AUT secures wireless access for 8300 staff and students daily with Fortinet security infrastructure

AUT is a contemporary New Zealand university focused on providing exceptional student opportunities and learning experiences, and graduate success in a context stimulated by impactful research and industry connectivity.

More than 28,000 students are enrolled at AUT in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, studying at one of three campuses. AUT has consistently been a leader in undergraduate and postgraduate enrolment growth of both New Zealand and international students across a wide range of professional disciplines, and as a result it is now the second largest university in New Zealand.

AUT has three teaching campuses located in south Auckland, Auckland’s CBD and on the North Shore; and three specialist facilities: the Centre for Refugee Education, the Radio Astronomy Observatory in Warkworth and AUT Millennium. AUT manages 8000 computers (including laptops) and, on average, 8300 students log on per day to AUT’s wireless network.

AUT has been running Fortinet firewalls since 2009 and upgraded to their current configuration of 4x FortiGate 3240C and 6x FortiGate 1000C HA appliances in 2012. The entire implementation has been refreshingly free from any major incidents and the support provided by Fortinet Platinum Partner Optinet has helped keep the Fortinet appliances running smoothly 24x7.

“A particular advantage of Fortinet’s security solution set is a regular schedule of updates and enhancements. We’re seeing more and more threats detected year-on-year and Fortinet’s upgrades keep pace with the heightened risk. This gives us better protection with a strong sense of continuity.”

– Brian Green, Security & Access Manager, AUT

Details
Customer Name: Auckland University of Technology
Industry: Tertiary education
Location: Auckland CBD and satellite campuses

Challenges

- Rapidly growing user base and increasing reliance on wireless networks
- More complex threat landscape requiring continual upgrades and enhancements
- Required minimal ‘change management’ overheads and ease of deployment and operations

Benefits

- No major issues over the six years of operations, allowing 8300 users to log-on daily for safe, secure and low-latency wireless networking
- Continuity in Fortinet’s solution set ensures minimal ‘change management’ costs
- Fortinet Platinum Partner Optinet provides expert support and managed services to minimise operational overheads

Deployment

- 2x FortiGate 3016B appliances (retired)
- 4x FortiGate 3240C appliances
- 6x FortiGate 1000C HA appliances
- FortiAnalyzer
- FortiManager
- FortiGuard Security Subscription Services
Increased complexity of the threat landscape

“AUT first engaged with Fortinet and Optinet in 2009,” says Brian Green, Security & Access Manager at AUT. “We had been running traditional firewalls and proxy servers but changes in the security landscape, specifically the increasing complexity of threats, as well as the growth in internet usage and an increasing reliance on wireless access, meant that we needed to undertake a major upgrade of our security infrastructure.”

AUT prepared a comprehensive RFP that specified their current needs and took into account planned growth. AUT were flexible in their deployment requirements and were open to a combination of on-site infrastructure and managed services.

“We were impressed with the thoroughness of AUT’s original RFP,” says Jason Nand, Business Development Manager at Optinet. “What they required that extended far beyond firewall capabilities. In addition to a proposal to install two FortiGate 3016B appliances which, at the time, were some of the most powerful on the market. We also proposed a managed services contract to maintain and support the firewalls.”

Most cost-effective

“Optinet’s proposal was easily the most cost-effective of the responses,” says Green. “Their solution closely matched the RFP’s requirements and the overall feature set more than satisfied our needs. They clearly understood our business requirements as well as the technical specifications. And we felt comfortable with their ability to provide the required services. A plus for us was that their implementation plan was quite straight-forward. As a result, we could anticipate a low cost for ‘change management’.”

The original deployment was based on a three-year contract. “As we approached the end of the contract we asked Optinet to recommend a security infrastructure that, again, would support current needs and future requirements,” continues Green.

“AUT also performed a market survey. As Fortinet and Optinet had more than satisfied us with their support in the past, it became clear that their competitive solution would continue to be the most cost-effective for us and best meet AUT’s requirements.”

Winning relationship

“We had built an excellent relationship with Brian and the AUT IT Security team over the past three years and had an in-depth understanding of their networking requirements as well as their corporate culture,” notes Nand. “As a result we were able to propose a more comprehensive security infrastructure that extended far beyond firewall capabilities. In addition to the FortiGate 3240C and FortiGate 1000C HA appliances we included FortiAnalyser to integrate logging, analytics and reporting into one system and FortiManager to simplify management and provide greater transparency across the network. We also extended the terms of the FortiGuard Subscription Services.”

“We had no hesitation awarding the upgrade to Optinet,” says Green. “The combination of Fortinet equipment and Optinet support had provided three years of cost-effective operations with no major incidents. A key consideration was that Fortinet provided advanced threat protection that covered both wired and wireless networking and addressed application control where required.”

Reliable operation

Since the 2012 upgrade, AUT has enjoyed a prolonged period free from any major incidents. “Every AUT staff member and student that logs into our wired and wireless network is protected by Fortinet,” says Green. “The network, with Fortinet protection running in the background, is fast, more secure and features low-latency.”

“A particular advantage of Fortinet’s security solution set,” he continues, “is a regular schedule of updates and enhancements. We’re seeing more and more threats detected year-on-year and Fortinet’s upgrades keep pace with the heightened risk. This gives us better protection with a strong sense of continuity. One of the original reasons we selected Fortinet was the perceived low cost of change management. That perception has proven to be a reality.”

Optinet’s services have been highly appreciated. “Their managed services and technical expertise have been invaluable in maintaining our network and ensuring efficient operations,” concludes Green. “The combination of good people, excellent equipment and a real understanding of our business requirements has provided us with the support we need to secure our students and staff. We have every confidence that this will continue into the future.”

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