Friesland College is a vocational training provider based in the north of the Netherlands. It operates out of 10 locations, with two main campuses in Leeuwarden and Heerenveen, and serves up to 15,000 students at any given time. The College has 1,100 employees.

Friesland College offers a range of courses, from full-time, four-year qualifications linked to particular trades, to evening and weekend language classes. Accordingly, it has a high turnover of students and a variety of service expectations.

“Education is changing,” says Foeke Hoekstra, Automation Team Leader, Friesland College. “Whatever you’re studying for, education has become a lot more mobile, more collaborative, and less tied to a physical location.”

GREATER FLEXIBILITY IN EDUCATION
Learning is changing, and so is the business of education. The College, says Hoekstra, has to be more flexible in the way it operates: “As a vocational college we need to be a lot better about integrating with some of the industries and employers we work with. We need a network that allows this – a network that is secure and agile enough to be changed quickly.”

In practical terms, this means a network that can support modern productivity applications (such as Office 365 or Skype for Business), where students can take classes remotely or work from any device, and that can support custom-built applications.

We were looking for a supplier with a proven track and a clear roadmap. This is a strategic network investment which we plan to build upon over the next 10 years. Innovation is important, but so too is the means to deliver. Aruba was the clear choice.

FOEKE HOEKSTRA
AUTOMATION TEAM LEADER, FRIESLAND COLLEGE

“We can make the student experience a lot more personal,” says Hoekstra. “Students should be able to view their timetable, make an appointment or access learning materials through an app. But we need to be able to monitor and control this access.”

Innovation, with the means to deliver
The College had a number of requirements. “The network would need to be reliable. We wanted to see evidence of fault tolerance,” says Hoekstra. “We were looking for a
supplier with a proven track and a clear roadmap. This is a strategic network investment which we plan to build upon over the next 10 years.”

Hoekstra looked at options with long term IT supplier, SecureLink. “We did look at one Chinese supplier, and the price was very good, but price does not necessarily mean value. Aruba was in the highest Gartner quadrant, and that quality is reassuring. Innovation is important, but so too is the means to deliver. Aruba was the clear choice.”

The Aruba solution, he continues, represented better value because it would be cheaper to manage and maintain, and changes or additions would be simpler: “We don’t have a big team. With Aruba, we’d be able to reduce the time needed to administer the network.”

**SECURE, RELIABLE AND SIMPLE TO MANAGE**

The RFP was concluded in May 2017. The solution comprises 400 Aruba 200- and 300-Series access points, two Aruba 7210 mobility controllers, Aruba 2930M Switches, and four HPE FlexFabric 5940 Data Centre Core Switches. In addition, network access is through Aruba ClearPass Policy Manager (with 2,500 enterprise licenses) and the network (both wired and wireless) is managed using Aruba AirWave Network Management. This is a proven Aruba Mobile First architecture.

The plan is to have the core of the new network in place by October 2017 (with the bulk of the work taking place over the quieter summer months), with everything complete by the end of the year. “Again, the priority is to make sure everything is working correctly, properly configured, so as to reduce our management time in the future,” explains Hoekstra.

**A platform for long-term growth**

Hoekstra admits the College is only at the start of its transformation journey. The first phase will be to ensure the network works correctly, the next step is make greater use of this platform.

Security is a key consideration, as is facilities management. “By the time the solution is fully in place, we’ll be able to use Microsoft Teams or Microsoft Classroom, or Skype for Business much more effectively and with greater performance,” says Hoekstra. “Students can use their own devices. We’ll be able to see who is using the network, and identify hotspots.”

“But we’ll be looking at additional layers. How can we make our buildings smarter? How can we add new devices to the network? I think we’ll be ahead of most other education providers in the Netherlands, but the exciting part is imagining the benefits to come and knowing we can deal with them.”

Aruba's valued partner SecureLink, also a network security specialist and expert in deploying Aruba ClearPass solutions, deployed the network for Friesland College. “We’ve worked with SecureLink for a number of years and we were confident in their ability to design and build the right solution,” says Hoekstra.