Historically, BYOD transitions can be compared to ‘rounding the horn’ in the golden age of sailing. All the preparations and decisions made are based on knowing that the journey will be rough, and that not all who embark on the journey will easily reach their destination.

During the past two years our teachers have been involved in ongoing digital pedagogy and technology development in anticipation of the 2014 BYOD integration. Significant planning and development of infrastructure was crucial in underpinning these educational technologies to enable a streamlined user experience for our students and staff in the transition to BYOD.

The School’s computer network is significantly different to its previous incarnation. Our BYOD environment now allows each student total control of the configuration and software on their device, giving them greater ownership of their digital environment and helping them to develop responsible practices — all pivotal in developing the attributes of a life-wide learner.

Key innovations from the IT Services department were also required to realise these goals. Changes to infrastructure and the environment are evident from the very first time a student joins the Girls Grammar wireless network, to the time they log off at home using GrammarNet and the Learning Management System (LMS), Moodle. The new software based ‘onboarding’ system automates the significant processes involved in connecting the student’s device securely to the School network. This is a robust, efficient and secure process which negates both password expiry and also changes affecting their device’s network connectivity.

Students have 24/7 access to applications and software delivered over the web using the Citrix XenApp platform and utilise web-based applications (Web 2.0) in their curricular activities. Site licencing for specialised software such as Adobe Creative Suite have been extended to incorporate installation on students’ BYOD. The ease of access with virtual learning environments has already attributed to a statistical rise in school engagement of over 200 per cent. This is significant considering the LMS was already negotiating 125,000 interactions daily.

Many activities now focus on the product to facilitate the device agnostic nature of our computing environment at Brisbane Girls Grammar School. For example, students are not required to use a specific word processor or image
editor to create a piece of work, instead they use the software and means at their disposal, thereby facilitating greater engagement and utilisation of all of their devices. A result of the implementation of BYOD into teaching and learning is greater personalised learning, strengthened by the creative and productive student use of tools that work best for them.

Another key driver to the success of the BYOD transition related to the needs of teachers to access their files. Previously, files and resources had been stored on servers and were only available via School-owned and managed devices. Moving forward, these resources are now available from every student and teacher’s web browser, allowing them to access, edit, save and work in a way that personally suits them.

The last major improvement to the School infrastructure has been in enhancing the printing and scanning platform. Previously it was difficult to digitise resources, but now with the installation of Ricoh Multi-Function devices, students are able to scan in resources and digitise their work directly to their email. Printing has also undergone a facelift and students are now able to send documents to be printed from any web browser, and then retrieve their printing from any of the eight student accessible copiers located across the campus.

Fostering personalised learning through BYOD makes good pedagogical sense. When integrated correctly through pertinent contextual instructional design and well-researched digital pedagogy leadership, BYOD becomes a normalised and good scholarly practice that assist students in becoming independent learners as they matriculate through their life-wide learning activities. BYOD creates more flexibility and relevance to students’ learning, their lives and their social media prevalence. BYOD empowers students to take ownership and management of their own learning. Our students’ use of BYOD will facilitate fluent transitions to undergraduate studies and work-readiness for a highly competitive 21st century interconnected world.