

JISC infoNet Award for Innovation in Records & Information Management

Submission by Bromley College of Higher & Further Education

Pam Ashley

Director Student Progression

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Background

Bromley College is committed to the pursuit of excellence in all services provided by the College and to a process of learner engagement that responds to individual needs

The use of ICT to enrich the learning process forms a key part of its quality improvement strategy. An early adopter of VLE technology, Bromley College has been recognised by JISC as a beacon college in the use of Moodle.

Original drivers behind the project

As part of the development of its quality improvement strategy, Bromley College recognised the inadequacy of its student tracking systems. There was a lack of consistency between the teams – even those teaching on the same type of qualification. Records were predominantly paper-based and the communication system between staff presented numerous opportunities for documents to become lost or damaged. Added to this, the staff had to access different databases for management information about a student, making the whole exercise both time consuming and frustrating.

In a climate determined to raise student retention and achievement, manage the RARPA process and engage with the theme of personalisation, the development of an integrated database became a top priority.

A decision was reached at the beginning of 2007 to develop an integrated tracking database which combined management information about a student with their assessment record and personal details.

Objectives

1. To improve retention and achievement through more efficient monitoring of student performance.
2. To develop an interactive individual learning plan (ILP) linked to performance data.
3. To improve the management of the curriculum.
4. To develop a tool to share information efficiently and involve all team/course members.
5. To improve student involvement in the learning process.

Methodology

Just over two years ago, Bromley College elected to work with a company called VLE Support to help implement, maintain and roll out Moodle open source VLE software to all members of staff. A strong relationship between the company and the College resulted, as VLE Support worked in partnership with the College's ICT team to help implement the software and encourage lecturers to use the technology through training and helpline services. The College chose to work with VLE Support on the development and implementation of the integrated tracking database.

The senior management team agreed to drive the initiative, however it was decided to establish a multi-disciplinary team to tackle the project, ensuring a 'whole College' approach in an effort to overcome the existing barriers to effective student tracking and monitoring. The following formed the project team:

- Technical IT Services Manager to ensure compatibility of the future system with existing services.
- Central Information Services Manager to link the database with existing EBS systems.
- Director of Student Progression to link all student support systems including tutorial into the project.
- Assistant Director Quality to reflect assessment tracking needs.
- Head of e-Learning to advise on electronic tracking.
- Managing Director of VLE Support, also a teaching practitioner, to contribute to and manage the overall design and implementation of the software applying both his own experience of student monitoring and technical expertise.

The team identified the key deliverables of the project to be:

- An integrated database combining all data connected with a student in one transparent monitoring tool to enable students to see their attendance, progress, targets and personal details whilst allowing staff to record student assessment outcomes.
- An individualised electronic learning plan for all students to work on with support from personal tutors.
- A progression tool that records the progress of every student in the College across a number of years and qualifications.
- A managing tool to support curriculum management and student performance.

First and foremost, it was determined that the tracking system must be developed to meet the RARPA (Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement in non-accredited learning) compliance standards. This meant that the development team had to build five key stages into the system which they defined as follows:

1. Clearly stated aims.
2. Initial and diagnostic assessment.
3. Agreeing challenging objectives.
4. Formative assessment and feedback.
5. Summative assessment and celebration.

Regular team meetings were held with monthly reports to feedback the plan of action to the College's senior management team for discussion and approval.

The team set two key milestones:

- May 2007: Roll-out of a prototype of the tracking system for user acceptance testing across four different qualifications and assessment regimes throughout the remainder of the summer term.
- September 2007: Complete implementation of the final system throughout the entire College for the commencing of the new educational year, at which time all paper-based recording systems would be abandoned.

Phase 1

The team used a map of the Learner Journey to identify the data gathered about a student from application to destination. From this, it looked at where this data was stored and how it was accessed by teaching staff and administrative teams across the College. The aim was to identify how the future system could reduce the need to open many different sources of data to monitor a student in the College.

Phase 2

A mock-up of the potential product was developed and a number of consultation sessions were held with teaching staff to agree the type and amount of information required from the final tool. This also involved fully informing them of the project plan to gain their buy-in and engage their support for the proposed pilot programme.

At this stage of the project, all technical issues were checked to ensure compatibility and effectiveness of the future tool with existing management information systems within the College.

Phase 3

As a result of the consultation process and technical research, the specification document to commission the development of the integrated tracking database was drawn up and agreed. VLE Support commenced work on the design and build of the prototype with the aim of implementing it for testing across four different qualification and assessment teams from May 2007 for the remainder of the summer term.

Phase 4

Piloting of the prototype was undertaken for six weeks with four different curriculum teams using different assessment regimes. During this period, the prototype was scrutinised to identify any potential malfunctions and areas to improve or remove.

