



CASE STUDY

Reading University's Hosted Contact Centre Solution Scores Top Marks on Clearing Day Thanks to Hammer's Load Testing Solution

About Reading University

The University of Reading has been at the forefront of UK higher education for almost a century. Today it enjoys a world-class reputation for teaching, research and enterprise excellence, with a thriving international community of around 23,000 students from 160 countries. Reading aims to be a truly global institution with a vision to extend and enhance academic collaborations with universities and organisations worldwide, pushing academic boundaries and leading social change.

The Challenge

Like many of the UK's universities, each year Reading receives high volumes of calls from students looking to secure a university place during the crucial August clearing period, following publication of the annual 'A' level results.

Clearing is the system employed by UK universities to fill course places that haven't yet been taken. Call volumes can vary quite significantly from year to year, depending on student demographics, as well as changes in university and applicant behaviours. In 2022, over 53,000 students were accepted through clearing, with the majority of these having originally applied through the traditional UCAS route.

In 2022 Reading decided to use a hosted contact centre solution for clearing for the first time. The University wanted to take every possible step to ensure the system would perform flawlessly under pressure from the anticipated high call volumes.

The Head of the University's Admissions Team explained:



Clearing is a race. For those students who don't get the grades they need to fulfil their conditional offer, it can be a very stressful process. And it is a crucial time for each University to fill as many of its course placements as possible.

"Every year we hear horror stories of phone systems going down and Universities missing out on filling places. We wanted to be 100% sure our system was resilient and that it would deliver high voice quality. During this crucial time, it is vital that every student is able to talk with one of Reading's advisors – and to hear and be heard clearly."

Reading decided to invest in independent load testing by a third party to ensure the hosted contact center system would perform under stress. At the recommendation of Reading's IT reseller Softcat, the university decided to work with Hammer's OnCall managed service.

The Solution

Hammer's automated testing capability replicates the real-world environment, using AI bots to place thousands of calls into a live contact centre environment simultaneously, to determine whether the phone system can handle high volumes of callers without any dropped calls or service deterioration.

The Hammer OnCall team ran a series of tests to independently verify the hosted contact centre provider. The tests focused on applying load to the system, by delivering calls to the live agents in incremental steps. A **Hammer spokesperson** explained:



As well as testing call delivery, our system can also verify whether IVR greetings are working properly and menus are working as intended to route calls successfully. We can also measure voice quality to ensure there is no voice distortion when the phone system is dealing with high volumes."

The Head of the University's Admissions Team takes up the story:



We worked directly with the Hammer OnCall team and were able to establish a very productive relationship with them. We ran a series of tests and their test engineers did identify a number of areas that needed to be addressed with our hosted contact centre provider.

"Because Hammer was able to pinpoint the issues and demonstrate the cause to our telephony provider, we were able to work through the issues in a very collaborative and productive way.

"We were able to access the Hammer portal and follow the progress of the tests very easily. We were able to drill down into error messages to see how far the call went and where it dropped off. We could also listen to audio files to understand any call quality issues."

During the clearing period, the phone system performed flawlessly, as **The Head of the University's Admissions Team** explains:



"The day started with a huge spike in calls between 9-10 am and our team was able to respond to every caller. Overall, we were delighted with the system performance. It was one of the most successful and stress-free clearing periods I can remember."



About Hammer

Hammer, an Infovista business and global leader in network and service testing, performance monitoring, assurance, and analytics, provides customer experience assurance solutions across two market categories: network and service performance monitoring, assurance, and analytics for Communications Service Providers (CSPs), and automated customer experience testing and monitoring for Enterprise Contact Centers. Many of the world's leading CSPs and Enterprises depend on Hammer solutions every day to increase customer experience, service performance & quality and revenues, whilst reducing operational costs and customer churn.

For more information, visit www.hammer.com