



# Hosted Services

## Frequently Asked Questions

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# Hosted Services FAQ

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## The Basics

### What is a Hosted System?

A Hosted System generally refers to a complete outsourced IT managed service where the technology used to deliver the service usually resides in a location other than your own office environment.

Other terms sometimes used to describe hosted systems include;

- SaaS - Software as a Service
- ASP – Application Service Provision
- Managed Service
- Cloud Computing
- Utility Computing

### What is a “Data Centre”?

A Data Centre (commonly abbreviated to “DC”) is a building purpose built for housing computer, network and telephony systems. The power, network and environmental conditions are designed to offer the best performance from the computer systems housed within them.

*Did you know?* - A typical DC will cost millions of pounds to build. The primary Data Centre facility used to house the IRIS hosted systems are in a decommissioned Bank of England Bullion Vault.

### How secure are Data Centres?

Data Centres typically house information with a high value or sensitivity. As a result, every aspect of the location is chosen to ensure that security is maintained. The physical location of a DC tends to be inconspicuous by design.

Access to a Data Centre is strictly controlled, with requests for entry restricted to named individuals by prior arrangement only, with further identity checks performed at the time of the visit. Additionally, the facility has 24-hour video surveillance in operation, covering all areas of the facility.

The facility is protected from flood, fire and bomb attack.

*Did you know?* The primary Data Centre used by IRIS uses 3 Chieftain Tank diesel engines to provide on-site power in the event of a failure to the power supply from the national grid.

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## I've heard the term "Tier" mentioned - what does this mean?

The term "Tiering" is used to differentiate the offerings of a Data Centre. The first describes the physical location and facilities, and the second being the network connectivity to the Internet. Unfortunately, the terminology can be confusing as the term Tiering is applied to both of these, but each uses a different method of scoring.

### ***Data Centre Tiering***

When applied to the capabilities of a Data Centre, there are currently four levels used to describe the levels of redundancy within the physical location. These are scored between 1 and 4, with higher numbers being better. These are as follows:

- **Tier 1** – There is no redundancy built into the facility covering items such as power, network links and cooling. There are many single points of failure
- **Tier 2** – Features of Tier 1 + a number of redundant components
- **Tier 3** - Features of Tier 1 & 2 plus additional redundancy including preventive maintenance, repair and replacement of components, and testing of systems which can be done without disrupting operation
- **Tier 4** - All features of Tier 1, 2 & 3 + all components are fully fault-tolerant including network connectivity, environmental systems, power etc.

The primary Data Centre used to house the IRIS Hosted Systems is a **Tier 3**.

### ***Network Connectivity Tiering***

When Tiering is applied to Internet network connectivity, the scoring system is reversed, with Level 1 being the highest. There are three tiers, which are as follows:

- Tier 1 – The network provider is one that does not rely on another supplier for its connectivity to reach any other portion of the Internet
- Tier 2 - A network provider that has agreements in place with other providers in order to rely on connectivity to reach some portions of the Internet
- Tier 3 - A network provider that relies solely on other network providers in order to reach the Internet.

There are only a limited number of Tier-1 providers in the world.

The Internet connectivity at the primary Data Centre used to house the IRIS Hosted Systems is a **Tier 1**.

## Where are the data centres located?

The IRIS Hosted Services are delivered from two data centres in the UK. The primary data centre is located in Manchester, with the backup DR data centre located in Leeds.

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## Accessing the Hosted System

### How do I access the system from my office PC?

Connecting from your office is achieved through a service known as “Remote Desktop”. This technology, developed by Microsoft, allows full access to the hosted applications and data

*Did you know?* – Any Windows XP (SP3), Windows Vista or Windows 7 PC comes pre-supplied with the Remote Desktop software required to connect to the hosted systems. All that a user needs is their logon server and user details to access the system

### How do I access the system from my home PC?

Full access can also be obtained from your internet connected PC at home. You will initially need to install the icon for connecting to the hosted system from our website. Once this is completed, you will be able to connect to the hosted applications as you do from your office.

