

Lancaster University relies on Veeam to protect its Microsoft Office 365 data and counter ransomware attacks



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— Matthew Storey,
Systems Technical Coordinator,
Lancaster University

The business challenges

Lancaster University has a world-class reputation for pioneering research, exceptional teaching and a rewarding student experience. One of the university's goals is to become a global leader and go-to resource in higher education.

That's not an easy endeavor amid a surge of cyberattacks and the ongoing pandemic. Within a 30-day period in 2021, higher education was the target of more than 6.1 million malware attacks. And since the pandemic began, ransomware attacks on colleges and universities have more than doubled.

Lancaster University's IT team is responsible for mitigating the risk of ransomware. When transitioning to Microsoft Office 365, they discovered Microsoft's backup wasn't as robust and accessible as they thought.

"We have to be able to recover data quickly if users' accounts are compromised so they can continue teaching and working, but it was clear we couldn't fully recover from Microsoft's backup fast enough," said Matthew Storey, Systems Technical Coordinator at Lancaster University. "What we didn't know at the time was the data in Microsoft Office 365 would become even more important to us as we embraced remote working and supported a heterogeneous client base. It was evident we needed to have a means to secure and preserve that data in case of disaster."

Storey said the university's requirements for data protection are simple. Backup must be flexible, reliable and future proof.

"Our backups are on-premises for now, but we're considering S3 storage off-premises for immutability in the future," he explained. "We're also considering containerization for some of our teaching systems — we like to keep our options open."

Industry

Education

Organization



Lancaster University is among the highest-ranking universities in the United Kingdom. Established by Royal Charter in 1964 and located in the center of Great Britain, the university offers more than 280 undergraduate degree programs. Lancaster University serves approximately 16,500 students and employs 4,800 faculty and staff.

Challenge

Ransomware attacks are on the rise in higher education, so protecting data is an ongoing challenge. When

Storey and his colleagues didn't have to look far for flexible, reliable and future-proof data protection. They had been using Veeam® Backup & Replication™ for nearly a decade to back up critical systems such as Moodle, the university's learning management system, Microsoft Servers and SharePoint. Veeam had replaced legacy backup (EMC NetWorker) as the university virtualized the IT environment.

"When it was time to transition to Microsoft Office 365, Veeam Backup for Microsoft Office 365 was the obvious choice," Storey said. "Veeam ticks all the boxes and gives us the flexibility and confidence to address backup needs both today and in the future."

The Veeam solution

Veeam modernizes and consolidates data protection for Lancaster University. It also serves as the backbone for disaster recovery and positions the university for S3 storage immutability and container backup in the future.

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Veeam backs up 4,800 Microsoft Office 365 accounts and nearly 1 PB of data across 1,500 virtual machines in the university's VMware HCI environment on-premises for local recovery and off-premises for disaster recovery. Storey said the IT team appreciates the flexibility Veeam provides for prioritizing backups based on Microsoft Office 365 users, groups, sites, teams and organizations.

Another feature the team appreciates is SureBackup®. It's a vital component of a disaster recovery strategy because it verifies the recoverability of backups. Veeam also allows the team to perform secure restore and scan machine data with antivirus software before restoring machines to the production environment.

"These features are valuable to us, but the people behind Veeam are valuable to us too," Storey said. "Our account team is absolutely superb about helping us prepare for the future."

The university is addressing two key areas in the future. The first is using the Veeam Backup & Replication Scale-out Backup Repository™ to create a second copy of immutable backups in S3 Compatible Object storage to protect against malicious activity. The second area is container backup.

"We have an in-house development team that is considering containerization for several systems like students records and our library system," Storey said. "Veeam opens up our options for containerized app backup, and we're looking forward to exploring them. We have confidence in Veeam to keep innovating and developing functionality to meet our needs."

Lancaster University transitioned to Microsoft Office 365 to improve communication and collaboration processes, the IT team discovered Microsoft's backup wasn't as robust and accessible as they required. They had used Veeam to back up critical IT systems supporting teaching and learning for nearly a decade, so extending data protection to Microsoft Office 365 was an easy decision.

Solution

- Veeam Backup & Replication
- Veeam Backup for Microsoft Office 365

Results

- Modernizes and consolidates data protection across the IT estate
- Serves as the backbone for the university's disaster recovery strategy
- Enables evaluation for public cloud storage, immutability and container backup

The results

- **Modernizes and consolidates data protection across the IT estate**

"There's a familiarity between the interfaces in Veeam Backup & Replication and Veeam Backup for Microsoft Office 365, so moving between them is simple," Storey said. "We know how the technology works, and we know how easy it is to restore data. There's a level of comfort in that."

- **Serves as the backbone for the university's disaster recovery strategy**

"After using Veeam for more than a decade, we have great faith in the solution, and we trust it to play a pivotal role in our disaster recovery strategy," Storey said. "If our Microsoft Office 365 accounts were compromised, we could restore them quickly."

- **Enables evaluation for public cloud storage, immutability and container backup**

Lancaster University is considering immutable backups that can't be updated or deleted. The university is also considering container capabilities that Kasten, the technology company acquired by Veeam Software, offers for Kubernetes backup and disaster recovery. "As our IT estate evolves, Veeam evolves with us," Storey said.

About Veeam Software

Veeam® is the leader in backup, recovery and data management solutions that deliver Modern Data Protection. The company provides a single platform for Cloud, Virtual, Physical, SaaS and Kubernetes environments. Veeam customers are confident their apps and data are protected and always available with the most simple, flexible, reliable and powerful platform in the industry. Veeam protects over 400,000 customers worldwide, including 81% of the Fortune 500 and 69% of the Global 2,000. Veeam's global ecosystem includes 35,000+ technology partners, resellers and service providers, and alliance partners and has offices in more than 30 countries. To learn more, visit www.veeam.com or follow Veeam on LinkedIn [@veeam-software](https://www.linkedin.com/company/veeam) and Twitter [@veeam](https://twitter.com/veeam).



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