Loughborough University - Embracing BCE

Business and Community Engagement (BCE), the sharing of knowledge and expertise with the wider community for mutual benefit, has a growing profile in the education and research sector. Many institutions have developed formal BCE strategies for associated activities, ranging from consultancy and continuing professional development services to the commercial application of research.

Loughborough University has long embraced enterprise and BCE as a core activity and key pillar of strategy. There has been particular focus on benefits of applied ‘research that matters’ being transferred to industry, and in working with national sporting bodies.

**In the beginning**

Over time, support for BCE activities, including IT, has become formalised at Loughborough, with moves to co-locate enterprise partners rather than have them distributed throughout the 437 acre campus.

**Dr Phil Richards, Director of IT, at Loughborough University** says "We support and collaborate with a wide variety of sporting bodies, charities, not-for-profit organisations and start-up businesses, many of whom are located on campus as University tenants. London 2012 has helped further raise our BCE profile in sporting and other areas."

In particular, the university aggregated sporting BCE activities within a new, purpose-built facility, SportPark. Benefits have included greater synergy between partners and the University, to share ideas, support each other, and enhance BCE-related outcomes.

SportPark has also yielded specific IT benefits for Loughborough and its partners, as the first facility to connect under the new Janet Eligibility Policy, including access to Janet Videoconferencing and the Janet network.

**Loughborough’s networking requirements**

Loughborough previously had a standard Janet connection for ‘academic’ network traffic, with an additional Internet connection, via NTL/Virgin Media, for commercial and other BCE activities that weren’t eligible under the former Janet Connection Policy and Acceptable Use Policy.

As BCE activities increased, the biggest challenge for IT was to provide a standard, supported service that was easy for partners to understand. Loughborough now has a light service offering, matching partner requirements.

**Matthew Cook, Head of Network Infrastructure and Telephony of Loughborough’s IT Services** says “While we want to offer as much support as we can, there are areas where we have to provide a standardised service to all partners. Janet services and recommendations from its technical guides and factsheets have helped greatly with this.”
CASE STUDY

How Janet helped

Janet has recognised the growing need to support the HE, FE and research community in its BCE activities, and has done so through a significant liberalisation of its policies regulating who can use the network and for what purpose.

The key change is that any institution with a Janet connection may now decide itself how it uses its network connection in this context. For example it may choose to pass on some of its own Janet bandwidth to a partner organisation, or use the Janet network when providing its own ICT services to a partner organisation. There will be no additional charge to the institution for the use of their Janet bandwidth in these ways.

Of course, any organisation wishing to take advantage of these opportunities must ensure that it follows good commercial practice and complies with current regulations, particularly those relating to state aid and competition law – but such rules are not IT-specific, and now institutions are empowered to ensure their own compliance across the whole range of BCE activities undertaken, including IT and Janet connectivity.

Matthew Cook, Head of Network Infrastructure and Telephony of Loughborough’s IT Services says “The changes and clarification of points within the new Janet Eligibility Policy mean we have been able to connect more of the university’s BCE work to the network rather than relying on an external supplier. The Eligibility Policy is clearly written making it easier for IT services departments to understand what is allowed and what isn’t. For activities that are not clear cut, Janet has been very helpful in discussing a way forward.”

Lessons learnt

For institutions developing BCE activities it is important to standardise IT services. “Make sure you talk to partners before you start offering a service. BCE partners may not be familiar with the security requirements of a Janet connection for example” says Matthew. Loughborough makes sure that its partners are aware of the networking provisions they can expect and provide networking connectivity to customers’ locations so that partners can manage their own internal provision.

Matthew says “You need to standardise as far as possible to have one size fits all. Make sure you are offering standard services that you can support, and make sure you’re constantly in touch, holding review meetings to see that it’s working for them.”

The key to successful BCE activity is acknowledged to be genuine mutual benefit to all parties involved. Janet services can now add a great deal in that regard.

“Our BCE activities bring a large number of people in from outside to work on specific projects, helped by Janet services like eduroam and technology like Moonshot,” says Matthew. “Partners also benefit because they work with a world-class university and gain connectivity through Janet. They value the networking capability that Loughborough offers through the Janet network. We are looking forward to the next network developments from the Public Access workshop.”

To find out how Janet can support your BCE activities, please visit our BCE web pages at: http://www.ja.net/services/bce/bce.html