Results
- Today 2,500 users benefit from enhanced search, find and content linking capabilities thanks to Alfresco
- Around 195,000 documents are being managed using Alfresco
- Improved document management capabilities have made it possible for the University to reduce its reliance on paper, in line with its green strategy
- Secure data storage and collaboration workflows have streamlined working practices
- Integration of Alfresco with the university’s web publishing system has streamlined and improved web content management
- Mobile access to documentation means knowledge workers now have secure access to resources, wherever they are based
- Each service unit has the flexibility to operate its own individual business environment
- Integration with Google Apps for Education enables staff to securely login to Alfresco through Google OAuth.

University of Westminster
The University of Westminster boasts a vibrant learning environment that attracts more than 20,000 students from over 150 nations. Its practice-based courses are designed to educate graduates for the demands of professional life and have won international recognition for excellence.

“...has helped to deliver truly mobile working...”

—Hiten Vaghmaria, Head of Digital Development, Information Services, University of Westminster.
A distinguished 175-year heritage means the University leads the way in many areas of research, including politics, media, art and design, architecture and biomedical sciences. Its academic activities are organised into five faculties, within which there are around 45 departments and 65 research centres.

The University’s headquarters and original campus are based on Regent Street in central London, with additional campuses in the Fitzrovia, Marylebone and Harrow areas of London. It also operates the Westminster International University in Tashkent in Uzbekistan, as well as a satellite campus in Paris through the Diplomatic Academy of London.

Business challenge
A diverse and dynamic international education institution, the University of Westminster needed to replace its first generation intranet platform with an integrated enterprise content management (ECM) system that would enable the more effective and efficient management of complex information.

Introducing ECM would help take the university beyond its current use of shared network drives to support improved internal collaboration between academics and professional staff teams and, through web-enabled services, enhance its partnership working capabilities with external bodies.

Alongside meeting a wide range of institutional demands, the new solution had to offer integration with a number of core transactional systems.

Robust and secure, the new ECM solution would need to ensure the integrity of business-critical documents and support customised workflows, making it easy for the University’s varied communities and practice areas to develop and share materials.

Minimising total cost of ownership was a key requirement, as was the need to implement support for knowledge workers — wherever they may be — to improve productivity.

Solution
Having reviewed a variety of commercial systems, the University selected Alfresco as the best open source solution on the market that met its key criteria, which included secure document management, ease of use, and the delivery of a collaborative information environment.

“The University has a large and distributed workforce, and the ability to access content securely, from any location, has helped to deliver truly mobile working,” confirms Hiten Vaghmaria, Head of Digital Development, Information Services, University of Westminster.

As an open solution, Alfresco enabled the University’s IT team to pursue its strategy of developing and supporting a new enterprise content management system that could support internal collaboration and enhance partnership working with external bodies.

“It was a major decision to make the move to an open source platform for a corporate system of this importance,” explains Vaghmaria. “At the time we were looking for a solution that we could host and develop ourselves, and Alfresco was the best option.”

Following an initial pilot, implementation of the new ECM system has been managed in a phased manner over a two-year period. This approach enabled full consultations with academic and professional staff users across the organisation to identify their needs and support any requirements for turnkey applications. Today, Alfresco is delivered via a scalable cloud platform, which is fully hosted and managed by Alfresco’s partner Zaizi.

“Zaizi have delivered a solution with guaranteed uptime and none of the overhead or hassle of ongoing system maintenance or evolution,” explains Vaghmaria. “Their subscription-based Software as a Service (SaaS) model gives us the flexibility to scale with ease to meet future user demand while keeping our costs consistent and predictable. They also managed the migration of our content to their infrastructure in a manner that was virtually seamless to the end user.”

Outcomes
The new ECM system, which is integrated with the University’s web content management system, now supports document, record and knowledge management and delivers enhanced capabilities relating to search, find and content linking.

Today 2,500 users have access to 195,000 documents, and the new ECM system has reduced reliance on unsecure email attachments while boosting the collaboration capabilities of the institution’s staff.
“Data is now stored in an ISO27001 compliant data centre, and managed by an organisation with the support and security policies we need to be able to use a cloud-based service with confidence,” confirms Vaghmaria.

Alfresco has also facilitated paperless business processes that chime well with the University’s commitment to green initiatives.

Furthermore, information retrieval, access and management has been streamlined and delivered in an economic and consistent manner, as Vaghmaria explains: “Prior to Alfresco we would often experience organisational issues around version control and document naming – which on occasion resulted in people updating or sharing the wrong version of a document.”

The university now delivers vibrant new web-based services to its undergraduate and postgraduate students. Prospective students can sign up for a portal and receive personalised subject information and updates, invitations to open days and events, and opportunities to meet other students and hear about their experiences.

As a public research university, the University of Westminster is committed to delivering world-class facilities that enable both professional and personal development of a wide community of users. The new ECM system plays a central role in streamlining enterprise-wide information management and access and supporting online collaborative project spaces.

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