*Did you know?* –We have hundreds of users online from their homes each day. The savings in terms of time and money made by working from home can be considerable. The IRIS Hosted Systems make home-working easy and productive

### How do I access my e-mail from a PC in an Internet Café, Hotel or Airport?

You may be on holiday or waiting for a plane when you realise that you need access to your e-mail on the Hosted System. The majority of publicly available internet computers nowadays will typically offer access to the Internet for browsing the web and looking at web-based e-mail services. The Hosted E-Mail system from IRIS allows you to take advantage of these facilities, allowing access to your e-mail, calendars, tasks and contacts stored in the mail system.

### Can I access my full hosted desktop from a PC in an Internet Café?

Public computers typically only offer Internet access through a web browser. The connection to the hosted system requires a one-time installation of a small piece of software or an ActiveX component. Unfortunately, due to the restrictions in place on these public computers, they do not allow software to be installed on the local computer. This restriction, which is imposed by the public Internet access provider and not IRIS, will therefore not allow you to access the full facilities that you would normally enjoy from an unrestricted PC.

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## Can I access the IRIS Hosted System from my Apple Mac?

We offer full access to the hosted systems from Apple Mac OsX computers, using the same “Remote Desktop” technology as is available on Microsoft Windows XP, Windows Vista and Windows 7 operating systems.

In addition, the IRIS hosted webmail system is available on any Apple Mac which has the “Safari” or “Internet Explorer” web browsers.

*Did you know?* – Microsoft has a website dedicated to the Apple Macintosh – simply visit the site [www.mactopia.com](http://www.mactopia.com)

## Can I access the IRIS Hosted System from my Apple iPhone or iPod?

If you have an Apple iPhone (version 2 and above) or iPod with access to the Internet using WiFi or 3G, users can send and receive e-mail on their device. These systems have the ability to connect to the IRIS hosted e-mail using the “Microsoft Exchange Active Sync Push Email” system.

## Can I access the IRIS Hosted System from my Apple iPad?

In addition to the iPhone and iPod, the system also supports access over the Internet from an iPad, equipped with WiFi or 3G. You can send and receive e-mail on your device using the same technology as the iPhone.

For users with full hosted subscriptions, the addition of an inexpensive add-on application provides you with access to the full IRIS Hosted Desktop including the IRIS application software, Microsoft Office, E-Mail and documents.

## What speed of internet connection do I require?

Whilst connected to the hosted system, your computer is using your internet connection to pass data back and forth invisibly to the hosted system. The amount of bandwidth required is dependent on a number of factors. These include the size of the Remote Desktop “window” that is being displayed, whether local PC hard drives are connected, the printers that may be connected and used on your PC and the amount of concurrent users connecting over the same broadband link for sites that have a LAN (Local Area Network).

Most “Broadband” connections available today should be suitable for single PC connections to the IRIS hosted systems. Where there is a connection from an office environment with several connected users, we will work with you to determine the optimal speed required for your environment.

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## **Can I use a 3G mobile data card or wireless USB device to access the hosted system when out of the office?**

Access to the hosted systems for users with laptop computers fitted with mobile data cards can access the systems when there is a suitable connection. The speed of access is very much dependent upon the quality of service, coverage and data bandwidth provided by your mobile provider.

## **What is the minimum specification of a PC to connect to the IRIS Hosted System?**

The IRIS Hosted Systems allow access from virtually any modern internet connected PC, laptop, netbook and “Thin client” device, covering operating environments including Microsoft Windows XP (SP3), Windows Vista, Windows 7, Apple Mac and even some versions of Linux. The only stipulation is that the operating system used on the PC should still be included in mainstream support by the manufacturer. Your IRIS representative will be able to give you details of preferred equipment specifications.

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## Hosted System Security

### What security protects my data from unauthorised external access?

Security is paramount when it comes to delivering hosting services, and we at IRIS place the utmost importance on the technologies used to protect against unauthorised access.

