

BT helps make IT simpler and safer for Aston University

Managed and Support Services



Aston was looking for a partner to plug the gaps in its technical skills by responding promptly to network problems, providing additional resources where necessary.



Aston is a long established University in Birmingham known for its world-class teaching quality and strong links to industry, government and commerce. The University is currently ranked fifth in the UK and first outside London for graduate employability (2012 Sunday Times University Guide).

IT maintenance and support are of major importance to Aston, with network or system failures potentially having a devastating effect. During August's A Level clearing period, for example, a failure could massively impact the University's ability to assess and advise prospective students, with serious financial implications.

It could even prevent the completion of certain course modules which students can only undertake on the University's own computers, due to the highly tailored software that's used. Pharmacy courses, for example, can't be run outside of the Lab.



A safe pair of hands

For Aston, BT was the ideal choice of partner, ticking all the required boxes and adding additional value. The team at BT wanted to go beyond simply fulfilling all of the requirements, aiming to reduce the University's maintenance and support costs by 25% per year, over three years.

As a partner with the highest levels of Cisco® accreditation, BT provides exceptional levels of understanding of the University network, as well as full support for any new Cisco® products deployed.

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Trevor Bayliss,
Associate IT director for infrastructure

When the maintenance contract first went live, BT carried out a survey to assess all elements of the network. The resulting report is now used to guide discussions about future plans and upgrades.

As part of its work with Aston, BT carried out an upgrade of the University's unified communications platform. The solution was built, tested and deployed with minimal disruption and with 24x7, real time support from BT's Technical Service Centre (TSC).

SLAs for a fast response

With the support of the TSC, Aston University's IT team now feel secure in the knowledge they can provide a fast response to any problems they encounter. They particularly like BT's smaller company approach in providing a consistent team to back them.

Explains Trevor Bayliss, associate IT director for infrastructure: "BT's TSC take time to understand you – and where possible connect you to the same engineer you have worked with previously who knows you and is able to quickly help you with whatever problem or question you may have."

As a trusted partner, the TSC team are on hand to advise the University of the potential impact on the network of any new technology they're looking to implement. When it comes to upgrade paths, they advise Aston University on how to ensure the best return on its investment. They also help to make sure new applications run optimally on the University's network.

The contract has stringent SLAs to deliver against, which BT has never failed on. On one occasion the University had linked its old telephony system to the new system as it gradually ported users across. But call transfers were failing, preventing people from making contact with colleagues. A call to the TSC identified an issue with the old system and the fault was remedied in around 40 minutes.

When word reached Aston's IT team that the wireless network was running slowly when students downloaded large files, it took just one call to the TSC to fix the problem within the hour. They made changes to parameters and settings, dramatically speeding up the performance of the network to everyone's benefit. Concludes Trevor: "It's great to have that level of expertise at the end of the phone – helping you overcome any issue or stumbling block, no matter how big or small, provides a great feeling of reassurance."



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