University on course for collaboration success

About Anglia Ruskin University

Anglia Ruskin University (ARU), located in the UK, is an innovative, global University welcoming students from 185 countries. Operating across 4 campuses, the University offers a variety of under- and post-graduate courses in computing and technology, art and design, engineering, law, business, economics, life sciences and more. It has been named as one of the top 350 institutions in the world by The Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2021 and is recognised as one of the top 40 universities in the UK.

Key Organisational Drivers

Launched at ARU in 2018, the "Better Working Together" programme was a major IT initiative encompassing a number of projects dedicated to driving collaboration across the University. Explains Mladen Kirilov, Senior Cloud Engineer at ARU: "This project was a vast undertaking which included significant plans to align our IT services delivered to students and staff and effectively become more agile. Part of the bigger picture was to bring everyone together into the same cloud environment for better collaboration."

At the time, all University students were using the Microsoft cloud for email, whereas University staff were using an on-premises email solution. The student Microsoft 365 tenant had evolved purely around the student workload and there was little governance around Groups, SharePoint and Teams. Mladen continues: "Due to insufficient governance, the situation in the student tenant had become a bit like the Wild West! Therefore, we decided it was necessary to create a new tenant where everyone could collaborate better."

In line with the "Better Working Together" programme, ARU recognised the need to create a brand new Microsoft 365 tenant that was accessible to both staff and students. Mladen resumes: "We needed to migrate staff from the on-premises email, implement a shift from using Skype for Business to Microsoft Teams and use Teams (SharePoint Online) for files as well. At the same time, we needed to migrate all our students from the old tenant – without bringing any unmanaged resources along. It made sense to start again from scratch to create a well-governed structure that would work well for everyone."

The ProvisionPoint Solution

With a brand new Microsoft 365 tenant in place, ARU was determined to ensure Teams was set up correctly, with proper management and full governance in place, before introducing it to staff and students.

Key Outcomes

Tailored solution

Improved governance

Low training requirements

Enhanced functionality

Cost effective

Workspace compliance

After research, ProvisionPoint 365 was recommended to ARU by an independent consultant. With ProvisionPoint 365 embedded into Teams, ARU can now create a set of specific service definitions, such as Projects and Organisational Unit Teams, as well as Virtual Teams for use in shared functions.

Mladen goes on: "As a University, we perhaps use ProvisionPoint 365 in a unique way compared to other industry sectors. We have chosen not to expose ProvisionPoint 365 to the majority of our user base, and instead have only provided our IT Customer Support staff with access to this robust governance solution. The Customer Support team act as Requestors and manage all requests from one central place – this avoids us ending up in the Wild West again! Users simply complete a form and following a well-structured, standardised approval process, it gives us much greater governance and control."

Why ProvisionPoint?

"Universities are typically challenged by tight budgets, so cost is always an important factor," Mladen continues. "ProvisionPoint 365 offers a clear, attractive pricing structure which is a great fit for the price-conscious education sector."

Besides price, ProvisionPoint 365 also includes lots of customisable features that ARU could take advantage of: URL templates; SharePoint site links; request forms and approvals – as well as the ability to use leases for lifecycle management. Mladen adds: "We also like the way we can add a prefix code to each project's URL to make it easier to discover SharePoint sites. ProvisionPoint 365 is intuitive and so simple to use. With just a 30 minute 'show and tell' session to familiarise themselves with the solution, our Customer Support team was ready to use the interface. I also love the fact that ProvisionPoint listens to feedback and has implemented small feature requests that help our workload."

In February 2020, ARU used ProvisionPoint 365 to create 10 Teams. Thrown into lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the following month saw 224 Teams created – an increase of 1020% in a matter of weeks! And because ARU had set up everything properly prior to this, they were completely prepared to efficiently handle this influx of demand that home working mandated.

> **ProvisionPoint 365 accelerated our Teams adoption by providing powerful functionality with custom features that allowed us to implement our own governance, management and lifecycle policies in the Microsoft ecosystem.**
>
> **– Mladen Kirilov, Senior Cloud Engineer, ARU**

Future Plans

As lockdown sees an increase in remote teaching, the use of Teams at the University is evolving and becoming more useful for class delivery, recording classes and sharing files. ARU is seeing more staff, such as Personal Development Tutors, requesting access to Class Teams, and they will require different service definitions. To this end, ARU has set up a Teams sandbox so the tutors can learn how to use Teams properly before allowing full access to ensure proper governance and compliance continues over the coming years.

Mladen concludes: "Our overall objective was to get everyone collaborating and ProvisionPoint 365 has really helped us to achieve this. We look forward to developing our use of ProvisionPoint 365 as our own needs evolve."

About ProvisionPoint 365:

ProvisionPoint 365 is the workspace governance tool for Office 365. Designed from the cloud-up for Microsoft Teams, SharePoint Sites, Microsoft 365 Groups, Planner Plans, Yammer Communities, and more, ProvisionPoint 365 helps to bring order to your Microsoft 365 workspaces. From preventing Teams sprawl, to preserving content for compliance and simplifying provisioning, this dynamic SaaS solution gives control to administrators, self-service empowerment to users and peace of mind to management.

Microsoft 365 Governance. Sorted