Our multiple layers of security, covering application and data

- **Layer 1** - The first level of protection is offered at the Data Centre. The DC utilises a technology known as “Distributed Denial Of Service” protection to ensure the IRIS Hosted System remains online even in the event of a targeted attack by hackers
- **Layer 2** – The next level of security is provided at the gateway of the IRIS Hosted System. The firewalls in place are owned and managed entirely by IRIS, and have been chosen to provide the highest level of compliance with the relevant standards bodies (ICSA Firewall 4, ICSA IPSec, NEBS Level 3, FIPS 140-2 Level 2, EAL4+ US DoD)
- **Layer 3** - Once the data has been approved by the firewalls, all logon information is encrypted using SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) technologies for all Remote Desktop and webmail connections. The webmail connections are all protected using a 1024-bit certificate issued by Thawtes, a world-leading provider of certification. Once logon to the hosted system has been granted, all data continues to be encrypted in transit until the connection is ended

*Did you know?* – Our firewalls block many thousands of unauthorised connections per day from “internet hackers”.

### Which users of the IRIS Hosted Systems can access my data?

By default all your personal data is only accessible by yourself or anyone to whom you have given your logon details. IRIS staff regularly checks for loopholes in the “file security” that is used to protect your personal data

### Which IRIS staff will have access to my data?

The Hosted Support team, with a combined total of more than 50 years experience of working within the IT sector, are the only individuals within IRIS that have administrative access to the IRIS Hosted Network. The staff assigned to the management and support of these systems has a long history of working with client systems, ensuring sensitive and secure material is maintained. Ensuring that the people responsible for the security of a “hosted network” can be trusted is a key contribution to the security of your data.

### How are IRIS Hosted backups performed?

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All client email, documents and IRIS application data is constantly replicated to multiple “Mirror” servers contained within the primary Data Centre. In addition to the online data replication, all data within the systems are backed up to removable media every night of the year using an “Auto-Loader” tape solution. The tapes within the unit are cycled over a 22 day period with a tape replaced in each cycle to give IRIS a historical backup spanning 12 months

*Did you know? –Each night IRIS backups up to tape an amount of data equivalent to 55,000 trees being made into paper and printed*

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## System Usage and Availability

### What is “uptime” and how does IRIS perform on this measure?

Uptime is a term used to describe the percentage of time that a system is available (systems availability) for use. IRIS produces monthly statistics for this measure which is provided to clients in a monthly report.

### Are there any times when the system is not available?

As part of our commitment to ensure the hosted systems reliability and stability is sustained, we perform regular schedule maintenance and upgrades on the hosted systems environment. The bulk of maintenance work can be performed at any time and in such a way that end-user operations are unaffected. In addition, we also operate a regular scheduled maintenance period that currently runs between 6.00am and 9.00am each Saturday morning. The hosted systems are taken “offline” for this period which allows us to apply security fixes and application updates on all systems.

### How will I know when the system will be in “maintenance”?

IRIS has an automated email alert that is sent on each Friday evening prior to the weekly maintenance as an initial reminder. On the morning of the maintenance work “on screen” pop-up warnings are sent at 45 minute, 15 minute, 5 minute and 1 minute intervals prior to the work commencing.

### What printers can I use on the hosted system?

The majority of “standard” printers are supported by the IRIS Hosted System. However in recent years, printer manufacturers have developed their own bespoke printing solutions to reduce the cost of printers to the consumer. These devices have not been designed to be compatible with server-based systems, and as such, cannot be used to print from within the IRIS Hosted System.

Whilst the low cost of such a printer may seem attractive at the outset, the printer manufacturer is likely to have made cost savings in every aspect of the printers design, which in turn can mean the lifespan and reliability of these printers may also suffer.

Printer manufacturers will occasionally “re-brand” a printer as their own, using technology developed elsewhere. The providers will use their own names for these “personal” printers which can make the process of selecting a printer even more confusing.

IRIS can provide recommendations upon request for a wide range of supported printers which will work on the hosted system. When selecting your printers, the key technologies to look for are:

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- PCL – “Printer Command Language” - originally developed by Hewlett Packard
- PS – “PostScript” - developed by Adobe

Both PCL and PS based printers use standard technologies which have been in use for over 20 years.

