AQA pioneers a move to the cloud that delivered more than three million exam results this summer

Working with Avanade, the nation's biggest exam board for GCSEs and A-levels has modernized and redesigned its entire exam processing system in the cloud to provide more flexibility, and a foundation for future innovation

LONDON, UK – 12 October 2023, As the UK's examination results were delivered this summer, the nation's biggest examinations board, AQA, has realized the benefits of scalability, stability, resilience, and flexibility from the deployment of its new cloud-native processing system, Nexus – designed, implemented, and run by Avanade, and hosted on Microsoft Azure. An industry first, Nexus has enabled 3.7 million eagerly-awaited exam results to be delivered on a future-proof platform.

AQA sets and marks more than half of all GCSEs and A-Levels taken in the UK. Each year, it onboards around 38,000 examiners during the assessment period to review and mark around 12 million exam scripts, which are handwritten and scanned into the central system. By leveraging the cloud, Nexus can now far more easily scale to onboard a huge influx of temporary users, such as the additional seasonal staff needed during the busy summer season.

The cloud-native platform, coupled with Avanade's Managed Service offering, enables AQA to focus on future innovations that could enhance the assessment process more broadly. The platform's additional security and stability measures ensured there can be no single point of failure and there's a more trusted access and ID management solution.

Dan Hinks, Director of Enterprise Technology at AQA, said: "Our examination platform is critical to what we do. It has a huge, direct impact on millions of results for students all over the country, every year – so there's really no room for error. Moving to the cloud was a big and exciting move for us, but with public confidence so vital to our success, we needed a partner we could trust.

"We have worked well with Avanade, and its Microsoft expertise is first class. They've developed a solution that not only uses best-in-class technology but that directly addresses and meets our needs. We now have a world-class leading system in processing exams. So, there's an immense sense of pride for what we've achieved together, and the possibilities of what we can achieve in the future."

Tracey Hill, Global Growth Lead for Managed Services at Avanade, added, "While everyone might think of the two critical days in August when the anticipated GCSE and A-Level exam results are revealed, the platform that delivers this underpins a far greater undertaking, starting when schools and colleges start making their exam entries in November. With changing pressures throughout the year, AQA's new cloud platform can reliably meet these different demands.

"AQA went big and bold for this transformation. They were already market leaders, but by investing in Microsoft Azure and having Avanade's managed services on hand to secure, manage and evolve their platform, they're now streets ahead of their peers. We're proud to have been part of their digital transformation journey and excited to see how, together, we can drive greater value from their platform as pioneers and leaders in the UK examination board space."

In November 2022, AQA and Avanade were jointly awarded the Software Development Team of the Year at the [GSA- Global Sourcing Association Awards,](#) for aiding their mission to do what matters to help millions of students realise their potential by co-creating Nexus.

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About Avanade

Avanade is the leading provider of innovative digital, cloud and advisory services, industry solutions and design-led experiences across the Microsoft ecosystem. Every day, our 60,000 professionals in 26 countries make a genuine human impact for our clients, their employees, and their customers.
With the most Microsoft certifications (60,000+) and 18 (out of 18) Gold-level Microsoft competencies, we are uniquely positioned to help businesses grow and solve their toughest challenges. As a responsible business, we are building a sustainable world and helping young people from underrepresented communities fulfil their potential.
Avanade was founded in 2000 by Accenture LLP and Microsoft Corporation. Learn more at http://www.avanade.com

About AQA

AQA sets and marks more than half of all GCSEs and A-levels taken in the UK every year. As an independent education charity, our income is reinvested back into AQA's charitable activities. It also funds our cutting-edge research, which sits at the heart of our assessments and supports our initiatives to help young people facing challenges in life realise their potential.

We also provide support and services that enable learning. These include a comprehensive support and training package for teachers, opportunities for professional development (CPD) and online resources to help teachers in the classroom.

Contacts

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