Education

Enabling **seamless** remote learning experiences

Roma Tre University

In the wake of stringent COVID-19 lockdowns across Italy, Roma Tre University aimed to continue to deliver outstanding teaching for students. Working with Lenovo Platinum Partner Asystel Italia, the university rapidly deployed comprehensive virtual teaching solutions based on Lenovo ThinkSmart Hub 500 for Microsoft Teams.

Lenovo

Who is Roma Tre University?

Founded in 1992 in Rome, Italy, Roma Tre University is the city's youngest public university. With a community of over 38,000 students and 1,370 academic and professional staff members, Roma Tre University offers 54 undergraduate degree programs, 75 master's degree programs, 16 doctoral schools, and five PhD programs.

ROMA TRE
UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI

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The
Challenge

When COVID-19 swept around the world at the beginning of 2020, governments implemented social distancing measures to slow the spread of the pandemic. Like many European countries, Italy introduced local lockdowns that required most citizens to stay at home.

For educational organizations such as Roma Tre University, the new stay-at-home orders presented tough logistical challenges. Almost overnight, the university had to switch from face-to-face teaching to virtual lessons. It aimed to help its thousands of students and teaching staff to make the transition with as little disruption as possible.

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"As a future-looking organization, we had already been experimenting with digital learning solutions for several years prior to the pandemic, which proved to be extremely valuable when COVID-19 struck. Within just one week, we began using our existing Microsoft Office 365 subscription to allow staff to teach virtually with Microsoft Teams."

Paolo Cursi
Human Resources and Telecommunications Manager, Roma Tre University

While the university's initial approach enabled a rapid return to teaching, Roma Tre University saw significant opportunities to enhance the experience for students and lecturers alike. As well as recording classes and making them available for students to watch anytime, the organization wanted to make it as easy as possible for teaching staff to deliver high-quality audio-visual, and multimedia content.

"In the first phase of our remote learning journey, our staff often experienced technical difficulties that got in the way of their teaching," continues Cursi. "For example, some of our personnel relied on commercial off-the-shelf laptops with low-quality onboard webcams and microphones, which made it difficult for students to engage with the content of their lessons. To prepare for the new academic year in September, we targeted a mature, long-term solution for remote learning that would solve these challenges."

Enabling socially distanced learning

After evaluating a number of potential solutions, Roma Tre University selected Lenovo ThinkSmart Hub 500 for Microsoft Teams—purpose-built conference room devices with powerful remote-management capabilities from Lenovo ThinkSmart Manager software.

"We were confident that our teaching staff would be able to return to the university campus in the fall, although we believed that most students would have to continue to work remotely," says Cursi. "We therefore decided to transform our classrooms and lecture theaters into virtual conferencing rooms. The goal was to enable high-quality audio, video and digital presenting tools, and free our teaching staff from time-consuming setup and troubleshooting tasks—empowering them to focus on engaging with students."

Hardware
Lenovo ThinkSmart Hub 500 for Microsoft Teams
Lenovo ThinkCentre M Series Tiny Desktop

Software
Lenovo ThinkSmart Manager
Microsoft Teams
Microsoft Office 365

Services
Lenovo Premier Support

"It was a real epiphany to discover a virtual conferencing solution that fulfills all our needs. We had already been using Lenovo ThinkCentre M Series Tiny Desktops for a number of years, which gave us peace of mind that the solutions would be high quality and come with excellent support from Lenovo. With the clock ticking down to the start of the new academic year, it was also a race against time to get the new solution ready for the beginning of the September term."

Paolo Cursi
Human Resources and Telecommunications Manager, Roma Tre University

Working together with Lenovo and Asystel Italia, one of Italy's leading system integrators and a Lenovo Platinum Partner, Roma Tre University deployed, configured and tested Lenovo ThinkSmart Hub 500 devices in 220 of its classrooms and lecture halls.

"The collaboration between Lenovo and Asystel Italia was excellent, and the two companies worked together to help us meet our deployment deadline in time for the new academic year," adds Cursi. "Asystel Italia was there to assist us from the very beginning—from sending us a Lenovo ThinkSmart Hub 500 device to test during the evaluation phase to advising us on the installation and configuration of our hardware and software later in the project."

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Results

Today, Roma Tre University has achieved its goal of building smart classrooms across its Rome urban campus. The typical classroom is now equipped with a Lenovo ThinkSmart Hub 500, desktop PC, interactive whiteboard, projector, webcam, and ambient microphone. Teachers can connect their own devices—such as tablets and laptops—to the Lenovo ThinkSmart Hub 500, and seamlessly share content with students in the class and watching remotely.

"Without question, our Lenovo solutions are making life much easier for our students and our teaching staff," says Cursi. "For our lecturers and academic staff, we can now provide a teaching environment that is more similar to the one they were used to before COVID-19, which, at the same time, enables them to prepare and teach their classes more effectively. For students, we can ensure it's easy to read, hear and engage with what's being presented—whether they are in the room or taking part from home."

✓ 11.6" touchscreen   ✓ 360° rotatable   ✓ Anti-glare, smudge resistant

Based on the success of its Lenovo ThinkSmart solutions, Roma Tre University is planning innovative ways to harness its digital collaboration capabilities. The organization is currently preparing to enable Wi-Fi based connectivity for its Lenovo ThinkSmart Hub 500 solutions, enabling teaching staff to stream from their own devices without cables.

Looking further ahead, the university is keen to enable its students to connect to Lenovo ThinkSmart devices to present their own work, and to allow students from other institutions to take part in lectures remotely.

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"We're delighted with what we've achieved by working with Lenovo and Asystel Italia, so much so that we've already recommended the Lenovo ThinkSmart virtual conferencing solution to another university in Italy. Our virtual teaching capabilities are helping us to deliver outstanding learning experiences to our students, and we are confident that the Lenovo solutions will continue to deliver great value even after the COVID-19 crisis is behind us."

Paolo Cursi
Human Resources and Telecommunications Manager, Roma Tre University

Why Lenovo?

Roma Tre University found that Lenovo ThinkSmart Hub 500 was a perfect fit for its specific requirements. As well as offering full support for the university's preferred Microsoft Teams collaboration solution straight out of the box, the Lenovo devices handle all video capture and streaming services. As a result, there was no need for the cost and complexity of installing dedicated video capture hardware into the university's existing desktop machines.

In addition, ThinkSmart Manager software enables the university's lean, 10-person IT team to manage all Lenovo ThinkSmart Hub 500 devices remotely from a single point of control—dramatically reducing the manual effort involved in ongoing management and maintenance.

How do you engage
with students virtually?

Enabling staff to stream lessons seamlessly
with Lenovo technology.

Explore Lenovo ThinkSmart