

CLOUD SERVICES

Hibernia College gives cloud services an 'A' grade for availability



Hibernia College is an internationally accredited, global provider of high quality education programmes based in Ireland and the UK. The College is a recognised world leader in online content development and delivery based on a blended learning format which combines interactive, multimedia-rich online content with face-to-face tuition through periodic on-site sessions.

The college's average completion rate is in excess of 95%. Annually they qualify approximately 40% of all teachers in Ireland and are the largest provider of Subject Knowledge Enhancement (SKE) programmes for teachers in the UK. In Health Sciences the College's attained the PragmaTrain IMI Centre of Excellence status which recognises that students on its M.Sc. in Pharmaceutical Medicine receive the highest quality education available in medicines development

As the college has grown it recognised it needed more than a reliable hosting provider but an expert technology partner with a robust, resilient infrastructure and the proven capability to provide support around-the-clock.

"We were moving into a different phase of our development and needed a more collaborative relationship with our hosting provider instead of a purely transactional one," explains Rob O'Neill, Head of IT for Hibernia College. "We wanted a technology partner who would guide us through the process of instituting tighter controls around security, policy and procedures and Sungard AS was able to help us establish this way of working."

Aware of its reputation in the industry, Hibernia College put Sungard Availability Services at the top of its list when evaluating potential partners. As well as being competitively priced, Sungard AS's Dublin location was another important factor as it would ensure low latency for the majority of its students who are based in the UK and Ireland.

The multi-tenanted managed cloud service provided by Sungard AS gives Hibernia College the reassurance of 99.5% availability backed by an enterprise-grade service level agreement. The secure, resilient cloud environment, shared with like-minded, security-conscious customers, allows Rob O'Neill and his team to deliver applications back to the business without needing to buy or maintain the underlying infrastructure. The College effectively subscribes to the compute power and storage it needs today in the knowledge that Sungard AS's vast resource pool will give it the flexibility it needs in the future.

Business challenge

Ireland's only government-accredited e-learning college provides post-graduate programmes for teaching professionals and others, delivering course content through online tutorials supplemented by practical classroom experience. With more than 8,000 students in 76 countries worldwide relying on Hibernia College's award-winning blended learning programmes every year, its IT cannot fail.

Solution

- Managed multi-tenanted cloud services.

"The internet is effectively our college campus so any downtime is equivalent to slamming the gates on our students."

Dara Cassidy,
Director of Online Learning,
Hibernia College



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Rob O’Neill,
 Head of IT,
 Hibernia College

Benefits

- High levels of availability, backed by service guarantees
- Flexibility to manage sudden bursts in demand
- Resilient IT environment is a differentiator when competing for students
- Fully redundant infrastructure provides instant failover in the event of server failure
- Robust backup and recovery solution gives reassurance that no data will ever be lost
- Continuous data protection
- Supports Hibernia College’s business proposition of quality teaching and affordable fees
- Frees the in-house team to focus on application development rather than infrastructure management.

A large proportion of Hibernia College’s students are returning to work after having a family or changing career so many are busy during daytime hours, which makes the option to study at a time that suits them particularly appealing. Unlike traditional ‘bricks and mortar’ colleges, there is no long summer break so demand is steady year-round.

However, the College experiences distinct peak periods with intense demand between 7pm and midnight on weekday nights and throughout the weekend. Furthermore, as the two annual cohorts of more than 350 students is required to upload a lesson plan daily before beginning each day’s teaching, the servers are particularly busy in the two hours leading up to 9am. Consequently, Rob O’Neill comments, “The guaranteed bandwidth provided by Sungard AS’s managed cloud service is essential to cope with these bursts in demand.”

Hibernia College’s experience has vindicated its initial decision to choose Sungard AS as its cloud provider. “I’m very happy with the flexibility of the Sungard AS service, which allows me to modify the number of servers we have and their capacity. I also like the visibility I have of my servers via the management tools and the ability this gives me to manage load, data backup and remain in control of my IT environment generally,” remarks Rob O’Neill. “I find the Sungard AS guys very responsive, experienced and knowledgeable. We haven’t had any downtime at all – it’s lived up to all the promises.”

About Sungard Availability Services

Sungard Availability Services provides managed IT services, information availability consulting services, business continuity management software, and disaster recovery services. To learn more, visit www.sungardas.co.uk or call 0800 143 413

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