

HANZE UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES - GRONINGEN

Fully prepared sooner for exams with the IGEL UD Pocket



For the purpose of digital examination, as a matter of routine Hanze University of Applied Sciences - Groningen replaces the standard settings of desktop PCs with a digital examination environment on an ad hoc basis. A procedure which would often take an entire day in the past. Due to the IGEL UD Pocket, the Hanze University of Applied Sciences has made substantial time savings in this respect.



FEATURE QUOTE

“ With a time saving from six hours to less than one hour, we will be able to expand our digital exam programme”

~ Wiebe de Jong

SUMMARY

The client

- Hanze University of Applied Sciences - Groningen
- Sites in Groningen, Assen, Leeuwarden and Amsterdam
- 26.000 students
- 3.000 staff
- 289 degree courses

The challenge

- Readying desktop PCs for digital exams
- Creating a safe exam environment for 500 exams
- Blocking access to files and the Internet
- Restoring settings after the exams

The solution

- IGEL UD Pocket
- 250 desktops
- IGEL Universal Desktop
- IGEL Universal Management Suite (UMS)
- Windows PC's

The results

- 80% time gain
- Safe environment
- Less work for the IT Department

Challenge

Each year, 26,000 students are taking tests at four different times during the academic year, which results in five thousand exams on an annual basis. At the present time, most of these exams remain traditional pen and paper exams, although the Hanze University of Applied Sciences is keen to fully switch to digital exams in due course. The way things stand, the University runs around five hundred digital exams a year. Digital exams particularly benefit efficiency. Another aim is for users to start seeing digital exams as the norm. For the digital exam environment, Windows 10 desktops are temporarily made suitable for exams in class rooms, at which point the PCs are disconnected from Windows, the Internet and other files. To do so, Windows had to be manually removed from each PC individually, before installing the IGEL Linux thin client operating system, thereby giving each PC the kind of protected environment which complies with the requirements that apply to exams.

‘For a classroom that holds around 60 desktops, this proved a mammoth job each year’, head of the Digital exams department, Wiebe De Jong, explains. ‘It could easily take an hour to render the desktops ready for the exams. Followed by another five hours to return the desktop PCs to their original settings. As a result, this often meant that classrooms were unavailable for an entire day. Which obviously did not make us flavour of the month with the Planning Department.’

When IGEL introduced the UD Pocket solution in late 2016, IGEL Netherlands put the word out to the Hanze University of Applied Sciences, explaining this could well be the answer to their problem. Thinclientspecialist, the partner that had previously put in place the exam environment at the Hanze University of Applied Sciences, supplied a batch of UD Pockets to try out. ‘We put the Pocket solution to the test right away and soon found that it would save us a great deal of time, as well as ramp up our flexibility in the process. Adopting the UD Pockets would enable us to organise tests whenever needed and wherever we wanted’, De Jong says.

Solution

Since then, the Hanze University of Applied Sciences has purchased 250 IGEL UD Pockets to convert the Windows PCs in the classrooms into IGEL thin client devices for the digital exam environment. UD Pockets are no larger than paperclip. Simply pop them into the desktop’s USB port and Bob’s your uncle. The solution enables dual start-ups, whereby the PC is organised like the IGEL Universal Desktop, or the local operating system on the desktop, the laptop or another 64-bit x86-based endpoint.

The UD Pocket has given the Hanze University of Applied Sciences a high-quality and time-saving solution, which enables applications to be accessed in the cloud, and server applications and virtual desktops to be created. The UD Pocket is part of the IGEL Universal Management Suite (UMS) for support, operational and management purposes.

One of the many benefits offered by the UD Pocket is the fact that it acts to ramp up the functionality of existing hardware as one endpoint now runs two operating systems. If a student has completed the exam within the IGEL Universal Desktop environment, the next lesson can start right away so to speak by simply rebooting the computer from the local operating system. Which puts the original local desktop back into the picture.

Another benefit of the UD Pocket is the time savings it gives students attending a degree course at any of the institution’s locations. They no longer need to travel the country all the way up to Groningen to do their exams, De Jong explains. ‘In the future, we will be able to take digital exams at any locations, which saves students travel time and expenses.’

The results

It often took staff at the Digital exams Department half a day to ready every individual desktop PC for an exam, blocking access to the Internet and files, and replacing the standard settings by those for the exam as part of the process. The resulting exam environment was an IGEL environment. Once the exam had been completed, everything had to be restored. A procedure which often took an entire day. With the 250 UD Pockets, desktops are now set and ready within the hour, and reset to their original setting in no time too. The important thing in all of this is safety.

The resulting time gains are a major benefit to the IT Department, which now needs to perform considerably fewer actions. On the other hand, these time gains are important to timetabling. For each exam, classroom availability has been stepped up by 4 hours. Which in turn gives us greater flexibility to assign classes and classrooms in the schedule. Moreover, the result is also important with regard to the ambitious plans harboured by Hanze University of Applied Sciences to make all exams digital in times to come. De Jong proudly announces that the project won them the Microsoft Education Award, as one of several prizes: ‘With the time savings we have already effected in the area of set-up and restoration, from six hours to less than one hour, we will be able to expand our digital exam programme. Once we have also properly mapped out our network, in theory we should be able to starting using UD Pockets everywhere. Did I mention that this entire enterprise also means we are out of the doghouse with the Department Planning?’.



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