

# Imperial College London Protects Its “Mini City” With Splunk

## Key Challenges

A world top 10 university with a reputation for excellence to protect, Imperial wanted to improve visibility across its expansive hybrid environment to better protect its community worldwide.

## Key Results

Using Splunk, Imperial gained visibility into hundreds of services and supported data-based decision-making across the organization — improving its security posture.

**Industry:** Public Sector/  
Education

**Solutions:** Service Monitoring and Insights, Digital Experience Monitoring, Security Incident Response

## Securing a “mini city” is no small feat.

Consistently ranked among the top five UK universities and in the top 10 worldwide, Imperial College London is by all intents and purposes a “mini city.” Its sprawling campus consists of accommodations, a sports center, libraries, a conference center, research facilities and eating establishments — not to mention lecture halls and classrooms.

A reliable IT infrastructure is vital to protecting the entire institution, from Imperial’s student body to its world-renowned researchers. To deliver on that goal, the university needs instant access to information so it can act swiftly — whether fighting security threats or sharing researchers’ models of the COVID-19 virus.

With a combination of Splunk Cloud Platform and Splunk Synthetic Monitoring, Imperial has visibility into its hybrid IT estate. University teams are now able to quickly remedy incidents and share insights across the organization for smarter decision-making, uncompromised security and a more reliable, resilient student experience.

## Academic excellence from the UK to Mongolia — and beyond

Imperial students need to be able to access courses and materials from anywhere in the world. This was especially crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic, when students from as far away as Mongolia called the help desk. To support users accessing resources on many different networks and devices, Imperial’s IT systems management tooling team — responsible for providing the monitoring, security, automation and testing tools that keep devices and applications humming across its hybrid environment — needed more insight into how its systems were being used.

A longtime user of Splunk Enterprise, Imperial turned to Splunk Cloud Platform and Splunk Synthetic Monitoring to help keep tabs on its on-premises assets and cloud resources. “Splunk Cloud Platform can ingest data from the services we use, and Splunk Synthetic Monitoring can monitor our users and services — no matter where they’re located around the world” says Andy Lax, IT systems management tooling lead at Imperial College London. “We can also see where users are having problems and work to provide better access. Our dashboards show many devices and applications, and we can see how they communicate. This means we’re never caught off guard should vital IT systems go down or apps freeze.”

## Data-Driven Outcomes

**17,000**

students and 8,000 staff protected

**Over 100**

services successfully monitored, with data coming in from more than 60 different sources

## Quick insights for a culture of informed decision-making

Higher education institutions are at high risk for security breaches. “We feel the pressure of protecting our reputation as a world-class institute,” says Lax. “Prestigious higher education institutions are an attractive target for malicious users looking for attention, so we can’t be too careful.”

Previously, getting a big-picture view of all the university’s services simply wasn’t possible. Splunk Synthetic Monitoring now gives Imperial a better overall view of its systems, reducing the time it takes to investigate and respond to performance incidents or outages.

The Splunk platform stores data on a range of issues from server performance and end-user experience to vulnerabilities and usage. “Using the data in the Splunk platform, we understand the services we provide to students and staff, whether those users are here at Imperial, in the residence halls or overseas,” says Lax. “This helps us ensure all users have the tools they need to learn and perform research.” If a system goes down or performance lags, the support teams receive a screenshot of the error message and detailed stats about which systems and apps are affected. With this information, the team can immediately take action to remedy issues.

Splunk’s unified platform also makes data easily accessible to teams across the organization, from product developers and product owners to the CIO. Having real-time data supports Imperial’s culture of informed decision-making. “From choosing a new CRM system to improving the student experience, Imperial can make decisions based on data,” Lax says.



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## A solid foundation for a resilient future

Imperial is always adding new products and services to better serve staff and students. Seamlessly integrating with third-party providers, Splunk Cloud Platform provides Imperial with the flexibility to easily grow its offerings, while Splunk Synthetic Monitoring helps the university manage complexity across its hybrid environment and monitor performance as a whole.

As Imperial’s data volume grows each month, so does its Splunk usage. Having seen the benefits of Splunk Synthetic Monitoring, the university sees the potential of Splunk Enterprise Security, Splunk IT Service Intelligence and Splunk SOAR.

“Moving to Splunk Cloud Platform lets us build on the security foundations we’d already put in place with Splunk Enterprise on-premises,” says Lax. “Splunk has given us a complete view of our hybrid architecture, and we’re confident we can support whatever demands we have in the future.”

Download Splunk for free or get started with the free cloud trial. Whether cloud, on-premises, or for large or small teams, Splunk has a deployment model that will fit your needs.



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