



## Queen Margaret University and ITS Fedra

### Using Microsoft training as a precision tool for gaining business excellence

With an enviable record of 96% of graduates finding employment or going on to further training within six months of graduating, Queen Margaret University has much to be proud of. Until recently though, their Information Services (IS) Department didn't feel able to claim much of the glory. Happily that has all changed now. Avril Brown, IS Technical Team Leader grins as she declares *"We've gone from having a shocking reputation to being the best department, and team, in the university."*

Staff Development Training has been the driving force at the heart of the transformation at QMU and Avril has been the indefatigable motivator behind it. She explained why she brought Microsoft Gold Partners ITS Fedra, in to work with her. *"We were looking for someone who was highly cost effective and understood where we were coming from. There are plenty of training companies out there, most of whom do a good job, but ITS Fedra have a background in HE and know what we're working with and that makes a major difference. But what's most important is that we were never made to feel like a number. ITS Fedra have always worked with us to bring solutions, not tried to sell us things, taken the trouble to understand who we are and what we need and brought us the right solution at a reasonable price, and I can't argue with that!"*

ITS Fedra's work supporting the technological overhaul of Queen Margaret University commenced with Citrix customised training both onsite and in our own classrooms.

Next was the Microsoft Network, with Instructor-led classroom based training for all staff in core Windows Server 2003 skills. The Microsoft certified training courses solidified base skills, filled in the gaps and made sure the whole team were working with the same level of knowledge and understanding. That synchronisation of skills and ideas instantly made a difference. Avril said *"We have seen an improvement in every way. Best practice is now normal practice."*

This was swiftly followed by instructor-led Active Directory 2003 training in preparation for the planned roll out of Exchange Server 2003.

QMU now started to take fuller advantage of the broad range of training options available from ITS Fedra and Microsoft. The roll out of Exchange required two targeted skills resource sets within the team. Some key staff attended the full public courses but for those who would provide support post installation, such in depth coverage was not needed, so we worked with Avril to provide a more simplified and focused custom onsite course aimed at conveying only the task relevant skills. This created the minimum disruption to helpdesk services and the maximum cost efficiency.

Flexibility was also important. When a key member of staff left just before the implementation, ITS Fedra stepped in and delivered onsite 1-to-1 mentoring to their replacement which allowed the project to remain on track. After the training they went on to become the MS Exchange and AD administrator for QMU.

The bulk of the staff were now competent but felt they lacked experience and asked for an ITS Feda Exchange expert trainer and consultant to come in and supervise their installation of 3 servers and assist for a day or so with configuration. They successfully completed the entire roll out in one week.

During the migration QMU used Quest tools and Quest stated they were the best prepared site they had ever come across for a migration. ITS Feda are proud to have helped them get to that stage.

Enthused by their new skills, QMU had seen a significant improvement in staff morale, productivity and customer perception, the next challenge was how to develop this, having delivered a budget on target and on cost.

ITS Feda came forward with an alternative solution. Microsoft Official E-Learning. E-Learning has something of a mixed reputation traditionally but the Microsoft courses definitely found favour. Following the same curriculum content as the instructor led courses they offered a great way of maximising the limited remaining budget. In this case the material also gave Avril's team the ability to customise and select specific learning areas and fitted in well with the 9am-9pm helpdesk working hours. For more complex courses such as Microsoft Active Directory and Exchange Server and for newer staff, QMU continue with ITS Feda's instructor-led courses initially, until they are sufficiently confident to move onto independent study.

The IS staff feel happier, conscious of the investment made in them and feel more valued. Avril is fiercely and rightly proud of her team and the hard work they have put in *"We've got great people and we need to make sure we keep them, they are ahead of the game and have the skills we need. We've been lucky we've had the investment from the University; it has improved confidence and performance. I know my team will deliver now."*

Come and talk to ITS Feda about your IT needs. You'd be amazed what we can do for you. Call us on **0870 145 1600** or email [Enquiries@itsgroup.org.uk](mailto:Enquiries@itsgroup.org.uk)



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