Below the responses to the questions raised at the User Group meeting on the 22nd January 2014.

Questions and responses

Q1 – Cardiff: How is it best to use the Software repository tools (User experiencing an SVN error)?

- A fix is available for SVN error in question. Andy Thomas progressed in a follow-up session

- The fix has been published within the Knowledge Base on the HPC Wales portal

Q2 – Swansea: How to "SSH out" of the HPC Wales infrastructure: user experiencing a challenge extracting data out from the cluster via SSH?

- There are security issues/risks exist with opening up the SSH. Following our recent ISO accreditation (ISO9001) we are looking at ways to improve the SSH services.

Q3 – Swansea: How can users take advantage of CFX and the licence available?

- A number of commercial licences have been procured by HPC Wales and if users have a specific requirement, they should contact their local team with any requests, or submit via the support desk

- In relation to CFX, there is a way to access the licence through advanced scheduling. Speak to your local technical support about advanced reservation to lock licences via LSF. Where the impact or frequency of request for this licence increases, then we may need to consider if further licences are required

Q4 – Cardiff: Do users have access to both Ansys Mechanical and Ansys MFX?

- Following a request from a business in Swansea/Pembroke, we are looking at procuring Ansys Mechanical, although this will require a business case.

- We are currently in the process of reviewing the licensing as many of the current licences will reach their renewal date in April 2014. It is vital that all users confirm any extensions needed and potential additional licences with your local team.

Q5 – Bangor: Is there an easy way for users to manage database implementation (particularly in Genomics)?

- A variety of databases is already available on the HPC systems (e.g., Hadoop, Oracle general Enterprise Solution etc.)

- Particular cases for data sets / additional requirements can be discussed with your local team and will be escalated where necessary.

Questions and responses

Q6 – Bangor: What is the situation for GP-GPU on the HPC system?

- There are 2 x GP-GPU systems available with modest capability, one at the Swansea Hub, the second at Cardiff. Both have 16 dual processor e5-2700 Sandy Bridge nodes, with each node housing a single Fermi 2900 GPU. Queues are in place: e - q_sw_gpu and q_sw_gpu – to enable submission through the batch LSF queues.

Q7 – Aberystwyth: How free is the user to choose where to store their data? How far does SynfiniWay allow decisions about where jobs can be run?

- For ease of use, data is best stored closest to you on your local system.

- Aberystwyth are looking at an option to distribute data across the system, dependent on file-space availability (Ed Flikkema's project), which is in progress with the local team

Q8 – Aberystwyth: How long does it take to create a SynfiniWay workflow that doesn't already exist?

- Typically 1 -2 days dependent on the complexity of the workflow, the applications and whether it requires a "grab & wrap" or needs to be created from scratch.

Q9 – USW: Are there plans to improve responsiveness to Service Now tickets, the case in point relating to significant delays over a Matlab-related query?

- Matlab functionality is available on the system. A review of the specific user problem around Matlab will be undertaken and HPC Wales will enable access, or explain any technical barriers.

- Note: As Matlab is a commercial code we have limited licences. Therefore we encourage researchers to use open source applications, such as Octave. We also recommend that the code is initially compiled using an in-house Matlab compiler (to avoid using the licence for the initial compilation work) and then run on HPC Wales services following this.

Q10 – USW: Can HPC Wales improve their feedback to the users on outcomes of tickets?

- As a matter of course, the Technical and Training & Outreach teams are always ready to follow up any queries. Should there be an outstanding issue it is not necessary to wait for the "ticket update", do contact your local team if you're concerned about a delayed outcome with little or no response.

- Of course, there's always room for improvement! We are working on a number of methods to signal outcomes of questions to our users and hope these improvements to our processes will improve communications.

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Questions and responses

Q11 – USW: Is there access to specific training e.g. Gromacs?

- The Skills team (James Osborne and Charlie Godfrey) are working on application specific training and will respond to this specific query.

- We are producing a number of Video Tutorials which will be published shortly in the Knowledge Base on the Portal, in addition to developing a LMS (Learning Management System) which will support a blended learning approach to skills development. We are looking at adding new training materials as a matter of urgency. This is a priority for us so we can build on the courses we're running across Wales.

Q12 – USW: Can users get SynfiniWay workflow training?

- Please forward any training needs to the Service desk / your local Technical team and they can plan a specific training workshop for you

- The next User group is planned to have more thematic sessions in a Face-to-Face setting. This could include specific training within your sector.

Q13 – Swansea: Is "critical computing" on the agenda for the future?

- Fujitsu have looked at "urgent" computing in the past but there are no current research projects in this area.

Q14 – How many users are developing their own code?

- Although no users from this User group session highlighted their own code development, we would stress that both NAG and FLE are available to provide assistance. Furthermore, the available Allinea products on the system will undoubtedly prove useful in optimising code performance.

Further guides have recently been introduced on the Knowledge Base to help you within the Other Reference Guide section and if you need to contact us, please select the Support Desk tab on the portal or send an email to support@hpcwales.co.uk.

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