And we’re off!

The Noteable service is into its next big pilot phase this Semester. Over 500 students will be using the service this week across 6 different courses in 6 different School within the University of Edinburgh.

But what is the Noteable service and what is the scope of this pilot? I’m glad you asked (You did ask, I heard you)

Here’s a quick summary of what the pilot involves, what we will be hoping to achieve and how we will measure it. Comments are more than welcome. (Nice ones)

What will be delivered

The Noteable service is a cloud-based application providing access to Jupyter notebooks online. Noteable provides a central space to store and run Jupyter notebooks in a variety of languages.

The purpose of Noteable is to allow students and staff to access Jupyter notebooks at any time without the need for pre-installation which can be cumbersome and difficult for programming novices. Noteable is integrated with the institutional VLE to allow for a central launch point into a pre-set environment without the need for a separate login.

Duration

The initial pilot will run for the duration of Semester 1 of the 2018-19 Academic Year concluding in December 2018. Feedback information from staff and students as well as usage data and indications of further demand will be collected and presented before the end of December 2018.

Users – Students, Courses, Schools

For the pilot of this service, we have worked to ensure pilot users from across the University. The Semester 1 pilot will involve 580 students in 6 courses from 6 different School within the University.

We are also aware that the Noteable service will be used as part of the Digital Skills Programme and we will report of the number of students involved in these sessions at the end of the semester.

Benefit

There are multiple benefits to be derived from the Noteable service pilot. Firstly, staff who already incorporate Jupyter notebooks into their teaching will benefit from removing the need to have students install Jupyter beforehand which is time-consuming and can cause issues, especially when using multiple additional packages. We will work alongside current users in the creation of Jupyter specific OER materials which will help new users be more easily able to adopt the service.

Success Criteria

The key success criteria for the Noteable service pilot will be based around 3 components:

1. **Demonstrate Need**
2. **Service Fit**
3. **Service Cost**

1. Demonstrate Need

The first goal of the Noteable pilot will be to determine that there is a need for a centrally supported notebook service for teaching purposes. This can be quantified both with the number of current users as well as secured future users. This will be broken down into two measurable indicators: number of courses using Noteable and number of students within these courses as a total. There will also be an additional measure citing the number of different Schools associated with the pilot to help ensure that the service is widely accepted across the University.

Goal: 6 Courses with up to 500 students in Semester 1

2. Service Fit

Define whether the Noteable service fits the needs of the user community. This includes comparing the Noteable service with other comparable services. This criterion cannot be easily quantified and will largely be based on the feedback from the current and prospective user community. As part of this evaluation, there will be a suggestion as to whether to use Noteable or use a comparable service.

Goal: Create a comparison document with service recommendation

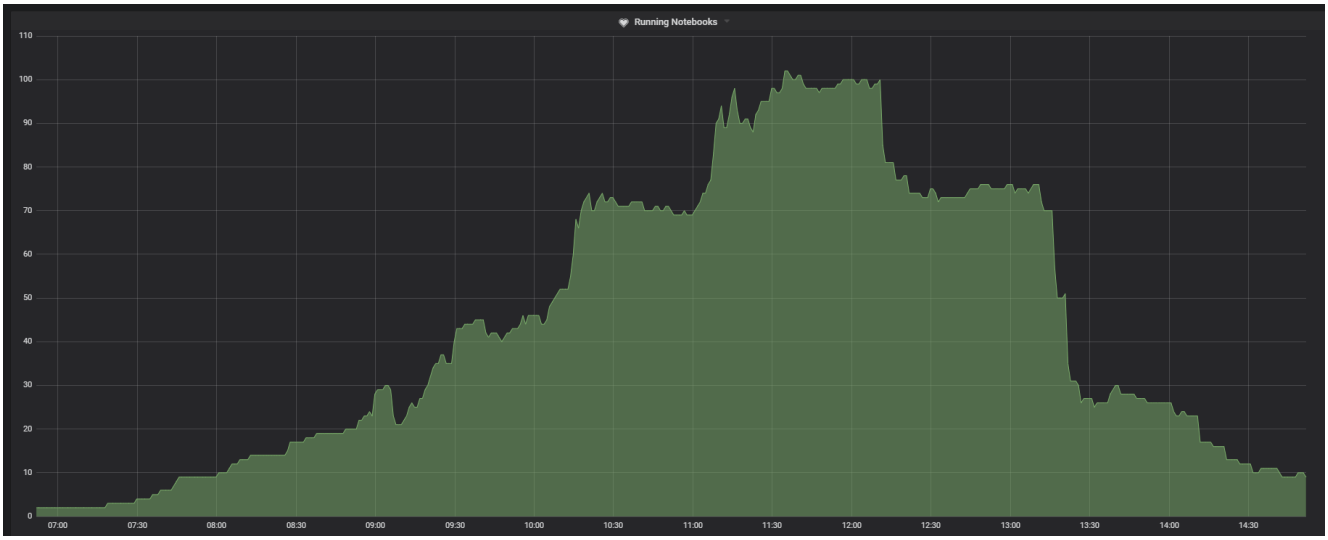
3. Service Cost

Determine the total cost of running the Noteable service including the cost of staff (both development and support) and operational/infrastructure cost. This can be determined as a yearly cost and also broken down to a per-user cost. This defined cost can then be used as part of the comparison with other comparable services as per criterion 2.

