



CASE STUDY

The Art of Secure Connectivity at Arts University Bournemouth



Arts University Bournemouth (AUB) offers courses in art, design, media, and performance. A university for innovative thinking, AUB prides itself on exploring the boundaries of artistic expression and its making culture, and has many exciting plans for its future, as well as an ongoing commitment to making its campus a hub of creativity.

However, with over 3,600 students and 600 staff based at a single campus in Poole, Dorset, AUB was facing some very modern challenges around its IT infrastructure. Like all universities in the 21st century, AUB needed a reliable and secure infrastructure and connectivity to support its various operations. Yet it also has to deal with several unique issues around security, including web filtering and counterterrorism reporting.

Creative Challenges for IT

For all universities, robust and secure connectivity is nonnegotiable. Whether it's accessing online services, accessing learning resources, collaboration and communication, uploading and downloading files, or simply connecting to the network, those living and working on campus need fast, reliable, and secure access. With an increase in "corporate owned, personally enabled" (COPE) and students' "bring your own device" (BYOD), delivering this has become more complicated, since students and staff alike are accessing the network resources by various means and devices.

For AUB, however, this is an even more pressing concern due to the nature of the large media files its users are working with. Rather than simply handing in written work, students have to upload images, videos, project files, and other multimedia formats. AUB was already in the process of addressing this, by implementing increased resilient 10Gb links with the Joint Academic NETwork (JANET) to increase its bandwidth.

Yet it was also facing increased security issues with its range of requirements to support the "arts disciplines," meaning it needed to assess its firewall capabilities. Firstly, AUB needed to comply with initiatives like the Prevent Agenda which is part of the government's counterterrorism strategy. Unfortunately, AUB's existing firewalls made monitoring and reporting on security a challenge.

Like many educational organizations, AUB also needed advanced web-filtering capabilities to stop students or staff accessing inappropriate content. For AUB, however, this was more complex than it might have been for other institutions: As an arts university, students are likely to both create, research, and access content to aid studies such as gunshot wounds for special effects makeup or costumes that could be fetish biased. So it needed a system that was flexible and intelligent enough to account for this.

Finally, AUB was exploring possibilities around the cloud against its hybrid estate. While many of its core systems are currently on-premises, it was considering its options with Microsoft Azure and Amazon Web Services. So, it needed security infrastructure that could support those ambitions too. All in all, AUB's IT staff had a challenging job on their hands.

"We needed an easy-to-manage solution with strong monitoring and reporting capabilities. This is exactly what we found from Fortinet's products."

– Stephen Harvey,
Head of Digital Services,
Arts University Bournemouth

Details

Customer: Arts University Bournemouth

Industry: Higher Education

Location: United Kingdom

“As an arts university, our security and bandwidth requirements are unusual—so we needed to work with a provider who could understand our unique situation and respond accordingly,” says Stephen Harvey, Head of Digital Services, Arts University Bournemouth.

Crafting a Secure, Connected Campus

AUB’s previous firewalls operated on a master/slave basis, in which the second box is passive until the failure of the first box. This wasn’t maximising the resource or the throughput, and IT staff felt this wouldn’t be suitable to meet their demands going forward.

IT staff therefore wanted to purchase two physical firewall appliances to provide high availability and network performance to handle 10Gb throughput on the firewall rules. It also needed an advanced web-filtering functionality, and monitoring that could report on extremism and child pornography categories in line with its Prevent Strategy, as well as security that could support cloud integration moving forward.

Replacing the two firewalls would be a significant financial investment, however—and the IT team knew it might struggle to secure signoff for this level of procurement. To reduce the potential for digital debt in the future, IT staff were keen to secure a reasonably priced, long-term contract that would support the growing needs and maintain the diversity required against its digital estate.

AUB set about seeking new solutions, speaking and consulting with similar universities that had procured new infrastructure, as well as visiting seminars and conferences and reading educational forums. As a small team, they were particularly interested in a simple, nontechnical interface, and were also looking for a provider who could support the installation.

This is exactly what a modern FortiGate solution provides: The technology is easy to manage and works efficiently with plenty of throughput even when advanced features are turned on. Fortinet products have the ability to support AUB’s specific security requirements—from counterterrorism measures to bespoke web-filtering functionality and large file uploads. Best of all, AUB will be prepared for any future risks thanks to the zero-day malware protection to guard against new threats.

A State-of-the-Art Solution

During the tender process, AUB found that Fortinet—and reseller GCI—were able to clearly establish the university’s requirements, giving a strong indication of what exactly the best solution (and most cost-effective route forward) would be. AUB was therefore happy to work with Fortinet and GCI to plan, install, and implement its new products.

GCI is a leading ICT service provider and highly experienced with Fortinet products, which meant they were able to add real value to the deployment. The solution was fully integrated in 10 working days, and the team were particularly pleased with the consultant engineer who carried out the deployment, as moving policies across from one firewall to another can be a challenging experience.

For AUB’s IT staff, the new suite of products has delivered the exact benefits they hoped for. The new FortiGate firewalls are easy to manage, while products like FortiAnalyzer and FortiManager allow the IT team to run automated reports and support their organization’s security goals.

AUB is now confident that its IT infrastructure is fully resilient and can offer growth and maturity to its organization, as their bandwidth requirements increase. As this has been purchased on a five-year plan, AUB’s IT staff can rest assured that they have the right products in place for the foreseeable future and manage the debit debt in this regard.

“Our new solution does exactly what it says on the tin. It has given us security, reliability, flexibility, and peace of mind that we’re prepared for any coming changes,” notes Harvey.

Business Impact

- Support increasingly complex IT infrastructure
- Meet unique campus requirements and government mandates
- Improved monitoring and analysis of cybersecurity

Solutions

- FortiGate with five-year FortiCare subscription
- Unified Threat Management (UTM) Protection Bundle—including Application Control, Intrusion Prevention, AV, Web Filtering, Zero-day Malware protection
- FortiAnalyzer and FortiManager

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