



FALMOUTH UNIVERSITY TRANSFORMS OFF-CAMPUS LEARNING DURING COVID WITH RAPIDLY IMPLEMENTED COMMUNICATIONS SOLUTIONS

FALMOUTH UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1902, Falmouth University today specialises in courses for the creative industries. The university has grown rapidly in recent years and plans to significantly increase student numbers by 2030, with 8,500 students studying remotely. This requires a transformation in communications and collaboration between students, academics, and the professional services people who support them.

The Challenge

Provide teaching staff with a single content approach to delivering and recording live sessions as a part of online learning; enabling students to easily access relevant course material and information through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE); improving online management business efficiency.

Location

Cornwall,
United Kingdom

Industry

Higher Education

Products & Services

Microsoft 365, Microsoft Teams, Microsoft Stream, CPS Professional Services

I Enhanced Collaboration

Falmouth University already offered online distance learning opportunities for undergraduates and postgraduates. Ambitious growth plans meant it needed to enhance its digital communication and collaboration capabilities for on-campus students, faculty, and support staff. In short, Falmouth’s communication and collaboration needed to be digitally transformed.

Finding the right transformation partner was critical.

The university had made significant investments in Microsoft 365 technology, but management knew that the organisation was not using its full potential. “We needed a partner to deliver the efficiencies of an integrated and joined-up 365 experience,” says Vicky Gosling, Director of Digital Experience.

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We realised we could align Microsoft 365 with our people strategy, and deploy the technology to get people sharing more information while collaborating better together in a joined up way. We wanted to get everyone using the same information with the same toolset.

Vicky Gosling
Director of Digital Experience

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Falmouth needed support from a partner that knew Microsoft technology well and had used it as the platform for communication transformation for a broad set of clients.

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We wanted ideas and insight from wider industries, not just from higher education.

Vicky Gosling says.

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Another requirement was a partner that could focus on the adoption and change appetites of different staff and student groups. “We had to make sure that things would happen at the right times for everyone’s ways of working,” adds Vicky Gosling.

In 2018, CPS was selected for a four-year engagement to help Falmouth deliver its strategic plan for 2030. As a leading Microsoft Solutions Partner, it showed deep experience in delivering communication transformation. Its prestigious Microsoft Adoption and Change Management Advanced Specialisation demonstrated commitment to adoption and change.



I COVID Ready

CPS' project team engaged with professional services staff, faculty, students, and organisational partners at all levels of the university. Starting with an organisation-wide discovery exercise to devise the best routes to enhance communication and collaboration, the team held workshops to develop adoption strategies appropriately.

A roadmap proposed Microsoft Teams as the communication and collaboration platform for all staff and students. It was also a flexible application for supporting conferences and business meetings.

Teams was scheduled for rollout in September 2020. However, COVID suddenly created a major new challenge for the university. Lockdown disrupted all face-to-face teaching programmes and made operational processes much more difficult to execute. It looked as though plans for the communications strategy would be knocked off course.

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In fact, the planning we put into our modern office communications meant that we coped with lockdown much better than many other organisations.

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I Fast Track

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When lockdown happened, we managed to switch all teaching and learning online in three days, whereas a lot of universities and colleges were taking weeks to implement new communication solutions," she says. "We knew what we were doing and had worked out how we could engage quickly with the academic staff. We accelerated plans and released Teams with Microsoft training materials, creating online communities to take over from face-to-face lectures and seminars that would normally happen in physical spaces.

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Academic staff learnt to record content, store and edit it in Microsoft Stream and link to it from the VLE. The university wanted to make Stream the store for all video and other media content to support teaching and learning. However, this is one area where COVID did threaten to wrongfoot the university.

"When we went into lockdown, we hadn't set any security permissions for Stream," Vicky Gosling explains. "This meant that all content stored on Stream was available to everyone. We wanted it targeted so that course video content was easy for students to find if they wanted to view it through a media library or the VLE. So we set tough deadlines for creating Microsoft Teams sites with the right permissions linked to Stream to provide the required level of control. CPS enabled us to do that incredibly fast. Without CPS, we would have had to manually create sites and permissions."

For new and returning students in the Autumn 2020 term after a lengthy COVID-enforced absence from campus, Microsoft Teams provides a blended communications delivery model with the university's Virtual Learning Environment on Moodle. There were Microsoft Teams sites automated by CPS for each academic department and course, delivering news about the university and relevant industry information and providing a community forum for our students. Stream content is integrated within Moodle and Teams, and Moodle is available via the Student App to give students easy access to what they need.

Responding flexibly to a fast-changing student environment, the university hosted all its student induction online meetings on Microsoft Teams in Autumn 2020. Live events with moderated Qs and As helped students overcome the anxieties of returning to campus. Since 2020 the University has continued to adapt its onboarding and induction activities through the powerful use of Teams, Teams Live Events and Stream.

I Business Efficiency

Microsoft Teams has also been important in driving business efficient communications, including at the most senior level. The Vice Chancellor's Executive Group, the Board of Governors, and the university's Leadership Team use Teams with embedded 365 Risk Management and Meeting Management applications.

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A very visible example of how business processes are transforming is how we now manage our Vice Chancellor's Executive Group. In the past, the person supporting that group spent much of her time making sure everyone had all the paperwork they needed for meetings. Now, much of that burden has gone away, everything is available via the Teams site, and she can provide valuable strategic support.

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“Feedback from governors has been really good,” according to Vicky Gosling. “They know their experience has been much easier than in many other universities and have had a seamless experience.”

Academics and professional services have also been positive about the introduction of online communication through Teams and Stream, helped by ongoing Microsoft Teams training sessions and support from the network of digital champions CPS proposed.



I Business Benefits

- Quality communication planning enables all teaching and learning to go online within three days during the COVID lockdown.
- Course video content is easily accessed and targeted.
- Online management meetings are smooth and efficient.



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During lockdown we managed to switch all our teaching and learning online in three days. That was testimony to the project planning we had put in place with CPS

Vicky Gosling
Director of Digital Experience

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The Results

Quality communication and planning enabled the switch to online teaching and learning in three days. Content storage is organised for easy access and integration with the Virtual Learning Environment. Management meetings run smoothly online, and support staff operate more strategically and efficiently.

For More Information



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