QUEEN MARY UNIVERSITY

Helping Queen Mary provide Wi-Fi to over 60 buildings for students

CLIENT:

Queen Mary University of London

INDUSTRY:

Education

KEY BENEFITS:

- 150% increase in Wi-Fi access

- User experience much improved

- A partnership of trust, consultancy and flexibility

Queen Mary University of London (QMUL) is one of the UK's Russell Group of leading universities. It has over 20,000 students and 4,000 staff spread over three faculties, five campuses and 60 separate buildings in London. It is the only university in London to offer an integrated residential campus with its award-winning, 2,000-bed student village.

QMUL's roots lie in four historic colleges dating back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: Queen Mary College, Westfield College, St Bartholomew's Hospital Medical College and the London Hospital Medical College.

Today, the university is organised into three faculties: Humanities and Social Sciences; Science and Engineering; and Medicine and Dentistry.

Brad McQuarrie is QMUL's Project Manager for IT Infrastructure.

MEETING INCREASED DEMAND FOR WIRELESS ACCESS

Like universities around the world, QMUL had experienced a rapid rise in user-owned devices. Students increasingly use laptops, tablet devices, smart phones and even smart watches to access university resources. Wireless is the default method of connecting to the university network and, as Brad explains, "Offering Wi-Fi access is no longer a bonus, it's a necessity."

QMUL's existing Wi-Fi infrastructure provided service in limited areas across the university's 60 buildings. However, the increased traffic was putting the network under pressure resulting in an inconsistent, and sometimes poor, service in some areas: "Poor coverage is almost worse than no coverage, because your devices try to pick up something with one bar and blocks your 4G" explains Brad.

The university needed to improve existing Wi-Fi provision. It also wanted to extend coverage all across QMUL's five campuses and provide for increasing numbers in the future. Installing the cabling and Wi-Fi access points necessary to provide a full service across 60 buildings was a major project. The buildings varied widely in age, construction and purpose. Some older buildings were constructed with thick, stone walls. Others, refurbished over the years, contained areas of asbestos. The university includes biology labs with cadaver areas that required special treatment to avoid contamination.

Other laboratories regularly contain sensitive experiments that run over several weeks or months. These could easily be ruined by dust or vibration. The necessary cabling and fitting work would need to be organised so as to minimise disruption to staff and students, to avoid disrupting sensitive experiments and to prevent possible contamination to laboratories.

QMUL's top priority was to address service in the Mile End Library, the university's historic home. Wireless service in the library had been a frequent subject of complaint and QMUL wanted to resolve this before enrolment began for new students.

A CROSS-CAMPUS UPGRADE FOR WI-FI PROVISION

QMUL's IT team determined that the solution was a complete upgrade of the existing Wi-Fi solution. This would require replacing the university's 880 existing Wi-Fi access points with 2,200 new Cisco units, a 150% increase. This would also require new cabling across QMUL's five campuses and 60 buildings. The upgrade would not only improve service for current students, but would have adequate capacity to handle a forecasted rise in both student numbers and devices per student.

Having been recommended by QMUL's cabling supplier Siemon, enablesIT entered the tender process and was selected to deliver the project.

Together, enablesIT and Project Manager Brad agreed that most of the work would take place in the evenings to minimise disruption to students and staff. Work in laboratories would be scheduled to avoid disturbing sensitive research.

Budget for the project became available from the beginning of August giving the project team just one month to complete cabling for Phase 1, the upgrading of Mile End Library, in time for the enrolment of new students. EnablesIT quickly brought together a team to deliver the service upgrade.

A PARTNERSHIP OF TRUST, CONSULTING AND FLEXIBILTY

With the enablesIT team deploying extra resources at short notice, QMUL's new students enjoyed a great first impression of the university and its facilities.

As the project progressed, enablesIT conducted site surveys on each building on the project plan, liaising with on-site staff to ensure there was minimum disruption when it came to cabling. The enablesIT team used its considerable experience to suggest alternative approaches where this would either improve overall service or reduce disruption. Where laboratories were running sensitive experiments, the team altered schedules to return to rooms and floors at a mutually convenient (and safe) time.

> "EnablesIT has done a very good job of working with lab managers and other staff on the ground. They're very flexible and just say 'we're here to help'. People really appreciate that polite and humble approach. I've only had positive feedback from those impacted."
>
> Brad McQuarrie,
> Project Manager for IT Infrastructure,
> Queen Mary University London.

The project is currently half-way through and the upgraded areas have proved very popular with users. Brad explains, "The Wi-Fi coverage in these areas has greatly improved, allowing students and staff to work more effectively. Overall, the user experience reported in completed buildings is much improved from the previous solution."

> "EnablesIT has been a great partner and it's obvious the team supporting QMUL is working hard to deliver what we need. Project timelines are very tight. The flexibility of enablesIT and its ability to deliver with very short notice have been very helpful in keeping the project on schedule."
>
> Brad McQuarrie,
> Project Manager for IT Infrastructure,
> Queen Mary University London.

QMUL is looking to extend its partnership with enablesIT, in the future. Other departments across the university have already proposed further projects as a result of the work done on the Wi-Fi upgrade.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ENABLESIT'S SOLUTIONS

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