Microsoft SharePoint is a cloud-based service for creating, storing and sharing data and documents. It is used to power cloud file storage in Office 365, including Microsoft OneDrive and Microsoft Teams. SharePoint sites can be created at Lancaster University through the use of Teams. Whenever you create a collaborative Team space using Teams, a SharePoint site is also created that sits behind this. SharePoint sites can’t be created independently of Team spaces by staff or students at the University. However, if you have a particular bespoke requirement that you think might necessitate the creation of an independent SharePoint site, you can contact ISS to discuss further.

Training, support and help are generally provided via Microsoft Teams help and training and Microsoft OneDrive help and training.

SharePoint is a collaboration platform. SharePoint has been through many iterations (much like Microsoft Word and Excel) and now has a cloud-based version as part of Office 365. In much the same way as Word and Excel are useless without words, figures and tables, SharePoint is useless without a design and structure. Much like its counterparts that can stretch from simple uses to highly complex structures, SharePoint can handle tasks such as external applications, workflows and automation.

In simple terms, SharePoint is a key foundation of Office 365 and many of the 365 application make use of it to deliver their services. As a good example, Microsoft Teams uses SharePoint to hold files, channel structures and some content. Teams also uses parts of Exchange and the AV Infrastructure previously used by Skype for Business to deliver a homogeneous experience.

Lancaster University provide Teams in a self-service format to allow agility of creation, management and removal to allow functional teams to develop their own collaboration mechanisms and styles across faculty, service or course for any study or administrative work. We have Teams built for projects, committees, study groups, external suppliers, partnerships and research projects. All are bespoke to the user’s needs and use some or all of Teams features. Those Teams reside across the Office 365 space including SharePoint.

SharePoint is available at the university but not a self-service offering as systems built on SharePoint services are generally institutional or for significant projects which demand a more formal design, testing and release phase. Teams is now the recommended service for any general collaborations. Stakeholders looking for appropriate solutions which may include SharePoint as part of a proposal should always consult initially with ISS, who can look at the various platforms supported by ISS and engage relevant resources to assist with designing and deploying any such solution. The implementation of any system including Office 365 services will be subject to appropriate controls and limitations depending on its scope and the risk to the University data held alongside in Office 365 and will generally require the requesting department to allocate suitable training and resource for ongoing maintenance/support of such systems.

Frequently asked questions

OneDrive and Teams use SharePoint to enable users to store and share files in the cloud. It is not necessary to use SharePoint directly when using either of these services, though you may see the word ‘sharepoint’ appear in the URL or interface from time to time. For example, there is an Open in SharePoint button in the files view in Teams which allows you to see your files in the SharePoint interface, from where you can access features such as the Recycle Bin and file version history.