



Queen's University Customer Spotlight



Queen's
UNIVERSITY

Discover how Queen's University, Canada moved to AppsAnywhere, and how they made software available on any device across campus to improve student outcomes.

Stephen Hunt, Paul Hiles, and Graydon Smith discuss how they implemented a tech solution that has improved student experiences on and off-campus.

This case study will cover:

- How they provided centralized application access
- Utilizing student-owned devices
- Supporting Windows and non-Windows devices
- How AppsAnywhere helps achieve strategic IT priorities

A transformative research institution in Kingston, Ontario

Located in Kingston, Ontario, Queen's University is one of the oldest universities in all of Canada. Queen's University was founded in 1841; however, the school of engineering predates the university and was originally founded as the school of mining. About 25,000 undergraduate students call Queen's University home. Queen's offers an exceptional learning experience and is known for its leading research-intensive teaching. Queen's is proudly ranked #16 in Best Global Universities in Canada, ranked in the top half of Best Global Universities in the world by US News, and ranked #11 in Best Colleges in Canada by Times Higher Education.

The Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science at Queen's University is a leading school that continuously teaches through innovation. In 2019, IT realized their delivery of software applications needed to evolve with the modern student and be improved to ensure the success of students across the school. Through their implementation of AppsAnywhere, Queen's University has improved and modernized its most historical department while improving the experience of its students.

Challenges with legendary IT

Traditionally, the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science had a ton of labs and in those labs were physical desktops. This was a huge challenge for a bunch of reasons. Physical desktops require a ton of maintenance and a ton of imaging. Because the applications are engineering software, the images were enormous and kept getting bigger each year. There was also a challenge when trying to get all software requirements from instructors during the summertime. If someone did not request the application by the deadline, they had to wait until winter break to get what they needed. Imaging aside, the other challenge with physical desktops is just that, the actual machine. Desktop machines in the computer labs need to be updated, repaired when needed, and sometimes even replaced if damaged.

Thinking virtual desktops were the answer

After facing the challenges with physical desktops in computer labs across the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science school, the IT department decided to replace the machines with virtual desktops, or zero-clients. A zero-client machine is a desktop with no hard drive and no replaceable parts, they are very simple devices designed purely to connect back to



the server. This solution worked well for what IT needed it to do. Imaging became a bit simpler, and maintenance was manageable on the machines as well. It also gave students the ability to access the desktops virtually. Even with these benefits, students were having trouble using the desktops. They found it difficult to use because it was not personalized to them, and some heavy-weight applications used within engineering were not running properly. Even though students were accessing a virtual desktop from their own device, they were not using their own desktop. At the end of the day, students wanted to use their own devices the way they wanted to use them.

Finding and implementing Queen's perfect solution

Trying to find the perfect solution to deliver software to students was no easy task for IT, they had a detailed list of requirements the solution needed to fulfill. First, the solution must grant students access to all their applications no matter the size. Like previously mentioned, engineering software can be very large which can impede on its performance. IT wanted a solution that worked for everything. Next, the desktop should be customizable to enhance the student experience. The solution needed to support all Windows and non-Windows devices. At Queen's University Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science, 40% of students (surprisingly) use Mac devices. With students using a variety of operating systems, the solution needed to be able to deliver Windows applications to non-Windows devices.

After carefully considering everything on their checklist, IT landed on AppsAnywhere by Software2 as their solution. In April of 2019, IT began the implementation of AppsAnywhere with their first kickoff call. By the beginning of the fall term, IT had packaged 97 applications. Today, they have over 110 applications packaged, and they are continuously doing more. Queen's University IT department put teams together to ensure the efficiency of packaging and the quality of work to be done.

The COVID-19 reaction

In the Spring of 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, colleges and universities around the world closed their doors and switched to online learning. Stephen Hunt says “thank goodness we did this [implemented AppsAnywhere] a year ago. This would have been hard, not impossible, but very hard to suddenly do all of this last March”. When students and faculty went home nothing changed. The students simply opened their laptops, logged into AppsAnywhere, and completed their coursework. AppsAnywhere provided Queen’s university students the same experience at home as they would have had on campus.



Happy students are successful students

With any change, there is always a possibility of challenges that may arise. With AppsAnywhere, this was not the case. Students adapted quickly to AppsAnywhere and began using the solution as soon as they arrived on campus in the fall. With AppsAnywhere, students have a single point of access to all their applications needed for their courses. The app store design is native to the modern student, which makes finding the desired application a breeze. The flexibility of AppsAnywhere has improved the student experience because students are no longer tethered to a single computer lab. Instead of making sure they have reserved time in a designated lab, they can access they work from the comfort of their dorm on a device they are familiar with. Queen’s University IT knew they wanted to grant students access to applications the way the students wanted to receive them. Engineering students can now access their software applications from any device, anytime, anywhere, the way they want it.

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