



STUDENTS THRIVE IN A WIRELESS ENVIRONMENT

Preconfigured Dell™ Latitude™ D531 laptops running the Microsoft® Windows Vista® Business Edition OS and Microsoft Office 2007 help provide a flexible learning environment and efficient administration and support for university students.

CHALLENGE

The University College Plymouth St Mark and St John (Marjon), in the UK, needs to sustain a competitive edge for attracting new students. As a result, the college wanted to supply a laptop to each student when they enrolled in an undergraduate or postgraduate certificate of education (PGCE) program.

SOLUTION

In September 2007, Marjon worked with Dell to supply Dell Latitude D531 laptops running Microsoft Windows Vista Business Edition and Microsoft Office 2007 to new students. Dell managed the logistics of delivery and made sure the laptops were preconfigured, thanks to its Custom Factory Integration services. Each laptop comes with Dell CompleteCare™ Accidental Damage Service¹ and three-year Next Business Day On-Site Service.²

BENEFITS

- The deployment helps create equal opportunity for students.
- Students have access virtually anywhere, anytime with wireless-enabled Dell Latitude laptops.
- Enhanced power management in Microsoft Windows Vista helps ensure maximum uptime.

Related Categories:

2007 Microsoft Office, case study,
Dell Latitude laptops, Marjon,
Microsoft Windows Vista, mobility

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Today's universities expect their students to be proficient in IT, and many require them to have a PC. However, financial pressures mean that some students find it hard to obtain affordable hardware, which puts them at an immediate disadvantage. In addition, as universities have become increasingly competitive, the schools must deliver top-level courses and provide supportive learning environments to help maintain student numbers.

The University College Plymouth St Mark and St John (Marjon) in Plymouth, UK, has 3,000 students. It offers a variety of courses that include management, public relations, tourism, hospitality, philosophy, and sociology. And its policies on student services are responsive to local, regional, national, and international needs.

In 2006, students in the UK faced an annual tuition hike of up to £3,000. This fee increase caused Marjon to find an innovative way to promote effective learning while appealing to new students. As a result, Marjon began a close working relationship with Dell, rolling out Dell Latitude D531 laptops to undergraduates beginning a three-year course of study and students pursuing a postgraduate certificate of education (PGCE). David Riggs, IT manager at Marjon, explains, "We regard ourselves as a good quality university college. New notebooks would have to complement our reputation, so we needed a top-tier provider like Dell."

Students who previously could not afford a PC had had to rely on older computers in shared computer libraries, so the Latitude laptops helped bolster student satisfaction. And because all assignments must be typed rather than handwritten, students found it easier to produce coursework and access online reading materials using their own laptops rather than using shared computers.

Riggs says, "We want to continue making it easier for students coming here, so we decided to carry out the same deployment for our September 2007 enrollments. Although getting a new computer for free was not a deciding factor when a student chooses to attend Marjon, it does help us become a more desirable choice in a competitive market."

LAPTOP DEPLOYMENT MEETS STUDENT NEEDS

In June 2007, Riggs liaised with Dell to reassess student needs and finalize specifications before the beginning of the school year. Dell sent the IT department test systems, and Riggs provided feedback before the planned deployment date.

As a small university, Marjon did not have the resources for a swift deployment, but Dell helped keep the deployment of 900 Dell Latitude D531 laptops quick and easy for both staff and students. Each Latitude D531 laptop comes with Dell CompleteCare Accidental Damage Service³ and three-year Next Business Day On-Site Service.⁴ Thanks to Dell Custom Factory Integration services, these laptops are also preconfigured with Microsoft Windows Vista Business Edition, Microsoft Office 2007, and 1 GB of RAM. “Dell arrived at our school gym and delivered the notebooks on both registration mornings, which prevented us from having to keep stock on-site overnight. A team of 11 Dell employees helped us with the rollout and answered any student questions,” says Riggs. “We distributed one notebook every 25 seconds. Thanks to Dell, the process went extremely smoothly. And this meant that teachers and students spent minimum time completing registration processes.”

As part of the process, students checked that they had all components before signing a Microsoft licensing agreement—after which the laptop was officially theirs. Now, these Marjon students have valuable access to the full professional versions of the latest Microsoft software both in and out of the classroom.

Students can use their wireless-enabled laptops to access the secure Internet connection at the school and spend less time linking to the Internet than they did previously. Students now also

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have additional time for learning virtually anywhere on campus, and do not need to procure their own Internet service provider. In the long term, teachers and students can take advantage of online tools to help increase learning efficiencies.

RELIABLE SUPPORT CREATES MORE TIME FOR LEARNING

If Marjon had not put this program in place, students would have come with various types of PCs, making it difficult and expensive for the college to provide appropriate support. Access to up-to-date technology also helps eliminate time wasted to wait in computer labs or for older systems to run. “Now students all have exactly the same, standardized model, and it is very easy for our IT employees to swiftly respond to inquiries. We also load written instructions on our Web site and also provide one-to-one help,” Riggs says.

The college Web site also has online support links—such as a short video clip showing how to upgrade RAM on a Dell laptop—and includes a page of frequently asked questions showing where to look for help on security advice, how-to guides on software, free software for download, and a link to Dell support. Riggs explains, “Dell provided us with a total package, including hardware, software, and services. In addition, students can access the Dell Premier Pages online ordering service to access additional notebook accessories at preferential rates.

“We also have a very strong working relationship with Dell’s sales team. They are very responsive and resolve our problems promptly. If students have an issue, they just call Dell, drop their machine at our office, and a Dell engineer repairs it and returns it to the student by the next working day.”

FUTURE DEPLOYMENT MEANS ADDITIONAL LAPTOPS

Marjon expects significant IT cost savings from the changing role of its IT support personnel that will help create a better balance between work and life for students. They can have one secure, centralized system to produce work on, whenever and virtually wherever they are—and even do homework between classes.

Students at Marjon will continue to receive Dell laptops in the near future. Says Riggs, “Knowing our students have effective learning tools will only improve our education delivery. It will also help our students to be more confident with the latest technology when they graduate.”

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QUICK LINK

Dell Latitude laptops:
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^{1,3} CompleteCare service excludes theft, loss, and damage due to fire, flood or other acts of nature, or intentional damage. Customer may be required to return unit to Dell. For complete details, visit DELL.COM/ServiceContracts.

^{2,4} May be provided by third party. Technician dispatched, if necessary, following phone-based troubleshooting. Availability varies. For complete details, visit DELL.COM/ServiceContracts.