



## **Dynamic implementation of eTrackr<sup>ip</sup> helps City of Westminster College to achieve success.**

City of Westminster College is a large Further Education College, situated in the heart of Central London, drawing students from a wide range of backgrounds and offering an extensive selection of courses. The college purchased eTrackr<sup>ip</sup> in the summer of 2012, and by the time they were inspected by Ofsted in June 2013, the college had successfully embedded eTrackr<sup>ip</sup> into a number of curriculum areas, and received very positive feedback in their inspection report:

“The tracking of students’ progress and the use of target setting are much improved and are now good. Where curriculum areas have fully adopted the new electronic tracking system, it is very effective in reviewing and updating students’ progress”.

The college received an inspection rating of ‘Good’ overall, improving on their previous rating of ‘Satisfactory’ in 2010. VLE Support spoke to **Pete Sharrocks**, Head of Teaching and Training, **Peter Vaughan**, Reporting Systems Manager, and **Sonia Staneland**, Staff Trainer, to explore their journey in implementing eTrackr<sup>ip</sup> and to consider what impact the system is having on teaching and learning at the college.

### **Why choose eTrackr<sup>ip</sup>?**

Prior to investing in eTrackr<sup>ip</sup>, the college had been tracking their students’ progress in a variety of different ways. Some departments had been using Moodle to track progress, while others developed electronic spreadsheets and others still used paper-based methods. The college wanted a product that would make progress tracking more transparent and accessible, while also facilitating a consistent approach. Having investigated a range of different solutions, they decided to purchase eTrackr<sup>ip</sup> and have not been disappointed by their choice. Pete Sharrocks explains what impressed them most about eTrackr<sup>ip</sup>:

“<We noticed> a lack of clutter; it seemed straightforward, clear and visual with the traffic lights and the progress bars. It covered...the things teachers said they wanted in a tracking system. We’d heard that eTrackr<sup>ip</sup> customer support was very good and I think that’s been proven - we’re very impressed”.

### **Key ingredients for success**

The eTrackr<sup>ip</sup> pilot phase started in September 2012 and ran for approximately half a term. Advanced Practitioners were deliberately chosen to drive the pilot, as they were “used to reflecting on their experiences and sharing their experiences with other staff”. This helped to reinforce the rationale that the main purpose for using eTrackr<sup>ip</sup> was to improve teaching and learning. Following the initial pilot, a staff training day was dedicated to eTrackr<sup>ip</sup> training and planning the product roll-out. This helped to create some momentum, but there was still a lot of work to be done by the eTrackr<sup>ip</sup> project leaders in order to ensure that staff were on-board and that the project continued to grow. The project leaders identified a number of key factors that they felt contributed to the project’s success:

- The initial pilot phase was driven by enthusiastic practitioners. This helped to establish a momentum for its use;
- The development was supported by the senior management team as a way of underpinning the development of more consistent curriculum practices (see below).
- The MIS team has a very good knowledge and understanding of the curriculum and therefore understood how to manage the data in a way that met the needs of the teaching staff.
- The college invested in a new post (Sonia) with a clear remit to provide training and support for the development of eTrackr<sup>ip</sup> (and Moodle). Sonia provided regular training slots for staff in the use of eTrackr<sup>ip</sup> – these were well publicised, and there were further opportunities for Sonia to provide one-on-one support outside these times. Additionally, from time-to-time, Advanced Practitioners ran workshop sessions on eTrackr<sup>ip</sup> for staff within their particular subject area.
- Good communication was maintained throughout between the curriculum areas and other support services including the MIS and Quality teams.

### **The impact of eTrackr<sup>ip</sup>**

The college has put into place robust systems for ensuring students are placed on suitable courses with challenging, but realistic targets. During the college's student induction process, initial assessment information is collated and evidence for prior qualifications is gathered and logged. This information is then fed into eTrackr<sup>ip</sup> through the SQL views. Following discussions with tutors, targets and action plans may be set (using the eTrackr<sup>ip</sup> interface itself); students in need of additional support are identified and appropriate action taken. All of this information, now collated in eTrackr<sup>ip</sup>, builds a detailed picture of the learners on each course. Pete Sharrocks comments: "Tutors are now much more aware of individual targets and individual needs. They make a point of cascading that information to the course teams, so it is incorporated into course planning."

Teachers are required to use the action-planning and student review processes within eTrackr<sup>ip</sup> and these are central to the College's overall system of assessment. All Course Tutors, alongside their Heads of School, present their course(s) to a termly Assessment Board, which is chaired by Heads of Faculty. They are required to explain the evidence for the target grades that have been set and to flag up 'at-risk' learners who are in need of additional support. In turn, the Heads of Faculty also present their curriculum to senior college managers. The college have been conducting this process for three years, and in the last year have been able to incorporate eTrackr<sup>ip</sup> into this strategy, to further develop its rigour. Ofsted were very impressed with this process, commenting that "tight monitoring of curriculum, course and student performance have become established features of the culture of the college and made a crucial contribution to the year-on-year increases in success rates". The Assessment Board process has the additional benefit of helping to ensure a high level of compliance in the college's systems and processes. eTrackr<sup>ip</sup> also provides a high level of transparency in the way that teachers undertake target setting and other assessment activities and this has helped to embed its use at the heart of curriculum processes.

### **Plans for the future**

Despite a very successful first year of using eTrackr<sup>ip</sup>, the project leaders realise that they must continue their hard work to ensure that eTrackr<sup>ip</sup>, in the second year, becomes fully embedded across all curriculum areas and is used by everyone involved with the college. While Ofsted commented that already ‘students value being able to monitor their own progress more easily’, the project leaders are keen to develop strategies to encourage even more students to engage with eTrackr<sup>ip</sup> – for example by sending text messages every week reminding them to log in. They hope to also make eTrackr<sup>ip</sup> accessible to parents and guardians, using the eTrackr<sup>ip</sup> Parent Portal module, so that parents can have greater oversight of students’ progress, as well as keeping tabs on their attendance and punctuality.