

For immediate release

The Open University of Hong Kong embraces the new way of students' administration with Microsoft Azure

Enhanced scalability and stability through the hybrid cloud solution

Hong Kong, 4 June 2015 — In today's fast-moving world, scalability and data security are critical for any organizations to succeed, be it private businesses or public sectors. As one of the leading education institutions in Hong Kong, The Open University of Hong Kong strives to maintain a stable student administration and course enrollment system for the whole university. It has chosen Microsoft Azure to update its IT infrastructure with a high level of flexibility to cope with the emergence of mobility and the uptrend in cloud services adoption.

Introduction to the Open University of Hong Kong

Since its founding in 1989, The Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK) has strived to achieve its mission of providing high quality and flexible further education opportunities for adults. In 2001, the first full-time programmes at the Associate Degree level were introduced to attract a new market of secondary school leavers. Since 2007, the full-time undergraduate programme has been growing in popularity, and OUHK is now offering close to 40 programmes from sub-degrees to postgraduate degrees. Today, OUHK has over 11,000 distance-learning (DL) students and 8,000 full-time (FT) students, with 235 programmes of different academic levels.

In view of the Academic Reform in 2012 that requires all students to take General Education Course as part of their curriculum, the University expected an increase of 4,000 students to enroll courses at the same time, and began to review their IT resources to ensure they could meet the workflow. Compared to only 1,000 – 2,000 students simultaneously accessing the online course enrollment system before, the current website traffic and workload would undoubtedly lead to a rise in maintenance and hardware costs. As a result, the OUHK began considering cloud solutions in 2013, and decided to deploy Microsoft's Azure hybrid cloud services in 2014 for better configuration, scalability and cost-savings.

Flora Yu, Cloud and Enterprise Business Group Lead at Microsoft Hong Kong said, "With Microsoft's technical expertise and local support, OUHK has deployed the hybrid cloud solution with both public and private cloud in place to support their online registration system, in which 20% of workload runs on premise and 80% of workload runs on cloud. Azure's unique hybrid cloud capability offers the University stable cloud services with significant benefits gained in security and storage flexibility."

"Compared with other cloud service vendors, Microsoft provides us with a more cost-effective and flexible option through a hybrid cloud solution, helping us to fully integrate Azure cloud services

with our existing IT infrastructure and ERP solution. As our trusted partner and advisor, they have been very helpful in suggesting different options to ensure we have a smooth and secure internet platform with efficient transmission of data and low latency. Thanks to the cloud services, we can have more efficient IT infrastructure management and capacity planning," said Dr. Simon Cheung, Head of Information Technology of The Open University of Hong Kong.

Benefits gained from deploying Microsoft Azure solution

By working closely with Microsoft Hong Kong, OUHK started deploying Microsoft Azure hybrid cloud solution in 2014, and had seen the following benefits immediately:

- **Reduction in total cost of ownership of servers**
With Azure, OUHK can handle data transactions in cloud for a fixed cost of HK\$20,000 yearly. Normally, hardware and maintenance investment could cost up to HK\$200,000 to facilitate the online course enrollment services. Deployment of Azure enables them to save costs, and allocate resources more effectively in other areas of IT development.
- **Simplified procurement procedures**
Having put 80% of workload on Azure, OUHK no longer has to worry about server and hardware limitations during peak seasons. It also saves much time on equipment procurement, from approximately 3 months for hardware procurement to just 2 days of procurement time for first-time Azure usage. After that, OUHK can add workloads to Azure instantly.
- **Smooth integration with campus infrastructure**
Azure integrates with OUHK's existing IT infrastructure and ERP solution, so that the University can better plan for the capacity and enhance service deployment. It also opens up opportunities for OUHK to leverage other Microsoft cloud technologies.
- **Scalable and flexible services**
Before deploying Azure, OUHK could only support a maximum of 2,000 students using online course enrollment at the same time. Now, the number of student that can enroll courses simultaneously has doubled.
- **Enhanced data security with local technical support**
The hybrid cloud approach offers significantly improved security to OUHK by allowing them to handle data transaction on cloud, while receiving continued technical support from Microsoft to help with deployment to Azure.

Future Roadmap

By using Microsoft Azure solutions for its online course enrollment systems, OUHK is able to achieve cost savings in maintenance and hardware, while also gaining ultimate flexibility in workflow, server and capacity planning. With support and flexible deployment options from



Microsoft, OUHK is confident to see sustainable and long term benefits of cloud services, and is now considering deploying further cloud based solutions in other areas of the school services.

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About Microsoft

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