



The University of Sydney

Case Study

Lenovo® ThinkPad Tablet 2 is selected by the University of Sydney for:

- Small form factor
- Durability
- Powerful connectivity
- Physical tethering & Electronic tracking
- Digitiser pen

Lenovo™

The University of Sydney and Lenovo draw up clean slate for digital learning

The ThinkPad Tablet 2 allows students to work online without compromising the interactivity of the face-to-face learning environment.

The University of Sydney is consistently ranked within the top 100 universities in the world. Since its establishment in 1850, the University has expanded to nine campuses across the Greater Sydney region, maintaining its traditional focus on liberal education across an increasingly broad range of academic, research, and professional disciplines for more than 50 000 students.

This case study focuses on the ThinkPad Tablet 2 as a secure, slimline mobile platform being used by the University of Sydney as part of a range of digitally augmented classrooms, allowing students to work online without compromising the interactivity of the face-to-face learning environment.

Challenges

The University faced strong demand from both students and teaching staff to establish learning spaces where digital technologies and face-to-face interactions were seamlessly integrated. Unlike traditional computing labs with desktop machines, these environments needed to retain the “discussion group” dynamic of the lecture or tutorial room, while simultaneously providing students with the ability to take notes and research easily to support their learning. Lecturers too wished to move their student engagement beyond the traditional white boards and slide presentations, requiring a platform which was both highly functional yet intuitive to use for educational purposes.

Situation

The University of Sydney’s students have access to a wide range of on site ICT resources, ranging from learning hubs, dedicated computer labs and virtual desktops to ubiquitous WiFi coverage at the University’s primary Camperdown/Darlington campus. However, technology resources have often been provided to students to support their out of classroom study, with many classrooms only equipped with a single desktop and projector for the teacher.

A rapidly-increasing number of students were already bringing their own mobile devices into class to take notes, complete in-class tasks, and access online materials hosted by the University itself. Introducing a standardised mobile platform within formal teaching spaces means teaching staff can enhance their teaching by using the technology available but also give students the flexibility to engage through their own devices. Such a platform would have to be not only cost-effective and secure, but also have high connectivity, usability, and a convincing form factor if it was to engage the University’s technology-savvy student base.

Jim Cook, Innovation Lead for the University of Sydney’s Information and Communications Technology department, canvassed samples and trials from eight market-leading vendors in the tablet computing space. Each product was tested by both the IT staff and teaching staff, with feedback going to Cook and the project team who made recommendations to the University’s governing bodies for the final decision.



The ThinkPad Tablet 2 emerged a surprising yet wholly impressive contender for our attention and has proven itself to be a strong choice for both our teachers and students.



Jim Cook
Innovation Lead,
ICT - Solutions and Engagement,
The University of Sydney

Solution

Lenovo's ThinkPad Tablet 2 was continually cited by testers as the most effective platform for the University's needs. The initial pilot saw 80 tablets deployed across two faculty spaces, both of which are located on different campuses.

The Tablet 2's main draw cards were its small, durable form factor and powerful connectivity, both of which directly addressed the University's core requirements for learning space. In the testing phase, the Tablet 2's security options came to the fore: unlike many other mobile devices, the Tablet 2 allows for physical tethering as well as electronic tracking, a must for fleet-wide integration into classroom environments. Teaching personnel were also particularly impressed by the Tablet 2's digitiser pen, which offered both them and students an ergonomic and fully-supported alternative to haptic input for the device.

"The Tablet 2 proved a surprising yet wholly impressive contender for our attention and has proven a strong choice for both our teachers and students," said Jim Cook. "But equally important has been the level of support and service which Lenovo has provided in our integration process: we wouldn't have been able to deploy so fast or so smoothly without their counsel and attention to every detail.

Lenovo personnel were deployed on site to assist with initial installation and management of the machines, working with Microsoft experts to ensure the Windows 8 tablets were fully compatible across the University's existing platforms. The first two tablet pod learning studios were launched in February 2013, less than 6 months after the initiative was first tabled.

Results

"Our students continue to relate back that they feel the University is supportive of using technology to augment their learning, which is increasingly important for their day-to-day experience of tertiary education," said Mr. Cook. "The University of Sydney has always prioritised the fundamentals of learning and teaching, and it's great to see these being served and encouraged by this new digitally-enabled classroom model."

Both pilot spaces are always heavily booked by students and the University now plans on extending the project to other locations in its broader campus planning. The pilot has also been cited for its role in meeting core e-learning outcomes at the University's satellite Cumberland campus, and both sites have maintained zero losses from their device fleets.

"The centrally-managed security options and ongoing support from Lenovo have made this innovation into a truly sustainable one, and we expect it to act as a template for further developments as the University and its students continue to transform how they work and learn" said Mr. Cook.

Lenovo® Key Facts

- No. 1 in Worldwide Education Computing • No. 1 in Australian Education Market
- A **Fortune Global 500** company
- One of the **Most Reputable Companies** according to Forbes
- Listed by Forbes as **10 Companies that are genuinely green**
- On the **Honor Board** of the **Hang Seng Sustainability Index** with an A+ rating
- **Major research centers** in Japan, China and the US
- **Manufacturing and assembly facilities** in China, India, Mexico and the US

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