AYRSHIRE COLLEGE

£53 million campus at Ayrshire College gets modern VDI platform and IGEL technology to deliver a truly flexible learning environment

Ayrshire College has invested in virtual desktop infrastructure and IGEL technology to support the move to its brand new £53 million campus in Kilmarnock.

> Students love the new system. In the old Kilmarnock Campus, some of the PCs were nearing end-of-life and were about to be decommissioned. Now everything is a lot quicker and they get the same experience irrespective of the device. This means they can jump from one to another and it's the same experience."

~ David Keenan
Ayrshire College's ICT team leader

THE CUSTOMER

- Ayrshire College is home to 5,500 students and 338 staff
- Built on a regeneration site, formerly a Johnnie Walker whisky bottling plant
- A 10-acre campus offering over 100 courses

THE CHALLENGE

- Creating a more flexible learning environment using technology
- An environmentally friendly solution
- Restricted budget requiring use of existing laptops
- Speed of deployment important to meet student needs

THE SOLUTION

- IGEL UD3 thin clients requiring less power
- IGEL Universal Desktop Converter solution for laptops
- Citrix VDI

THE BENEFITS

- Student access to technology in more university areas
- University flexibility to quickly meet new education demands
- Speed of deployment
- Ease of management

Ayrshire College is built on the site of a former Johnnie Walker whisky bottling plant. The land for the 10-acre campus was gifted to the College by Diageo to help regenerate the area and is now home to 338 staff and 5,500 students who study over 100 courses.

Ayrshire College has invested in virtual desktop infra-structure and IGEL technology to support the move to its brand new £53 million campus in Kilmarnock.

Brad Johnstone, Ayrshire College's head of ICT, explains "Installing traditional desktop PCs was initially considered but rejected as it didn't give the freedom or flexibility for students to work. Instead, we've invested in a Citrix XenDesktop VDI platform to create an environment where students can log in from wherever they are to access their own personal desktop profile and applications."

Ayrshire College has purchased IGEL multimedia UD3 thin client terminals for 12 classrooms and Universal Desktop Convertor (UDC) software to run on 400 new laptops. Taking minutes to install, IGEL's UDC converts any x86 device, regardless of manufacturer, form factor or age, into a universally deployable IGEL Linux-based thin client.

VIRTUALIZED DESKTOPS WITH THIN CLIENTS CHANGE THE WAY SUBJECTS ARE TAUGHT

The use of VDI and IGEL thin clients is radically changing the way the College operates at Kilmarnock. Previously, applications were loaded onto computers in dedicated laboratories or classrooms subject to the curriculum requirements per course. If timetabling changed, software would have to be then added or removed which was a time-consuming overhead for the onsite IT team of six.

David Keenan, Ayrshire College's ICT team leader, says "Citrix has empowered us to move away from this with the software each student requires served up when they login. This means the classroom setting becomes irrelevant and we can use our space much more productively introducing IT to areas which didn't have it before."

THIN CLIENT TECHNOLOGY IS IDEAL IN AN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

The use of IGEL thin clients is perfect in a classroom context. They are compact, quiet – obviously important from a teaching perspective - produce a minimal amount of heat and consume less power which helps with the College's green initiatives.

When a student logs into their virtual desktop, they get access to a web browser, Microsoft Office, Adobe PDF packages, applications specific to their course and an online learning tool from Moodle. Each student currently gets unlimited storage space for their work.

Ayrshire College has taken advantage of IGEL's UDC software and loaded it onto 400 laptops to convert them into thin clients. Furthermore, by converting laptops into thin clients – remembering that applications run centrally on servers – applications start up quicker and battery life has been boosted such that a full teaching day can be delivered from a single charge.

Keenan says "Students love the new system. In the old Kilmarnock Campus, some of the PCs were nearing end-of-life and were about to be decommissioned. Now every-thing is a lot quicker and they get the same experience irrespective of the device."

EASY TO MANAGE INFRASTRUCTURE PROVIDES A PLATFORM FOR THE FUTURE

IGEL thin clients are robust, and, using IGEL's free Universal Management Suite (UMS), easy to set up, configure remotely and manage day to day with support requests responded to quickly.

Keenan adds "We had a two-week window from the building being signed off to getting the IGEL thin clients installed prior to students arriving. I'm very proud as my team took a product they had very little knowledge of, and implemented it efficiently from day one, everything worked with very few issues."

The Kilmarnock Campus is phase one of the approach to deliver IT flexibility throughout Ayrshire College. Based on its success, the aspiration - subject to funding - is to introduce Citrix and IGEL across not only the three campus sites, but additional satellite locations which offer courses such as motor vehicles and horticulture, so that all students are given the software they need when, where and how they want it.

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