

Edge Hill University & Blackboard Managed HostingSM

A STRATEGIC DECISION LED TO A TIPPING POINT

Edge Hill University is one of the fastest-growing universities in the United Kingdom, experiencing a four-fold increase in applications over the last decade. With a mission of being a leading university of choice in the region by 2015, the university recognized that it needed to make a strategic decision. The only way it could quickly and effectively support such a significant increase in its student body would be to invest in its Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

Laying the Foundation

In 2007 Edge Hill was running Web CT in production and hosting it internally. The university was at a critical juncture: It had outgrown the platform and was ready to make a bold move towards achieving its aggressive enrollment goals.

Edge Hill decided to combine two strategic moves at the same time: upgrade to CE8 and migrate to Blackboard Managed Hosting. "Our IT department was stretched thin, and we knew that we needed help if we were going to provide the level of support that our increasing user community would require," says Lindsey Martin, eLearning Strategy and Development Manager, Learning Services at Edge Hill University. "We chose a basic level of hosting service as a first step towards improving availability and performance, which made a significant impact on everyone at the institution."

QUICK FACTS

- Located in the United Kingdom
- 25,000 students, 11,000 of whom are enrolled fulltime
- Blackboard Learn client since 2007
- Blackboard Managed Hosting client since 2008



Edge Hill University

Blackboard Managed Hosting provides a level of service and uptime that can't be replicated internally. And for a university where 90% of our courses have a Blackboard component, it's absolutely critical that our VLE is always available for faculty and students.

Lindsey Martin
eLearning Strategy and Development
Manager Learning Services
Edge Hill University

However, the university's success with growing enrollments quickly exceeded its expectations. And by 2011, it found itself ready to take its VLE to the next level.

The Tipping Point

Thanks to a concerted focus on training, the faculty became more comfortable and confident in using the platform—and the number of Blackboard course sections grew exponentially. The demand for additional learning tools and resources by faculty increased, as did the number of students using the platform.

So in 2011, Edge Hill once again coupled its decision to upgrade the platform with a new level of hosting service, moving to Learn 9.1 and the Diamond Service Level Engagement Plan with Blackboard Managed Hosting. In doing so, the university not only gained a more powerful learning platform, but it gained a critical technology partner in Managed Hosting.

“We now have a dedicated Hosting Manager [with the Diamond-level plan] who is the perfect liaison between the learning technologists and our IT department,” continues Martin. “He understands what both sides need, keeps an eye out for us, and helps us anticipate and avoid potential problems. We view him not only as an industry expert, but as an extended member of our team.”

Results/next

Since moving to 9.1 and the Diamond level plan, Edge Hill also benefits from a much more stable and reliable VLE thanks to Managed Hosting's 99.9% uptime SLA guarantee. "The reputation of Blackboard is one of a stable and very robust environment and platform. Everyone at the university regards it as business critical," says Martin.

Riding on the successes of the platform and hosting upgrades, Edge Hill turned to Blackboard for further solutions that would help them meet their mission for 2015. The university has implemented Assignment Handler and Mobile Learn, and is piloting Wimba and Collaborate. "It's a testament to our confidence in Blackboard that we've come this far and have even considered extending our platform to this extent," adds Martin.

And if its annual student eLearning survey is any indication of future success, Edge Hill is well poised to meet its objective of being a leading university in the region by 2015: 78% of their students said that knowledge they've gained using the Blackboard system has enhanced their learning experience. The team at Blackboard is proud to be a partner in helping the university achieve its mission.

For more information about Blackboard Managed Hosting, please contact your Account Representative or visit blackboard.com/managedhosting.

CORE INFRASTRUCTURE

All Blackboard Managed Hosting Engagement Plans leverage the same infrastructure and support baseline:

- Up to 99.9% application availability guarantee
- Sub-two second host latency performance guarantee
- 24 x 7 x 365 performance and fault monitoring by Blackboard staff across 4 continents
- 7 Day setup and installation
- Uncapped storage space and bandwidth SSL encryption (optional)
- Daily data backups
- Secure, best in class datacenter facilities
- Firewall protection
- Intrusion protection
- Redundant Tier-1 Internet connections
- Fully redundant and conditioned power



ENGAGEMENT PLANS

SILVER

For small institutions or departments experiencing initial organic online program growth - Fast, easy and effective 24x7 hosting from experts who know the application

GOLD

For medium-sized and larger institutions whose online learning programs are maturing - Cost-effective 24x7 production infrastructure with the incremental addition of technology components when required

PLATINUM

For institutions with a structured and mature online education strategy - Complete hosting infrastructure, higher service level, and additional project management for critical changes

DIAMOND

For institutions whose online learning programs are at the core of their educational mission - Partnership to manage fast growth and change with the highest levels of support and strategic planning



RISK MANAGEMENT & BEST PRACTICES

Infrastructure and Support Baseline

24x7x365 Operations and Support

Tier-4 Data Center

Tier-1 Redundant Internet Connections

Redundant Data Backups

*The 99.9% SLA is available for institutions upgrading to Release 9.1, who currently have or plan to move to the Platinum Level Service or higher, subject to meeting Best Practice Requirements; Restrictions apply. All qualifications must be met. Requires execution of the 99.9% SLA Addendum to the Blackboard Managed Hosting contract.