## Can I connect to my network printer from within hosted?

We support a significant number of popular network printers within the hosted systems. Each printer would need to have a WHQL signed driver from the printer manufacturer or the Microsoft Windows Update web site, and have been tested and certified for use by our support team. In addition, we would need to be able to create a secure VPN tunnel from your site to our hosted systems. As part of the implementation process, our project team will review your current setup and provide advice on any changes that may be required to allow you to take advantage of this service.

## Can I use my scanner with the IRIS Hosted Systems?

Yes, any scanner that is working on your PC at the moment can be used with the IRIS Hosted Systems. There is an initial fee and monthly subscription associated with each scanner that you would like attached to the network.

## Can I store and play my music and videos on the hosted system?

The technologies used within the hosted systems environment are designed for the delivery of business applications over the Internet. The systems are not designed to be used for playback of video and music content.

In addition, the majority of music and video content is subject to strict copyright laws, and therefore for legal reasons, we do not provide the ability to store this type of content on the hosted system.

IRIS recommends that any personal music and video files are backed up from your PC using an external USB drive or online backup system.

*Did you know?* – [IRIS provides an online backup service for PC's, please contact Sales for more information](#)

## Can I copy documents between the hosted servers and my local PC?

When connected to the hosted servers, you will have the ability to copy ad-hoc documents between the hosted system and your local PC. Although this solution is available as standard, we only recommend this for occasional transfers of relatively small documents (Word, Excel etc.) between the systems in order to avoid duplicated information between systems and to ensure that the internet bandwidth from your location remains optimal.

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## What applications are available on the Hosted System?

The core applications available within the hosted systems are:

- Certified IRIS Software Applications
- Microsoft Office 2007 Standard Edition
  - Word
  - Excel
  - PowerPoint
  - Excel
- Microsoft Exchange Server 2007
- Windows Mobile
- Internet Explorer
- Security
  - Anti-Virus
  - Anti-Spam
  - Anti-Phishing
- Adobe Reader
- PDF Creation
- Document Scanning

## Do I have to pay extra for upgrades to the software when they are released?

The appropriate rental subscription includes both the licence and upgrades when they are installed on the hosted systems. The predictability of subscription fees is one of the many benefits of using a hosted solution.

## Can I install and use other applications on the hosted system?

The hosted systems operate within a controlled environment. All applications that run within the environment have been through a strict technical validation and sign-off procedure. This validation process ensures system stability and security is maintained within the system. All applications have to be installed by our hosted services support team.

Occasionally, there may be additional third party applications that clients would like to consider using within the hosted environment. IRIS is able to consider the installation of additional third party applications, but there are a number of questions and steps that need to be addressed prior to agreement, which include:

- The type of application
- Compatibility of the software within the hosted environment
- Resources required (i.e. memory, disk space etc.) in order to run the software
- Number of concurrent users that require access to the application
- Level of resiliency required

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- Levels of integration and compatibility of the application with the existing applications working within the hosted environment
- Popularity of the application (ie. is the product likely to be used / required by other businesses operating within hosted)
- Contractual & licensing implications of operating the software within a hosted environment
- The initial costs associated with validating the software within the environment
- The on-going costs associated with hosting the software

The formal testing process has been designed to ensure that the application performs correctly on our systems and that the application provider allows their software to be used on such a system as per the terms of their licence agreement with you.

## **Do I own the software?**

The software that is used on the hosted systems remains the property of the suppliers. Clients that access the systems simply pay a rental fee on a monthly basis which allows them access to the software and infrastructure during the period of their contract and whilst payments continue.

## **I have a copy of Microsoft Office loaded on my PC – Can I use that licence within the hosted systems?**

The licence agreement with Microsoft does not allow you to use the licence and software that has been purchased with a local PC within the hosted services environment. You can continue to use a fully licensed local copy of Office on your desktop or laptop computer, but if you require access to Office software within the hosted environment, a rental fee is payable for each user that accesses the system.

## **Can I use the hosted services software licence to run software on my local PC?**

The rental agreement allows users to run the software applications within the hosted environment only. Software and licences that are paid for on a rental basis cannot be installed locally on a desktop or laptop PC.

