



THE WHITE ROSE GRID

e-Science Centre of Excellence

Frequently Asked Questions

Why should I use Grid?

Grid offers an infrastructure to support e-Research for scientists and non-scientists alike.

Key advantages are:

- Discovery of and access to computing and information resources not previously available.
- Making access to resources simpler.
- The ability to collaborate with others more easily.
- New ways of working that facilitate research.

All this is designed to allow the researcher to get the resources they need to enhance their research efficiency, and to get things done today that might previously have taken weeks on small, local resources.

What is Grid exactly?

The Grid is not so much an entity as a collection of technologies. The aim of these is to allow collaboration in the realm of computing and data whilst ensuring security of computing systems and data.

Common themes in Grid are:

- Geographical distribution – the resources (computing, data), and individuals involved may be spread across the globe.
- Virtual Organisations – groups of individuals or companies that come together and collaborate on a particular project or task.
- Aggregation of computing – making a set of distributed resources usable without detailed knowledge of remote sites being necessary. I.e. Work is simplified and task based.
- Work flows – joining together resources so that the results of one stage feed into the next.
- Ease-of-use – tying together all these strands so that using supercomputing power spread across the globe is as easy as using a desktop.
- Open standards for achieving all of these.

The ultimate aim of Grid computing is to make best use of computing power by aggregating it and making it as easy to use as plugging something into an electrical socket, i.e. Using the electrical grid.

What is the White Rose Grid?

The White Rose Grid was the first regional Grid set up in the UK. It is designed to allow sharing of resources between the universities of the White Rose Consortium, that is Leeds, Sheffield, and York. It has been running from 2002 and now has an associated e-Science Centre of Excellence.

Why was the White Rose Grid set up?

There are a number of reasons:

- To give the White Rose Universities experience of using Grid, allowing the White Rose Universities to develop valuable expertise and potential spin offs.
- To support e-Research within the White Rose Universities by providing facilities for enhancing collaboration and coping with peak demands in computing needs.
- To provide users with access to heterogeneous resources that would otherwise require significant additional funding on behalf of each institution to achieve the same level of service.
- To provide for continuity in case of disaster.

What facilities does the White Rose Grid offer?

Each site offers a number of computing machines and data storage and other facilities such as web services containers and application servers.

Thus the total number of CPU cores on offer across the White Rose Grid is 960, with this set to break the 1000 barrier in May as York upgrades its facilities.

How do I get access to the local facilities?

To access your local service simply contact the system administration team at your local site.

How do I get access to the other sites?

To access the other machines there is an application form to fill out which covers the legal requirements for cross-site usage, ensuring that you agree to abide by the usage policies at every site.



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How much time can I get on a machine?

At each local site you will be allocated a share of resources according to the local policies. In general you will be allocated resources on a "fair share" policy. This allows you to use more resources some days than others provided that over time you use roughly the share you are allocated.

By default each site reserves 75% of its resources for local users with 25% being shared across the White Rose Grid.

How much does the service cost me?

Policies regarding charging and full economic costing across the White Rose Grid are under discussion. Local sites are responsible for charging policies for local users.

What is the National Grid Service?

The National Grid Service is like a larger version of the White Rose Grid which is run across sites spanning the UK. You may get access to this by registering at www.ngs.ac.uk

A National Grid Service node is hosted by the White Rose Grid.

What is Campus Grid?

This is a way to use otherwise underutilised computers across campuses (e.g. Classroom PCs) which would allow the main White Rose Grid machines to be reserved for jobs that need higher powered machines. This is currently being considered in the context of the associated environmental impact and technical requirements.

What are digital certificates?

Digital certificates are means of uniquely identifying a user so that you don't have to keep entering passwords to access resources. These are required for the National Grid Service and very useful for some types of work on the White Rose Grid. Each local White Rose Grid site can issue digital certificates under the e-Science programme.

How does Access Grid fit in?

Access Grid is a video conferencing system and is somewhat distinct from Grid computing. Please see the flyer about Access Grid for more information.

Where can I find more information about the White Rose Grid?

The main White Rose Grid web site is at www.wrgrid.org.uk

Each site also has its own web site:

Leeds: www.leeds.ac.uk/iss/wrgrid/

Sheffield: www.wrgrid.group.shef.ac.uk

York: www.wrg.york.ac.uk

These sites host information on how to get access to the resources locally, latest news updates, and so on.

Where can I find out more about Grid?

Useful web sites include:

- UK National e-Science Centre – www.nesc.ac.uk
- UK National Grid Service – www.ngs.ac.uk
- UK Open Middleware Infrastructure Institute – Grid middleware tools – www.omii.ac.uk
- Grid Today – up-to-date Grid news – www.gridtoday.com/gridtoday.html
- Globus toolkit home page (defacto standard Grid programming tools) – www.globus.org
- Storage Request Broker – distributed data tool – www.npaci.edu/DICE/SRB/index.html
- Global Grid Forum – www.ggf.org
- Enterprise Grid Alliance – business users of Grid – www.gridalliance.org
- Grid Cafe – an overview site – gridcafe.web.cern.ch
- Home page of Carl Kesselman, one of the founders of Grid Computing, a good source for milestone papers on Grid – www.isi.edu/~carl
- Home page of Ian Foster, one of the founders of Grid Computing, a good source for milestone papers on the Grid – www.fp.mcs.anl.gov/~foster