Wits Bioinformatics

Bioinformatics Service Request
Version – January 2014

Introduction

Wits Bioinformatics has a role in providing service to researchers in the Faculties of Science and Health Sciences. We can provide advice on bioinformatics protocols, methods and tools to use, as well as some basic training.

Wits Bioinformatics has a computer cluster with significant computational resources with many hundred bioinformatics applications installed. Members of the broader Wits bioinformatics community can be given access to the cluster — we can provide basic training on how to use the cluster and help with installation and use of new tools. There are also specialist computing services such as a Galaxy and EMBOSS available for training or production use.

Although our team has a wide range of skills, bioinformatics is a large area—if a problem is outside of our area of expertise, we’ll do our best to point you in the right direction as we have excellent relations with other South African bioinformatics groups.

Like any service, bioinformatics services must be paid for. Wits Bioinformatics has never received any Wits funding to provide service so there usually needs to be a quid pro quo for the service offered. We recognise that there are a wide range of needs and we shall endeavor to be as flexible as possible. We emphasise the need to talk to us as early as possible in a research project. Bioinformatics must be planned from the beginning both with respect to scientific method and available resources.

Computational Resources

The Research Cluster is available for projects with large computational requirements. Up to a few thousand CPU hours and 50GB of storage, access will generally be free (resources permitting), though we’d appreciate acknowledgement. Beyond that, there needs to be some negotiation about use. The research cluster relies on funding from our partners and we may ask for some modest financial contribution. Generally, use of our specialist services like Galaxy and EMBOSS will be free. We can also help with hosting local mirrors of important databases.
Consulting/Bioinformatics Analysis

This type of service can be split into three types:

1. **Ad hoc help:** Much of our work is to help with small requests: How do we install this software? How do we run that software? Which bioinformatics technique is best for this type of data? Each case can be negotiated on a case-by-case basis, but generally up to about 10 hours of work can be done without any cost (though we’d always like acknowledgement on a dissertation or paper). Beyond this, we need to negotiate a more formal arrangement. The focus of this type of service is to improve your capacity to help yourself.

2. **Collaborative Model:** Our preferred model for more extensive work is a collaborative model: we collaborate on your project and the person or persons on our staff who work with you become collaborators. Our role would be scientific and not entirely technical. Such collaboration should apply the ICMJE (http://www.icmje.org/) guidelines regarding authorship.

3. **Service for payment:** This is not a preferred option but we would consider it. Payment would be made against some Service Level Agreement. This would be a full cost recovery model so both time and resource usage would be billed. For university customers, a likely charge would be R500 per hour.

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**Guidelines**

Each project will be handled on its own merits, depending on the nature and size of the project. Small service requests can be handled informally (ad hoc help) where others need more formal engagement to assess the best level of service we can offer.

Please complete the questionnaire attached, to engage with Wits Bioinformatics on providing assistance with your project.

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