

Using Offline Files

1. Recommended Practise

Synchronisation and working with offline files is designed for use with the files and folders in your personal U drive (with a few exceptions discussed later). But many University staff store most of their files on, and work collaboratively from, the shared file storage (N: drive) allocated to their department. It would be tempting therefore for laptop users who wish to work from home to make parts of their N: drive available offline, work on these at home and synchronise them when they next connect to the University network. This is **NOT** advisable as you run the risk of corrupting files and possibly overwriting someone else's work.

2. Working on N: Drive from Home

As an alternative to working offline you can access your N: drive (and U: drive if required) directly from off campus by making a Virtual Private Network (VPN) connection. This is a secure connection that will allow you to view and work on all your files/folders as if you were in the office. Thus, when you have made a VPN connection, you are accessing the actual network drives instead of the offline (synchronised) versions. Working in this way should prevent two users from attempting to edit the same file on a shared drive simultaneously and avoid loss of work. When you disconnect the VPN you go back to working offline and will only be able to access synchronised files from your U: drive once more. NB A VPN connection requires a fast network connection to work smoothly.

3. File Types Excluded from Synchronisation

Certain file types are deliberately ignored during the synchronisation process in order to prevent them from being corrupted. Synchronisation filters according to file extension, and excludes *.MDB, *.LDB, *.PST, *.MDW, *.SLM & *.MDE during the synchronisation process. If you try to synchronise an MDB or PST file for example you will see a warning at the end of the process stating that the manager is unable to make a certain file available offline. This is expected behaviour.

4. Resolving File Conflicts

If you receive a conflict message when attempting to synchronise after working offline this may be because:

- A. the network version of a file is newer than that on your laptop (offline version) because you worked on it from another computer instead of your laptop. The Synchronisation Manager will notify you of a file conflict. The choices are self-explanatory; you can keep the network file, keep the offline file or both.
- B. You have deleted an offline file on your laptop and made changes to the corresponding network version before you next synchronised your laptop. When you synchronise you will be notified you have changed the file in both locations and the network file will be retained.
- C. Scenario B may also occur in reverse. You deleted a number of network files while working from a hot desk computer and subsequently made changes to the offline versions on your laptop. When you next synchronise your laptop you will be notified of the discrepancies and asked to choose appropriately
- D. You also work on a desktop computer and produced a number of new documents which you saved in your U: drive. These will be added to the laptop's offline files when you next synchronise.

5. Multimedia Files

Music (.MP3) and picture (.JPG) files tend to use a lot of your 20GB U: drive allocation and slow down the synchronisation process considerably or even cause it to fail. It is therefore a good idea to avoid synchronising the My Music, My Pictures and iTunes folders but copy these files to a personal data folder on your laptop C: drive instead.