

Introduction to PC Anywhere Software

PC Anywhere is software which allows remote administration of computers. This means that, should a student have a problem with a PC it can be accessed remotely and the problem sorted. Some of the undergraduate/taught postgraduate machines are almost 200 meters from the help desk and through seven sets of doors and up two flights of stairs. The time saved in not having to make such a return trip allows a much better helpdesk service to be offered to our students.

The software has many beneficial facilities. The file transfer, and command shell features are especially useful for remote diagnosis of problems. There is also a "remote viewing" functionality to the software which allows the Helpdesk Support person to view error messages and operational difficulties as they are happening, aiding resolution.

Previously, if a student had a problem with a PC they would lock it and go looking for one of the Helpdesk personnel. Invariably the Helpdesk personnel would be out fixing some other glitch. By the time the student in question had found them and returned to their PC it would have been rebooted and taken by another student (resulting in loss of work).

Using the PC Anywhere software allows problems to be resolved remotely. Should a problem arise with a computer a student can lock it, go to the nearest internal phone and call the Helpdesk. The Helpdesk personnel then log the call (nature of problem, etc.) and address the problem remotely. The student can return to the laboratory to their PC (well before the fifteen-minute window has elapsed).

Because problems can be resolved remotely (i.e.: without having to leave the Helpdesk) the Helpdesk personnel should be more accessible and therefore available for these phone queries.

Disk imaging is also in use. We have weekly laboratory maintenance sessions scheduled for each lab. These sessions aim to be pre-emptive and preventative in nature. Any computer displaying signs of problems (or likely problems) are re-imaged during these sessions. It is not practical to re-image during other periods. The PC Anywhere software is to be utilised outside of these scheduled sessions.

Operational Criteria

The following are the operational criteria to be taken into account when using the "Remote Viewing" functionality of the PC Anywhere software

- the system is normally used from the CA helpdesk only and is not available from any other location in the CA building;
- it may also be used by senior technical support personnel in the course of their duties with the express knowledge of the Head of School or School Manager;

- the system is used when a student requests help from the helpdesk or technical support and is used to replicate a machine on which the student is logged on in order to resolve some technical difficulty or problem that the student is encountering;
- the purpose of the system is to allow technical support staff perform remote diagnostics on such machines without having to leave the helpdesk;
- the system is used to monitor another PC only:
 - when the Head of School or School Manager has been informed and where there is a strong enough suspicion of a breach of laboratory usage rules to convince the Head of School or School Manager to do so. The decision to monitor a PC without the knowledge of the user is made by the Head of School or School Manager only;

or

- in the case where a student is clearly in breach of the laboratory usage rules and presentation of a student ID card has been formally requested by an identified staff member but presentation is refused. Offenders will be notified of their offence and that the remote viewing software will be utilised to identify the account under which they are logged in and disable it. This procedure aims to reduce the potential for unnecessary confrontation within the lab environment.
- the system may be used to monitor PCs in the undergraduate/taught postgraduate labs only and may not under any circumstances be used on staff or postgraduate research students' machines;
- all technical support staff are made familiar with these guidelines.