CITRIX
Desktop Virtualisation

Work from anywhere

The NWU has put considerable effort into establishing a facility that delivers virtual Desktops pre-loaded with relevant software to allow uninterrupted work on almost any modern device - a PC, tablet, or even smartphone - with an internet connection at any time.

1

For students this means that Lab applications are accessible on their own devices wherever they are any time of the day or night, both on campus and remotely. These applications can be accessed when students launch the 'Lab Desktop' found after logging in on the Citrix platform.
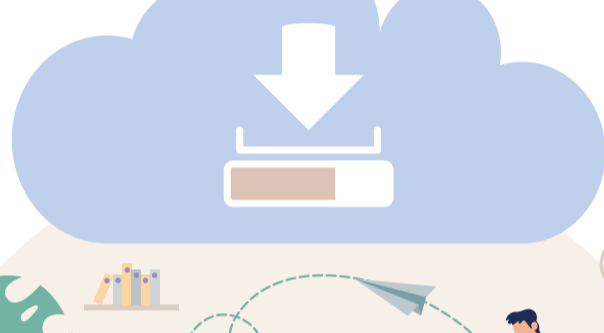
2

Staff have access to the 'Staff Desktop - Multi Session' virtual desktop through which they can use general purpose applications such as MS Office and GroupWise, as well as network drives or any other resource which is accessible only on campus.

3

There are also special case virtual desktops which have been prepared for specific user groups such as students from Computer Science collaborating on projects, and VSS users spending the largest part of their day working on that system in the virtual environment.

Saving and persistence

1

With virtual desktops, multiple users share the same computing resources. Each time you log in, you will be assigned a new Desktop. The implication is that after you log off, files and folders will be lost – except those created in your Documents folder. Take note - files and folders in your Documents folder will be available every time you log in to a virtual Desktop.

2

When using the Windows Workspace App client (or when using the light version, which runs in your browser) to access the virtual desktop, you can transfer files back and forth between the client device and virtual machine with ease. Based on the latter, it does not work when using Linux, Mac, or mobile clients. In the Getting Started guides for staff and students, you can find more information on the different options and how to use these environments.

3

Many peripherals such as webcams, scanners, digital pens and 3d mice should also work in the virtual environment.

Lockdown and zero rating

1

Phase 1 of the Lab Virtualisation project, initially deployed only to several physical computer labs across the NWU campuses by the 20th of April 2020. Still, with the lockdown implementation, the focus shifted to quickly delivering the service to students - and staff - now having to work from home. Due to the previous, it was advantageous as the Citrix platform is optimized for low bandwidth connections, meaning even users with slow or unstable connections could benefit from it. Part of this optimization is also minimizing data usage to help users with usage limits. And finally, Citrix was one of the platforms which were zero-rated for use by NWU students.

2

Are you looking for additional software or features on the Virtual Desktops? Log a Citrix Request on the NWU Support Portal, and we'll be in touch to discuss it further.

Links to service

Read more about how to get started using this service on the NWU IT Service Catalogue:
http://services.nwu.ac.za/it-service-catalogue/pc-lab-virtualisation