Phase 5

The final build of the online tracking tool – named eTracker – was completed and signed off by the senior management of the College following feedback from the testing teams.

eTracker

eTracker acts both as an information aggregator and a bespoke database application, visible to managers, teachers and students alike.

The system provides College administrators with a global view of students' assessments as well as individual assessment criteria, enabling vastly improved management and increased transparency at all levels within the College.

Teachers are able to monitor, assess and analyse their students' performance, helping them to identify issues and intervene fast, and enabling a much higher level of attention to be given to students where needed.

Students are motivated by their ability to easily assess their own individual progress against personalised goals, allowing them greater ownership of the learning process and encouraging them to perform to a higher standard.

Access to eTracker is strictly controlled and varies according to each person's permission level. For example, students can only see information relevant to their personal work whereas teachers have access to a greater depth of information on each student, and greater breadth of information across groups of students.

Key design features of eTracker include:

- It forms a thorough and detailed Individual Learning Plan incorporating academic and pastoral tracking information.
- It was built to be hosted on the College's own site rather than hosted externally.
- It runs in behind Active Directory so that once logged into the network, users do not need to log-in again to access eTracker.
- It pulls in live data from the institution's MIS database such as student address details, groups, courses, attendance, enrolments, and previous qualifications rather than relying on manual input and import.
- Students are automatically assigned to courses through enrolments.
- It allows teachers and students to create a detailed individual learning plan for each student.
- SMART targets are built into an individual's action plan.
- It tracks individual student performance against their individual targets.
- It allows teachers and students to view previous academic years.
- The system is departmentalised for courses.
- It provides templates for different courses and criterion.
- It works with GCSE, NVQ, BTEC, A-level and many other qualifications.
- BTEC scores/points and A-level grades are calculated automatically.

- It includes course criterion scores and student progress is shown graphically using progress bars.
- Teachers can carry out subject reviews and progress audits.
- Progress of all students is visible to all teaching and management staff.
- It allows students to input to their personal pages generating greater buy-in and enthusiasm for using the system.
- The student page allows the individual to keep notes on careers of interest, general career information, work experience and job applications.

Deliverables

1. The prototype of the system – eTracker – was successfully rolled out on 31 May 2007.
2. The completed system was implemented for commencement of the new College year on 03 September 2007.
3. The use of all paper-based recording and tracking systems was eradicated on 03 September 2007.
4. The entire staff base of 800 together with the student body totalling 5,000 is now fully engaged with eTracker.

Given the fact that eTracker has only been fully operational for one term, it is still too early to provide any metrics to demonstrate any improvement in student retention or achievement. The College has, however, conducted a survey across the student body and staff base to seek feedback on the system.

<i>Student Survey</i>	Yes
▪ Do you feel that you are more involved with your learning since the introduction of eTracker to Bromley College in September?	69%
▪ Do you feel that communication has improved between you and your tutor as a result?	73%
▪ Do you feel more motivated towards achieving your personal targets as your progress is more visible using eTracker?	76%

<i>Staff survey</i>	Yes
▪ Do you feel that eTracker enables all team/course members to share information more efficiently?	89%
▪ Has the introduction of eTracker made it easier/less time consuming for you to monitor your students' progress?	67%
▪ What percentage of your students have improved since the first 6 weekly reviews?	33%


Barry Spencer, Programme Area Leader at Bromley College has offered the following conclusion:
“The functionality of eTracker is outstanding – it is exactly what further education colleges like ours require. When you see eTracker in action, it is clear to see that the project team went to great lengths to understand the demands upon teachers and what does and doesn’t work with students. It is still early days, but I am confident in the benefits it will bring to the staff and student body alike.”

Appendices

eTracker Screen Shot

- Student Page

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eTracker

[Courses](#) | [Administration](#) | [Statistics](#) | [Students](#) | [E-Tutorial](#)

SELECT DATASET: 2007-2008

You are in: Student View

STUDENT SEARCH:

Jane Carlton - ID: 2011



Details:
 15 Somewhere Street, Croydon
 T: 01234 567899
 M: 07712 1234567
 E:

Attendance & Punctuality

	Term 1		Term 2		Term 3		Current Total
	Half 1	Half 2	Half 1	Half 2	Half 1	Half 2	
P	85%	12%	0%	0%	0%	0%	90%
A	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	10%
L	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%
D	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%

Current Performance % - (RARPA S4)
MTG: Merit
Prior Achievements

BTEC ND for IT Practitioners (Networks) - Year 1

	Total	More Detail	Criteria	Assessment
Computer Systems	50%	VIEW	VIEW	VIEW
Customisation of Client Side web pages	33%	VIEW	VIEW	VIEW
Moles & Ions	00%	VIEW	VIEW	VIEW

Recent Progression Audits - (RARPA S4)
Disciplinary
Initial Assessment

Date	Status L/W	Predicted Result	Comment
06/09/2007	L	Merit	Jane is progressing well and should achieve a good result. Her attendance has dipped slightly.
08/10/2007	L	Merit	There have been no issues related to the progress of this student. Should achieve a Merit easily.
12/10/2007	L	Pass	Jane needs to concentrate more on mathematical achievements!
26/10/2007	L	Distinction	Jane has excelled herself this term.
31/10/2007	L	Merit	Jane continues to bound from strength to strength.


