



CUSTOMER PROFILE

Name: University of Surrey
Industry: Education
Location: Guildford, England
Profile: The University of Surrey is a public research university located within the county town of Guildford, Surrey, in the South East of England, United Kingdom. The university specializes in science, engineering, medicine and business.

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University of Surrey Provides Students with Flexible, Affordable WiFi Solution

More than 5,000 TP-LINK routers deployed in halls of residence to-date
3,500 routers pre-configured for arrival of new students

Ranked as one of the UK's top 10 universities by The Guardian's University Guide 2014, the University of Surrey prides itself on providing students with a competitive edge for their future through innovation and forward-thinking. Since 1894, the University has established itself as a global world-class research and education institution with an enterprising spirit, contributing to its unrivalled graduate employability record. It offers 14,441 students over 50 subjects at undergraduate level, with 2,300 members of staff providing a distinctive blend of academic knowledge and professional insight.

FAST FACTS

- **Self-funding, universal, WiFi deployment**
- **Personal WiFi hotspot solution for just £10**
- **Provides multiple non-competing, secure WiFi networks**
- **Simple to pre-configure for swift roll out**
- **Adopted by more than 70% of students on campus**
- **More than 5,000 units purchased by students in less than 2 years**

The rise of wireless

Currently the University of Surrey houses 5,500 students on its campus, providing a home away from home in its halls of residence. In order to meet the students' connectivity needs, in 2003 the University deployed a wired Ethernet connection to each room, enabling residents to plug in their PCs and laptops. However, with the proliferation of wireless devices it became apparent that a wireless solution was essential too.

Rob Purcell, Group Leader IT Support, University of Surrey, explains: "Because most devices are WiFi ready or don't even have an Ethernet port for a wired connection, the first question to our tech support team is about the wireless in halls. Students want access to FaceTime, Skype, Instagram, Whatsapp and all the other instant messaging applications so they can keep in touch with old friends, family and new friends on campus. We found that wireless came up again and again in student satisfaction surveys."

Individual solution

The University of Surrey strives to offer its students typical home comforts to help them settle in and knew that they needed to find an effective solution that was also easy-to-use, and wouldn't place an additional burden on the campus tech support team. With no University fund allocated

towards the task, the solution needed to be affordable so it could be self-funded by students living on a shoe-string budget. To remain flexible, University IT gave students the option of purchasing a simple wireless solution directly from the University or bringing their own wireless router from home.

With so many residents and potential connected devices in close proximity, they needed to create non-competing networks that could provide high-speed connectivity to all students. It was essential to avoid individual students hogging bandwidth, resulting in lag and delays for the others. As a result, rather than deploying a complex wireless infrastructure for the whole of the halls of residence, they needed a solution that could be deployed on a room by room basis.

Affordable, neat and packed with features

University IT evaluated a number of connectivity products for their features, signal strength and value for money before handing them over to a group of 15 students, with varying levels of technical knowledge, to test and provide their feedback. In the end the decision was unanimous. The TP-LINK 150Mbps Wireless N Router TL-WR720N was the best solution because of the value for money it offered. The University initially invested in 2,500 units from eBuyer,

a specialised online electronics retailer on their approved procurement list, to test the solutions viability.

Purcell explains: "We needed a solution that was small, compact and durable but still had all the necessary features. One key consideration was the need for a product that can be easily configured and would enable the University to auto-tune the solution and set the wireless signal parameters for the dimension of one bedroom per unit only. With the rooms being in such close proximity to each other, the signal strength needs to be modified on each device in order to ensure that there is no interference between the routers in neighbouring rooms. At the same time, we needed the router to provide good signal strength in the room it sits in, so that students have access to a high-speed wireless network. TP-LINK was able to offer these capabilities in one small, cost-effective yet powerful solution."

The initiative proved so successful that the University quickly purchased a further 1,000 units to meet student demand.

Wireless welcome pack

It takes just one minute for a member of the five strong team of student advisors, part of the IT User Support Team, to pre-configure a router and allocate a unique SSID (Service Set Identifier). Students are then provided with a WPA key, which acts as an individual password ensuring their network is protected. The router connects directly to the Internet without any further configuration, providing a plug and play experience.

Since launching the Wifi service in August 2013 the University has sold over 5,000 TP-LINK routers to its residents, each costing as little as £10, providing the students with great value and demonstrating the popularity of the scheme. Experience shows that Freshers reach for wireless first so the University prepares connectivity packs ahead of the new term time. At the beginning of term, 2,500 pre-configured routers are packed with accompanying literature and offered to new students upon

arrival as part of a welcome pack. The University found that approximately 70% of students, living on campus, opted to purchase the TP-LINK solution.

High-speed connectivity

The TP-LINK wireless N Router provides students with wireless connectivity up to 150Mbps, enabling bandwidth-intensive applications such as video streaming and online gaming. With up to eight or nine devices connected simultaneously at any one time, residents can still enjoy a high quality experience, in the comfort of their own rooms, when streaming the latest film or favourite TV series, gaming online wirelessly, or sharing their photos from a previous night out with friends and family. It also allows the students to tap into the wide range of online resources, from lecture notes to journals, that the University provides for their courses and to submit their assignments online.

The router also has an Ethernet port in the back that act like a switch, providing students with the option of plugging in wired network devices such as printers, PCs and laptops to add them to the private network in the room. The reset button enables students to wipe the University configurations when they leave campus, so they can continue to use the product when they leave the halls of residence.

Purcell concludes: "The TP-LINK router meets all our requirements; it's quick to set-up, easy-to-use and feature rich whilst remaining very good value for money. The TL-WR720N is reliable and sturdy which is a massive benefit when you're deploying large numbers in a student environment. Each user benefits from their own private protected high-speed network, with little performance conflicts with other networks on campus."

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