Modern, Local, and Secure: How HCT, Anthology, and AWS Partnered to Deliver the First SaaS LMS Deployment Hosted on UAE Soil

The region's first ever locally hosted SaaS-based LMS provides the best of modern learning while meeting stringent data regulations.

كليــات التقنيــة العليــا
Higher Colleges of Technology

Shaping the Future of Emirati Education

Since its foundation in 1988, the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) has grown to form a central role in the United Arab Emirates' economy and future. More than 25,000 learners currently study at campuses in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and other major cities across the UAE, where their courses provide a modern education that furthers their own ambitions as well as those of the nation.

INSTITUTION TYPE:
PUBLIC

LOCATION:
ABU DHABI, AL AIN, AL DHAFRA, DUBAI, FUJAIRAH, AND RAS AL-KHAIMAH, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

STUDENTS:
25,000+

ANTHOLOGY PRODUCT:

Blackboard

Anthology®

The Challenge

Modernizing the LMS While Providing Local Hosting

As part of its commitment to modern, career-focused learning, HCT sought to upgrade its Anthology® Blackboard instance to the latest SaaS version, Ultra. This comes with a range of features not available with the original course view and on-premise hosting, such as Blackboard's pioneering AI capabilities, the Blackboard Content Designer, and the Flexible Grading interface, as well as reduced maintenance, faster updates, and improved security for user data.

HCT engaged Anthology to deliver a SaaS deployment of Blackboard, with all its varied benefits, using a local data center to ensure that data remained within the nation's borders. This was a first-to-market request that had not previously been attempted with a learning management system (LMS) deployment in the UAE.

At HCT, we are committed to providing our students and faculty with the most advanced, secure, and innovative learning tools. Partnering with Anthology and AWS to deliver the first SaaS-based LMS hosted on UAE soil was a groundbreaking step in modernizing our educational infrastructure. This project not only aligns with our vision for a future-ready education system but also ensures compliance with the UAE's stringent data regulations. It's a testament to our dedication to shaping the future of Emirati education.

—Mohammed Alnuaimi
HCT Vice President of Shared Services

The Solution

Leverage Partnership with AWS to Set Up a Local Data Center

Blackboard is hosted globally on Amazon Web Services (AWS). Both Anthology and AWS share a vision to provide education opportunities equally in all corners of the globe, and have developed a close partnership to remove the distinct barriers that different markets face to provide the latest learning technology for their students and instructors.

Though AWS had commenced the process of creating a data center in the UAE in 2022, extensive work was required to meet the specific regulatory requirements of the UAE and ensure readiness for a SaaS deployment of an LMS. Anthology and AWS worked together to map out the services required for Blackboard and develop a project plan to have them made available as soon as possible. This collaboration, which included quarterly meetings involving the global leadership of both companies, also led to the development of toolkits and processes to make similar SaaS deployments easier to replicate in the future.

The Results

The First Ever SaaS LMS Deployment Hosted on UAE Soil

As of January 2025, HCT is now live with Blackboard—making it the first educational institution to activate a cloud-based LMS hosted within Emirati borders. The HCT and Anthology teams worked together through the migration process to deliver a smooth transition without disruption to learners.

Instructors and students are pleased to have access to Blackboard (Ultra)'s innovative features, including the market-leading AI Design Assistant, which streamlines the process of creating engaging courses and assessments. With their Blackboard instance now hosted in the cloud, they no longer need to dedicate significant resources to upkeep as is the case for an on-premise LMS.

The transition to Blackboard (Ultra) hosted on Amazon Web Services (AWS) has been transformative for HCT. Our faculty and students now have access to cutting-edge tools like the AI Design Assistant, which enhance the teaching and learning experience. Beyond the innovative features, the cloud-hosted LMS has significantly reduced our operational overhead, allowing us to focus more on delivering quality education. This milestone underscores our commitment to leveraging technology to empower the next generation of Emirati leaders.

—Dr. Michael Koh
HCT Acting Chief Academic Officer

📖 Epilogue

This initiative reflects Anthology's commitment to delivering a high level of data security at a global scale. HCT is the first institution in our network to go live with our next-generation infrastructure platform, which we're in the process of rolling out across the world.

Learn more about Blackboard and its SaaS capabilities today.

Anthology