



THE UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

CASE STUDY



DATA INTEGRATION
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The University of Exeter is one of the UK's most popular and successful universities with nearly 18,000 students and 3,000 staff. It combines very high levels of student satisfaction with world leading research and teaching.

With three main campuses based in the South West of England, Exeter is rated in the top 200 universities in the world by the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, and has just reached ninth place in The Sunday Times University Guide 2012, the first time it has been in the top ten.

The challenge

Research

With the University's particular strength being research, Exeter receives significant levels of investment to fund its research activities. But, five years ago investment in information technology was not being made at the same rate, and subsequently the university's IT infrastructure was finding it increasingly difficult to support such levels of research.

Student satisfaction

Competition between universities is very high, and delivering the optimum 'student experience' features highly as criteria in University league tables. As Roger Snelling, Head of Networks at the University of Exeter explained, "We had several single points of failure, and suffered poor bandwidth connections - in essence our network had been outgrown by the demands being placed on it. Today's students demand fast online access to the very latest bandwidth hungry applications and content, yet the University's infrastructure was

slow and unreliable, which was frustrating for both staff and students."

Security

A key challenge faced by the University of Exeter, and every university alike, is that of security. With the growing trend of consumerisation, where students bring multiple devices of their own to campus, universities need to deliver a highly secure yet 'always on' environment at the same time as protecting systems and data belonging to the university, its staff and students.

Investment in infrastructure

To modernise its ageing estate, the University of Exeter has made a considerable investment in excess of £270m over the last three years, upgrading and extending its buildings and campuses. One of the largest building projects in the South West, this new infrastructure was an inherent factor in the future of network and communications service delivery for the University of Exeter.

The approach

In 2008 a public competitive tender process was initiated to find an IT partner with a high degree of experience in the higher education sector. Following the stringent tender process, the University of Exeter started to build a relationship with Data Integration.

"We are driven by the desire to make our university the very best choice for researchers, students and staff alike and the strength of our partnership with Data Integration, and the network infrastructure they deliver and support, underpins every element of our strategy to achieve this goal."

Roger Snelling
Head of Networks
The University of Exeter

“Data Integration demonstrated that we could lower our running costs by investing in technology from Juniper Networks. We very quickly began to view Data Integration as a trusted advisor – not only because of their highly credible track record with other universities, but because of their strategic vision, ability to listen and enthusiasm for the University of Exeter,” commented Snelling.

The solution

After being awarded the contract to supply the University of Exeter, and working closely with its key staff to understand the requirements in-depth, Data Integration began the process of implementing a new 10,000 port network incorporating the latest wireless, mobile access and security technology.

The solution comprised Juniper Networks' largest university deployment of EX Series switches which enabled the University of Exeter to deploy network access control, integrated with Nortel and Microsoft unified communications solution and a campus-wide wireless network based on Aruba Networks 802.11n access points.

To better secure the network, new firewalls with intrusion detection were implemented to manage and block threats. Package shaping was also introduced to control data, mitigate exposure and prioritise legitimate traffic. Multiple levels of support were included in the project, with certain critical services covered by a 24/7 four-hour fix.

The benefits

Achieving top ten ranking

Now ranked ninth in the UK, the University of Exeter is within the top 1% of universities globally and listed as one of the fastest growing organisations in Europe. Undoubtedly investing in technology has played an enormous part in enabling the university to deliver up to and beyond staff and student expectations. “With valuable foresight, Data Integration helped us to realise the benefits of investing in technology such as wireless back in 2008, which put us in a very strong position when the demand exploded” announced Snelling.

Reducing IT support requirements

The IT support team has also enjoyed huge benefits from the new network infrastructure, with Data Integration providing a depth of on-site resources and expertise to allow them to focus on more strategic applications of technology and be more flexible with on-demand resources as new research funding comes in.

Becoming more energy efficient

As a leading university in weather and climate science, green credentials are high on Exeter's agenda. By consolidating the amount of hardware it deploys to deliver its network services, the new infrastructure has enabled the University of Exeter to make a sustainable environmental impact and move towards compliance with the CRC (Carbon Reduction Commitment) government initiative.

Increased network protection

Inevitably, students need access to copyrighted information to facilitate their studies. With new security technology now deployed, the University of Exeter has managed to reduce the amount of copyright infringements from between thirty to forty a week down to three to four a month.

The future

As a trusted partner, Data Integration is actively involved in introducing innovative IT solutions. Having secured and stabilised the university's network, and enabled the delivery of faster network access, it is helping to shape future service provision at the University of Exeter – an example being capacity planning for video streaming to further enhance the learning experience offered.

Snelling reiterates the importance of retaining in its position in the Top Ten UK universities.

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About Data Integration

Data Integration specialises in managed networks, managed security services, mobility solutions and high performance IT platforms.

We provide these services to over 300 leading organisations in Higher Education, Insurance, Finance and the Public Sector, benefiting from reduced cost, simplified solutions and optimised performance.