:servicedesk@sharjah.ac.ae) or Extension 2000

### Assistant Director IT Security, Governance & Architecture

We are pleased to introduce Pradeep Nair, who is the new Assistant Director for IT providing oversight and leadership of the IT Security, IT Governance and IT Architecture of the university. Pradeep has significant experience in managing security, governance and architecture for large organisations and is CISSP security qualified. Pradeep has been the ground running and has initiated several initiatives to improve our security posture and the quality of our IT Services, including establishing a Change Advisory and Enterprise Architecture Advisory boards to get better controls around our IT Services. Welcome to the team Pradeep!