Goals: Cost per year and Cost per user.

And to makes all this seem a little more real, here’s a graph

of the use for Tuesday



First ‘big’ usage day, peaking at over 100 concurrent Jupyter notebooks. The best bit is; this isn’t even our busiest day.

ProgTeach Play by Play

The first ProgTeach Symposium took place on the 24th of August, this has been something that colleagues and I have been working towards for some time so it was great to finally see this come together. The premise is fairly simple, across the University of Edinburgh lots of people teach computation in some form so let’s make time for getting as many of these people in the same room together and discuss what they do (and how they do it).

As my first main event that I’ve run at the University of Edinburgh, my main concern was that I had put something together that no one would want to attend…..we filled 80% in 24 hours. As you can see below the event was pretty well attended, what you can’t see is how diverse the audience was, colleagues from 13 different schools turned up with a

smattering of units within those schools.

> *At the #ProgTeach Symposium this morning pic.twitter.com/y0cjRiCBXX*
>
> *— marioant (@marioant) August 24, 2018*

So to kick us off we had an introduction from Anne-Marie Scott, Deputy Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Services. Anne-Marie has been very keen on the idea of running these types of events to get people talking together about their teaching practice and is also my boss's boss so no pressure.

https://twitter.com/ammienoot/status/1032890247846223874

Up next our first speaker was Dr Areti Mantaki from the Centre for Medical Informatics to talk about her experience of delivering large (huge) scale distance learning introduction to programming courses.

https://twitter.com/ammienoot/status/1032910951983599617

Areti shared some great incites about teaching coding generally and also some of the challenges (and surprises) of teaching entirely online. Something that a lot of attendees agreed with was how important it was to include mistakes in your examples but also spend time walking through the solution.

> *Areti Manataki reminds us that showing your learners the mistakes you make when coding and how you identify and fix them is part of the programming process and just as important on videos for MOOCs #ProgTeach*
>
> *— Neil P Chue Hong (he/him□they/them) (@npch) August 24, 2018*

Next up we had Professor Chris Sangwin and Dr Stuart King,

both from the School of Mathematics who talked about their introductory programming course. This including speaking about introducing Jupyter notebooks into their teaching as well as using CodeRunner as an assessment tool. Important to note that the students really enjoyed the ‘game’ of pursuing getting full marks in practice question sets.

> *#ProgTeach Stuart King and @sangwinc now talking about and demonstrating using CodeRunner to teach introductory programming*
>
> *— Edinburgh Carpentries (@edcarp2) August 24, 2018*

Then it was my turn (James Slack) to talk about the University’s Noteable service currently in a pilot phase. For those not familiar with Noteable this is the University’s own JupyterHub environment, giving access to Jupyter notebooks for teaching purposes. Although this is still in a pilot phase the demand has been high and we will be delivering the service to over 500 students this coming semester.

The next speaker was Andrew Kirk from the Digital Skills and Training Team who are using the Noteable service as part of their Digital Skills Programme to deliver beginner Python courses to students from across the University. The courses were overwhelmingly popular, the first session had 90 bookings for only 20 places and will run again in the coming semester.

> *Striking thing from this image of who signed up for @UoEDigiSkills introductory Python course (based on @EDINADigital Noteable #jupyterhub platform) is just how diverse the audience is in terms of disciplines #ProgTeach pic.twitter.com/whmFaFSlz9*
>
> *— Neil P Chue Hong (he/him□they/them) (@npch) August 24, 2018*

After the lunch break, we had a quick talk from Sean McGeever about the carpentries workshops in Edinburgh and the creation of a supportive RSE community. The theme of this talk about building a community to support colleagues from across the University was very closely aligned with the whole theme of the day. Sean also got the funding for cake so bonus points for Sean.

https://twitter.com/ammienoot/status/1032940392482856966

For the penultimate session, we wanted to focus on the on the discussion between colleagues about how they approach certain challenges of teaching computational content. Ironically no-one had the confidence the attempts to answer “How do you build confidence in learners”.

Heres a full breakdown of the discussion points – Discussion (Word Document)

And then to wrap up the day we had a quick talk about creating Jupyter based OERs to support new users, there is obviously a lot of material out there for ‘Intro to Python’ already but what can be really useful is a collection of these in notebook form that we know will work straight away in Noteable and also some ancillary materials about how to use notebooks to make it easier for people to introduce them into their teaching.

And that was that! A very interesting line up of talks and very useful discussion between disciplines which is something I’m always interested in promoting. I’ll leave it to Anne-Marie to wrap up the day:

https://twitter.com/ammienoot/status/1032985095454515201

And yes, there will be another one!