

## **AusAID Improves Its Aid Delivery with Data Centre University™ Courses**

*Online courses give AusAID's data centre project manager insight into a variety of solutions, giving him the know-how to achieve two successful data centre implementations*

Cooling and space for his data centres were two problems that Jim Richards, Director of IT Operations at AusAID, the Australian Agency for International Development, encountered frequently. However, after enrolling in American Power Conversion's Data Centre University™ (DCU) online courses, finding the perfect solution to these design issues is now second nature to Richards.

Launched by APC in 2006, DCU online education helps IT professionals, engineers, facilities managers, and others involved in the design, build, and operations of data centres develop successful solutions for the physical layer of their data centres.

Richards is just one beneficiary of the DCU courses. "Managing our old data centre posed two perennial problems—cooling and space. The old set-up could not provide adequate cooling for a minimal computing infrastructure. This had an adverse impact on AusAID's overseas aid delivery program since resources had to be diverted in order to carry out remedial repairs," he recounts.

"The amount of space our previous data centre occupied was the other issue—the old UPS system was housed in a separate air-cooled room and took up significant room. At a time when the demand for office accommodation within the property market was intense, optimizing the use of available office space was a challenge."

### **DCU scores with invaluable guidance**

Currently, DCU offers more than 45 courses. Subjects include the fundamentals of power, cooling, and cabling; raised floor implementation; energy efficiency; going green in the data centre; generator fundamentals; and blade server integration.

Richards says, "I took APC's Data Centre University courses after I was appointed project manager for the establishment of computing facilities at AusAID's two new accommodation sites.

"The courses provided me with guidance on design in terms of whether or not a false floor is required or even desirable, cooling and hot spots, UPS and power consumption, safety issues, and a range of other topics that proved invaluable to me in the process of designing and implementing our new data centres."

All DCU courses, offered in partnership with the global training company Thomson Prometric, are vendor-neutral and do not promote APC products. They focus on critical technologies and best practices that are relevant to leading-edge data centre design. All DCU courses are approved for continuing education credits by leading industry organisations, including IEEE, IET, HIMSS, IFMA, BISI, and ISPE.

“DCU courses imparted knowledge on a range of data centre topics that gave me insight into *all* the issues and solutions available in the marketplace, not merely those offered by APC. This clarity enabled me to present a comprehensive and compelling business case to senior management for endorsement,” says Richards.

“After completing the courses, I oversaw the procurement and installation of AusAID’s new twelve-rack InfraStruXure<sup>®</sup> data centre at the primary site and a six-rack InfraStruXure data centre at the secondary site in May–June 2007.”

### **Online education is effective and efficient**

Because DCU courses are available online and on-demand, enrollees can take them anytime, from anyplace, in an hour or less. “I personally prefer e-learning over the traditional classroom method. The flexibility it offers also means that you can learn over short periods without taking time off from work. And computer-based training methods are more geared to individual learning styles than traditional systems of teaching,” says Richards.

“DCU scores on both these counts. Through a computer-based system that included initial assessment, fast-tracking through the subtopic, modular design, and confirmation of knowledge gained through end-of-topic assessment [a Knowledge Checkpoint Practice Exam that allows individuals to gauge their exam readiness], the DCU courses catered to my unique learning style, at my pace. I believe it allowed me to gain knowledge while making efficient use of my time.”

### **A critical need for knowledge of critical physical infrastructure**

Richards is one of more than 34,000 IT professionals who have enrolled in DCU courses since the program was introduced. As of April 2007, he and 400 others have also achieved DCU Associate Certification, an international credential that recognizes foundational knowledge in data centre infrastructure, including power, cooling, racks, cabling, fire protection, management, and physical security. IT professionals can earn certification by passing a 90-minute, 75-question exam. The DCU syllabus comprises a Certification Learning Path, 14 e-learning courses covering all of the exam domain areas.

“Data Centre University addresses the great need for advanced education in the disciplines of planning physical infrastructure and designing data centres,” says Susan Hartman, Data Centre University Program Manager.

“DCU has undoubtedly had a positive impact in raising levels of awareness about data centre issues, and other professionals could benefit from this knowledge just as I have done. The course gave me a degree of confidence in handling my job, and the knowledge I gained helped me to accomplish two successful data centre implementations. I definitely appreciated the chance to take the DCU courses,” Richards concludes.

Details about the Data Center University Associate Certification, registration information, and exam FAQs are available online at [www.datacenteruniversity.com](http://www.datacenteruniversity.com)