## **How can I access my e-mail on the hosted service?**

For users that have signed up to the hosted Exchange e-mail solution, you can access your e-mail from any of the following:

- Over the Internet using a compatible web browser such as Internet Explorer, Firefox or Safari
- On a Windows Mobile device, iPhone or Blackberry device

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- Within the hosted services environment using Microsoft Outlook 2007

You cannot use a locally installed copy of Outlook to access the hosted e-mail system.

## Can I View Adobe PDF Documents on the Hosted Systems?

Adobe PDF (Portable Document Format) documents are a universally accepted method of viewing information on different computing environments. A PDF “reader” uses a portable format which is generally available for viewing read-only documents.

For the majority of PDF documents, there is little or no difference in the display performance within a hosted environment when compared to a locally accessed document. However, the exception to this is where a document has a significant high graphical element (for example, manufacturers “glossy” brochures). For this type of document, there can be a performance difference when viewed through the Hosted System. The performance difference between a local PC and a hosted system is due to some limitations within Windows Terminal Services technology, which is used to deliver content from the hosted system to your desktop device.

Although the generic PDF format is built on certain standards, there are different versions available which can also have an impact on the experience within the hosted environment. The versions include:

- PDF Version 1.3 – This is the most compatible and there are rarely performance issues experienced with documents created to this standard
- PDF Version 1.4 – This is the current Adobe recommend version of PDF creation. At the time of writing, Adobe are still working on improving performance when viewing these documents
- PDF Version 1.5 and Acrobat 3D - These are new versions which are not yet commonly available and are not compatible with any of the freeware PDF viewers that can be downloaded. Documents produced to this level are therefore the ones which will generally suffer from performance issues when viewed in Hosted due to the extra processor time required to prepare the documents for the screen to be viewed

The majority of clients on the hosted services platform are able to view PDF documents without any limitations, and these restrictions are generally limited to a handful of users with very specific requirements.

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## How many clients use IRIS Hosted Services?

The IRIS Hosted Service solution is currently in use at over 70 individual businesses, with user counts in excess of a 1200.

## Who owns the data?

The data (e-mail, documents, case information etc.) that is created and input by the client and stored on the hosted systems remains the property of the end-user client. IRIS provides and maintains the server-based infrastructure and applications that allow access to this information.

## Can I have a copy of my documents and email on CD or DVD?

IRIS can produce to order CD or DVD copies of users' personal data upon request. As this process can be time consuming IRIS will be required to make a small additional charge to the customer in the event of such a request

## Can I add more users to the system if my business expands?

A significant benefit offered by a hosted solution is that it provides clients with the ideal platform to allow their businesses to grow easily without the need to spend significant amounts on local server implementations and consultancy. Once the initial system setup, configuration and migration have taken place, adding users to the system can take as little as 24 hours to complete.

## I have part-time staff that "job share" – Can they use the hosted system?

Part-time staff that "share" a role within a business can be setup with a single login for access to the systems if required. This login can be used by both individuals, but only one person is able to use the system at any time. The login provides access to the same system profile, documents and e-mail (where applicable). If the part-time users require their own unique e-mail address, document storage and software account, or they need to access the system at the same time, then each user will require a separate account which will incur a per-user, per-month fee.

## What technologies are used by IRIS behind the scenes in the Hosted System?

IRIS works alongside some of the world's leading hardware and software vendors. Our strategic partnerships with leading brands such as Microsoft, Dell and Cisco ensure the IRIS Hosted System provides some of the very best levels of service and support available in the marketplace today.

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*Did you know?* – On an average day, 65 NEW viruses appear – all of which are trapped by the security solutions in place within the hosted systems!

## **Do I need a server in my office when I join the IRIS Hosted System?**

Although the IRIS Hosted Systems have no specific requirement for a server to be located at your offices, some customers may choose to implement or retain a local server for a number of reasons. Your PC's may be connected to a network "domain controller" which is used to perform a secure logon to the local systems, allowing access to shared printers, local files and non-hosted applications when not connected to the IRIS Hosted System. One of our consultants will work with you to determine your specific requirements during the implementation process.

## **Will I have access to the latest versions of software on the Hosted System?**

IRIS has a commitment for our hosted clients to be running the latest versions of software once they have been through a rigorous testing procedure.