

Guidelines on use of software and general computing resources provided by third parties (cloud services)

This advice relates to the use of software or filespace being offered by 3rd parties. This is usually free or at very reduced cost but creates other concerns that should be considered. This advice will consider first the position of the user, then that of the department that may wish to utilise such products and provide them on to their users.

The jargon used to describe such offerings includes "cloud computing", "software-as-a-service"... - examples are Google Docs, iCloud, Microsoft Skydrive, Amazon Web Services.

For the **user** who wants to take advantage of, possibly free, resources:

1. These resources - software or filespace - often reside on machines/disks that exist wherever is convenient for the service provider. This can change, often frequently, and data may be passed on to or through sub-contractors. More often than not, this is in the US.
The School has various obligations with regard to personal data covered by the Data Protection Act 1998 as outlined in the Data Protection Policy. Specifically, there are responsibilities for security and the restriction of that data to within the European Economic Area (or a small number of other specified countries, not including the US). In particular, **identifiable data should not be put in the cloud.**
2. You must be aware that these facilities usually come with little or no guarantee of availability - you should never use them as your only source of material - e.g. you should not keep your only copy of an important document on a 3rd party disk or use 3rd party software as your only means to get something done.
3. Your data may be encrypted in transit, but you need to consider its storage.

For **departments** considering use of such resources, obviously the points above need consideration, but also:

1. Companies do get into trouble and there have been instances of companies failing and giving users little or no warning to rescue their own data.
2. Even though locally provided LSHTM services can suffer problems, internal services are supported and the School takes all due care and consideration with regards to business continuity when there are problems. Data on IT Services machines is appropriately registered with respect to the Data Protection Act so that the School is not liable to prosecution for breach of the DPA.