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Case study



Sector Education
Service Cyber Security

Dec 2022

A trusted partnership in action

Queen Mary University of London (QMUL) is a world-class, Russell Group academic institution ranked in the top 20 of all higher education establishments in the UK. Hosting 32,000 students from over 170 nations, and 4,500 staff, the university is renowned for being intensely research-led.

Like many others, QMUL has encountered seismic changes over the past few years. From bolstering remote access technologies and online learning capacity in the face of a global pandemic, to investment in next generation cyber defences to secure the organisation's critical systems from the evolving threat landscape.

How we helped

We started working with QMUL over six years ago, meaning that before the disruption of covid, we had developed a strong understanding of the business, the operation, the needs and the challenges the team of approx. 200 IT staff face.

After coming to us through a referral due to our proven expertise in the higher education sector, we initially worked with the university to support strategic improvements in Digital Pedagogy. This work, which focuses on the use of digital technologies in teaching and learning, was to help them maximise the value that was being delivered from online virtual learning environments.

Establishing a cyber strategy

We provided four full time staff members (Information Security Manager, Information Security Officer, Policies Standards and Awareness Manager and Technical Security Officer) to Queen Mary's on an interim basis to offer strategic support to the newly formed Information Security Team.

We have since worked with the team on defining a robust security architecture and developing a three-year cyber security strategy to ensure resilience from current and future threats.

Cyber improvement programme

A key priority was key cyber security, and our team rapidly mobilised to deliver a cyber improvement programme aligned to the NCSC Cyber Essentials framework for the School of Economics and Finance.

Identifying the current state and mapping out requirements to meet the standard, certification was successfully awarded in November 2019 and has allowed the university to not only demonstrate its commitment to cyber resilience, but secure a critical research bid in the process.

Building a team from all sides

After the success of the Cyber Essentials certification, a tactical cyber improvement programme was initiated including both project support, as well as bolstering the QMUL security team with skilled specialists to work as one virtual team.

We placed Waterstons employees onsite as Information Security Manager and Technical Security Officer to provide on the ground expertise and facilitate knowledge transfer to local resources.

This approach was such a success that the university requested we provide 24x7 security monitoring via our Security Operations Centre (SOC), providing assurance that critical systems were monitored around the clock in order to detect any early indications of a cyberattack.

Establishing SOC services

In addition to the supplemented roles, the 24x7 SOC monitoring was expanded to include additional services, with cyber incident response processes tested extensively to validate their effectiveness.

Work is ongoing to achieve ISO27001 certification for centrally managed services, in addition to a technical roadmap of security improvements designed to reduce possible exposure to cyber security risk.

Trusted partnership

The strong foundations of our relationship have enabled us to work with the University on numerous initiatives including strategic input on virtual learning environment improvements, supporting technical solution selection and wider security architecture support.

These services are all critical to ensure that the institution is able to deliver resilient, scalable and secure services to support the world leading reaching efforts and high-class teaching.

Our expertise is measurable, our knowledge extensive, but it's our relationships built on trust that enable us to add value and generate success for our clients.

To find out more about our work in Higher Education, visit https://www.waterstons.com/sectors/education