CASE STUDY

How Academia Scales for Remote
Learning with Azure Virtual Desktop

About Canterbury Christ Church University

Canterbury Christ Church University is a university in the south of England. Starting 60 years ago as a teacher training college with just 75 students, Canterbury Christ Church has grown into a vital source of training for healthcare and teaching professionals, an innovator in STEM education, and a vibrant hub of creativity and talent, with research that benefits regional, national and international communities. It's team of 68 IT professionals now serves approximately 26,000 full and part students, and just over 1,800 staff members.

As a University with three campuses across Kent and Medway, and partnerships with other academic institutions around the UK and the world, Canterbury Christ Church's needed to be able to host high performance software for advanced it undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses. It had also partnered with the University of Kent to establish Kent's first ever medical school, Kent and Medway Medical School (KMMS), which required the KMMS students to access both institutions 'systems, including accessing the Canterbury Christ Church desktop from either campus and several nearby NHS locations.

Furthermore, the University wanted to provide academic and professional service staff with hybrid work models, particularly as the country was going in and out of lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In an effort to maintain normal working habits, Canterbury Christ Church University needed to convert from on-premises remote desktop services (RDS) to enable access to campus desktops across the board. At the start of the 2020 academic year, the IT department rolled out generic student desktops to ensure access to University resources. However, the maintenance and scaling necessary for so many users proved unsustainable.

> "The University needed to implement a cloud first strategy to lower costs and scale to accommodate a hybrid model," said Dave Hailwood, Platform and Systems Manager at Canterbury Christ Church . "On-prem alternatives required too much specific expertise to maintain and simply were not flexible enough to meet our needs."

Making Azure Virtual Desktop Work for Canterbury Christ Church University

Once RDS licenses were up for renewal, Hailwood and the team switched to Microsoft's Azure Virtual Desktop to further enable the University's hybrid model and make it easier for the IT team to create purpose built host pools for different departments. Despite the improvement in functionality, the University's IT team needed something that offered a complete automation package than the Azure admin portal.

> *"Nerdio Manager for Enterprise kept popping up in conversations with peers using AVD, and it seemed to be exactly what we needed to streamline IT operations while saving time and resources,"* added Hailwood.

During the proof-of-concept (POC), Canterbury Christ Church imported eight host pools seamlessly from native Azure into Nerdio Manager for Enterprise and saw immediate value when it came to ease of management and scaling.

> *"The Nerdio technology made it much easier for my team to build and manage host pools while still providing a great service to our users,"* said Hailwood. *"It is simple compared to the complexities of native Azure but still provides IT with all the options they need to make customized updates."*

Improving Efficiency with Nerdio Manager for Enterprise

Native Azure was prohibitively complicated for the 68 person University IT team, who needed a more streamlined, automated management tool to power a university of this size. With Nerdio Manager for Enterprise, scaling became much more manageable, and cost savings were immediately apparent. "The School of Engineering, Technology and Design host pool had particularly sophisticated requirements with the need to provision high-performance, more

expensive VMs. Nerdio Manager's auto-scaling features immediately saved us 70% through its compute and storage scaling, managing session hosts, and reducing profile storage capacity," said Hailwood.

Furthermore, IT is able to use the portal effectively as an ad hoc service desk, allowing the team to manage session hosts and individual sessions and empowering them to provide better experiences to users. The portal provides a single point of operation for all automation and AVD management, and Nerdio Manager for Enterprise ensures updates can be made quickly and easily in just two clicks.

Empowered IT = Better Experiences

Nerdio Manager for Enterprise has enabled Canterbury Christ Church University to increase the speed of AVD adoption across the organization, while migrating away from RDS and improving user experience.

> *"Nerdio made everything much easier and has enabled us to do more with AVD than we ever could natively," said Hailwood. "The automation and ease of use provides the team with much more flexibility, allowing us to create bespoke environments for specific departments while still keeping costs low and allowing for proper testing and rollout. Our users have never been happier with the experience."*

Creating a new host pool used to take weeks. Now with Nerdio Manager for Enterprise, that same work can be accomplished in less than a day, further empowering IT to customize University desktops and better serve the academics who rely on this technology to teach and learn.

Unlike with the on-prem alternative, the IT team no longer needs to worry about capacity, and have seen a decrease in the number of support tickets filed due to the improved experience for students and staff alike.

About Nerdio

Nerdio empowers IT Professionals to deploy, manage, and auto-scale Azure Virtual Desktop (AVD). Created to address the technical and security requirements of enterprise customers, Nerdio Manager for Enterprise is ideal for IT Professionals looking to deploy and manage large AVD environments and can be connected to an existing AVD setup or used to stand up a new AVD deployment. Nerdio Manager is an all-PaaS Azure application that runs in a customer's own Azure subscription, making it one of the most secure and compliant solutions on the market. Learn more at www.getnerdio.com/nme

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