

University of Western Sydney delivers cutting edge learning and teaching with mobility



Challenge

- Support blended learning curriculum and eLearning solutions
- Support aims of students and work of staff
- Provide mobility for students and staff



Solution

Dimension Data planned and delivered a mobility strategy and platform to enhance the university experience of students and teachers, enable them to engage with online services, and participate in learning and teaching anytime, anywhere, from any device.



Result

- Enables students and teachers to engage in learning and teaching anytime, anywhere, from any device
- Supports blended learning curriculum and eLearning solutions
- Increased productivity and student and staff engagement
- Perception of staff and students that UWS is 'cutting edge' resulting in staff and student retention

'[Students and teachers] **can now access those applications** from home, when they are off-site, when they are travelling internationally, on the devices that they want to use ...'

Kerry Holling,
Chief Information Officer,
University of Western Sydney

 Challenge

Supporting the aims of students and staff

The University of Western Sydney's (UWS) mission is 'to be a university of international standing and outlook, achieving excellence through scholarship, teaching, learning, research and service to its regional, national and international communities, beginning with the people of Greater Western Sydney.'¹

The University has over 40,000 students and 3000 staff, with six main campuses across Greater Western Sydney.

To achieve its mission and be at the leading edge of knowledge as well as provide a contemporary education to its students, UWS must be able to support staff and students with the tools to engage and participate in learning and teaching in ways that resonate with them.

Consequently, the University recognised it needed to provide mobility to allow staff and students to access the blended learning curriculum and eLearning solutions provided by the University and also enable them to participate in learning and teaching anywhere, anytime and from any device.

According to Chief Information Officer at UWS, Kerry Holling:

'Our ambition is nothing less than being recognised in the sector as a leader in terms of how technology can support the aims of our students and the work of our staff, whether they are teaching or researching. What we are trying to do is unshackle staff from having a lock-down desktop device that is a prerequisite for them to do a lot of their work.'

1. UWS Making the Difference: 2014 – 2016 Strategy, University of Western Sydney, accessed 2 October 2014, http://www.uws.edu.au/about_uws/uws/mission_goals_strategic_plan/uws_making_the_difference_strategy

 Solution

Flexibility to innovate and work independently

Seeking a partner to assist with formulating and implementing a mobility strategy and platform, UWS approached Dimension Data.

'We were very particular,' said Phil Costley, Business Services Manager, UWS.

'We wanted end-user compute experience advice, rather than saying we wanted to go out for virtualisation. We had a suspicion that [virtualisation] was the answer but we didn't want to define it by technology, so we wanted somebody who would look at our needs and actually work out which was the best solution for us.'

So, the first thing Dimension Data did was help the University to get to the next level in understanding the use cases for mobility and end user computing and develop these to a high level of detail. Dimension Data surveyed academic and IT staff and various different groups within the university to really help understand the specific use cases the team was trying to solve.

According to Geoff Lambert, Project Manager, UWS:

'We wanted a platform that would be able to enable them [University staff and students] to work in a predictable, supportable environment for our corporate systems but still give them that flexibility to be able to innovate and be able to work independently.'

'So, as part of our mobility strategy, we've used Citrix virtualisation to enable our workforce to operate anywhere, anytime on any device, as well as rolling out 25,000 iPads to first-year commencing students so that they can engage with the blended learning curriculum that we've put before them,' said Holling.

The University benefitted from what was described by CIO Kerry Holling as a 'genuine partnership' between the university IT group and Dimension Data.

'The things that I gained most value from our relationship with Dimension Data, was their readiness to become part of the team and to own problems as they arose until they were successfully resolved. It made a huge difference to the dynamics of the project,' said Lambert.

 Result

Making idle moments matter

The mobility strategy and platform have proved to be a great success and have received positive feedback from across the University, including through channels such as Yammer. The students and teachers are able to engage in learning and teaching anytime, anywhere and from any device – increasing productivity and staff and student engagement. UWS is now also perceived as being ‘cutting edge’, thereby enhancing the University’s reputation and assisting in staff and student retention. ‘A lot of staff work across campuses and it lets them use those kind of idle moments when they are at a campus, away from their office, in between lectures to still fulfil their needs.

‘We have had users who have been as far away as Europe and Asia who have said the experience is just like what they would experience if they were sitting at their desk at the campus. They are using it from every platform, both internal and external,’ said Lambert.

‘They can now access those applications from home, when they are off-site, when they are travelling internationally, on the devices that they want to use – which, in many cases, are the iPads we have given them,’ continued Holling.

‘In the case of desktop virtualisation, I would have to say the feedback we have received from staff has been more positive than any other initiative in the three years that I have been here,’ commented Holling.

‘We’ve had comments like, “UWS is really cutting edge”. We had a comment on our Yammer feed recently that was completely unprompted from a staff member, an academic, who said “I am absolutely thrilled”,’ concluded Lambert.

Services overview

- Formulation of mobility strategy and implementation of platform incorporating Citrix virtualisation and 25,000 iPads for first-year students
- Plan and implementation of data centre migration services
- Directory synchronisation implementation to reduce administration overhead of provisioning users in Office 365
- Network Threat and Visibility Assessment