



FAQ on Cloud Computing

1. What is the “cloud”?

The *cloud* is a broad term for describing a service on the Internet where you can store files, use/edit documents, or delete stored information from anywhere as long as you have a computer, laptop, tablet, mobile phone or any other internet-enabled gadget. Examples of cloud services include Dropbox, Windows Live, GoogleDocs, Evernote, Office365.

2. Where is the data or information stored?

Data is spread across many different servers in different locations and possibly in different countries. For example, Google has data centres located in the USA, Taiwan, Singapore, Finland, Belgium and Ireland. Be aware though that the cloud provider chooses how or where it will store the data on its virtual servers.

3. What is Curtin’s primary concern with cloud services?

The majority of cloud services are hosted in the United States of America where Australian legislation does not apply. Consequently, data or information that travels outside Australia is subject to foreign laws (for example USA’s Patriot Act) and we may not have control of who can access it.

In addition, data centres located in China, Japan, India, Singapore, Philippines and Vanuatu do not have the same data protection legislation as Australia has.

Curtin cannot guarantee that the cloud service can guard against the unintended disclosure of Curtin’s information, and to protect the Curtin Community, staff should avoid using cloud services hosted outside of Australia.

4. Are there any other risks I should be aware of?

Loss of data is one of the risks associated with using a public cloud service. If the security of your account is compromised, or a systems malfunction occurs, your data or information may be accidentally or maliciously deleted and removed from your account. When this happens, the effect of the deletion will “roll out” to all of your synched devices such as computers, tablets, mobile phones, deleting all copies of your data. To mitigate this risk, it is essential that you keep copies/backups of any files in a location outside of the cloud.

5. What sort of data or information is suitable for storing in the cloud, example Dropbox?

In assessing the suitability of the cloud for storing a file, you need to consider the security classification of the information it contains. Consult the following documents for information:

- Information Security Classification Policy and Procedure
- Decision Framework on the Use of Cloud Services
- Typical risks on Using Cloud Services

As a rule, any file containing personal or sensitive information, should not be stored in a public cloud unless it has been suitably encrypted or de-identified.

6. Is Curtin currently using Cloud solutions?

Yes. IPerform: eWPPR & Learning Management System is one of the solutions hosted on the cloud. However, Curtin has done its due diligence in ensuring that the cloud solutions implemented within the University are secure and within Curtin's risk appetite.

7. Who can I contact for further questions?

For further information, contact Records and Information Management at 9266 7050 or rim@curtin.edu.au. For technical enquiries, contact CITS Service Desk at 9266 9000. For legal and contract issues regarding acquiring a cloud service, contact Legal and Compliance Services at 9266 2767.