Cause for Concern: 6
 Stage 1: No
 Stage 2: No

(RARPA S2)
 Literacy: Level 2
 Numeracy Entry 3

eTracker Screen Shot

Subject Review Page

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SELECT DATASET: 2007-2008

You are in: E-Tutorial

STUDENT SEARCH:


[Subject Reviews](#) | [Progression Audits](#) | [Action Plans](#) | [Basic Skills Targets](#) | [Careers](#) | [Personal Notes](#) | [Student's Own Targets](#)

Subject Reviews

Previous Reviews

Review Date: **VIEW**

1 = Excellent, 2 = Good, 3 = Satisfactory, 4 = Unsatisfactory

Student Selected: [Harris, Sasha](#) ([Change](#))
 

[Click here to view full version of review](#)
[Click here to view student criteria performance](#)

Units / Modules / Subjects	Performance %	Motivation	Study skill	Attitude & Behaviour	Attainment
Unit 2824	42%	2	3	1	2
Unit 2825/02	99%	0	0	0	0
Unit 2826/01	76%	0	0	0	0
Average Scores:		0.7	1	0.3	0.7

SAVE
LOCK
UNLOCK


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eTracker Screen Shot

Action Plan Screen – Setting SMART Targets

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You are in: E-Tutorial **STUDENT SEARCH:**

[Subject Reviews](#) [Progression Audits](#) [Action Plans](#) [Basic Skills Targets](#) [Careers](#) [Personal Notes](#) [Student's Own Targets](#)

Action Plans

CREATE Student Selected: [Harris, Sasha](#) ([Change](#))

Targets Set Action Description **SAVE** Date to be met: [select date](#)

Previous Action Plans

Target Set	Description	Date to be met	Completed
		02/01/2008	<input type="checkbox"/>

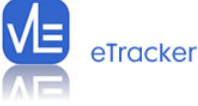
Save

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eTracker Screen Shot

■ Careers Page

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Courses Administration Statistics Students E-Tutorial **SELECT DATASET:** 2007-2008 ▼

You are in: E-Tutorial STUDENT SEARCH:

Subject Reviews Progression Audits Action Plans Basic Skills Targets Careers Personal Notes Student's Own Targets


Careers

Student Selected: [Carlton, Jane](#) ([Change](#))

Long term Goals Jane is interested in working in IT. She probably wants to concentrate on installations and basic networking to start with, but she would be grateful of any help with developing ideas on this front!	Changes to Goals Formerly interested in software design, but changed mind to hardware installations and mind mapping.
UCAS Applications: 2008 still pending ...	Offers received 3 weeks work placement at HAYS IT, as well as ongoing voluntary work for Southwark's Home Ownership Unit, who are experiencing a few problems with bill allocation systems.
Work Experience: I had a newspaper round in Peckham for 2 years, and most recently I have been working Saturdays in Brick Lane Market. Duties involve cash-handling and book keeping in the latter role.	
Part time work: Please enter text here.	

eTracker Screen Shot

■ Courses Screen – Assessment Scores Tracking


eTracker

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SELECT DATASET: 2007-2008

You are in: Courses

SELECT COURSE:

Your Courses and Units

[A2 Chemistry](#)
[A2 Physics](#)
[BTEC First Diploma for IT Practitioners](#)
[BTEC ND - Business Studies](#)
[BTEC ND for IT Practitioners \(Networks\) - Year 1](#)

[Unit 10 - Customisation of Client Side web pages](#) 16% ▶ Running [Change](#)

[Unit 2 - Computer Systems](#) 83% ▶ Running [Change](#)

Group A 100%

	Carlton, Jane		100%	SET DATES	ENTER SCORES
	Denton, Alastair		100%	SET DATES	ENTER SCORES
	Easton, Susan		100%	SET DATES	ENTER SCORES

BTEC Grade	BTEC Points	%P	%A	%L	%D
P	6	90	10	5	1
M	12	89	11	6	2
P	6	56	44	2	10

Group B 67%

[Training Course 1](#)

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