

North Kent College make excellent progress with eTrackr^{ilp} in the first year of implementation

North Kent College is a large General Further Education College, with campuses in Dartford and Gravesend.

The college purchased eTrackr^{ilp} in May 2015, and has already made considerable progress with regards to implementing the product across the college.

VLE Support spoke to **Steve Humphries, Learning Technology Manager and Wendy Davies, Assistant Principal, Teaching and Learning** to discuss their reasons for choosing eTrackr^{ilp} and their experience of implementing and using the product so far.

Why choose eTrackr^{ilp}?

Prior to using eTrackr^{ilp}, the college had used a number of different ILP and tracking systems, including in-house systems, but concluded that they lacked the necessary infrastructure to support these systems effectively. Steve Humphries commented: “we needed eTrackr^{ilp} to give us a turn-key, properly supported solution.... and the product you have is head and shoulders above the competition”.

Steve, in particular, was responsible for researching different tracking systems and found that eTrackr^{ilp} came highly recommended: “We had contacts at other colleges who were using it and were really happy with it...”. In his investigations, he was also encouraged by the personal contact with the VLE Support team: “I found all the VLE staff very amenable and incredibly helpful and we knew that these people would be supporting us [going forward].”

The college was impressed with eTrackr^{ilp} for a number of reasons and being easily accessible to all users from senior management to students was a key factor. Wendy Davies remarked: “It brought in attendance; the students could see it – it’s very powerful”. By engaging the students in using eTrackr^{ilp}, with its range of features including target grades and action plans, the college intended to use progress tracking in eTrackr^{ilp} “as a motivational tool” to improve student outcomes.

eTrackr^{ilp} and bksb

Furthermore, the integration of eTrackr^{ilp} with bksb was an important factor. Alongside the purchase of eTrackr^{ilp}, the college decided to invest in licences for ^{using} bksb Functional Skills tests and also bksb GCSE Initial and Diagnostic Assessments. Using the two systems together enables key information to be brought together: specifically in terms of students’ English and Maths skills, Prior Qualifications and progress in their current courses. With regards to this, the college has found the Summary Group Profile report (SO27) to be particularly useful – *see example below with dummy data:*

Year 2015/2016

Course: BTEC EXTENDED DIPLOMA IN BUSINESS (1059)
Qualification: Pearson BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma in Business (QCF)
Course Leader: Monique Lam

Group: A
QAN Code: 500/6746/1

Student	Photo	English GCSE Grade	Maths GCSE Grade	BKSB English IA Level DA Level & score	BKSB Maths IA Level DA Level & score	Prior Quals APS	Initial Target Grade (ITG)	Aspirational Target Grade (ATG)	Declared LD, Dis or Health Issue(s)	Asses - sed as needing ALS	ALS Comments (from Attached Notes)	Recommended Learning Strategies (from Attached Notes)	Other Characteristics
Kieron Boyd Id: 128352 Age now: 19, Gender: M Ethnicity: African		C	C			40 (APS1)Fine grade C	PPP	DMM	* Dyslexia	Y			
Emma-Louise Cochran Id: 119658 Age now: 18, Gender: F Ethnicity: African		D	D	IA: E2 DA: E2 81	IA: E2 DA: E2 88	39 (APS3)Fine grade C	DDM	DDM	-				Has Discretionary 16-19 Bursary Funding.
Tabetha Delacruz Id: 105806 Age now: 18, Gender: F Ethnicity: Any Other White background		D	D	IA: L1 DA: GCSE 43	IA: E3 DA: GCSE 24	29 (APS3)Fine grade E+	DMM	DDM	-				

Project Implementation

The college's implementation plan proposed to implement eTrackr^{ip} very quickly, in as many Curriculum areas as possible. There are a number of risks inherent with this approach, and it is not recommended for some colleges, depending on specific circumstances. However, North Kent College were aware of these risks, took action to address them where possible and, as a consequence, appear to have had a largely successful implementation so far.

While there has been resistance from some areas of the college, Wendy Davies remarked: "We've had buy-in from nearly all Curriculum areas, so that's been very positive... Compliance is better than expected. Staff are liking it; a lot of it is intuitive."

To date, approximately 80% of the Curriculum Areas are using the software and the college is keen to extend this use to more areas of the curriculum, where practical, in future.

Steve Humphries, in his role as Learning Technologies Manager, has been instrumental in driving the project forward. There has been a concerted effort to 'sell' the product internally and promote its use.

The college benefitted from initially purchasing four training days in addition to the standard one training and one consultancy day. This allowed more staff to get on board with the project, and led to a well-trained eTrackr^{ip} champion being allocated to every curriculum area. Steve then meets with these champions through the year to review progress with the project implementation. Steve is based at the Dartford Campus and is assisted by a colleague who has a similar role, based at the Gravesend campus.

Using eTrackr^{ip} as a Management Tool

Given the swift implementation process, there has been some variation in terms of the staff usage and some inconsistency in terms of the way in which staff have been using certain features. As more data is inputted into eTrackr^{ip}, the college is now beginning to take advantage of the large range of management reports available in eTrackr^{ip} in order to monitor the quality of use and provide further support where required. For example, regarding the use of Action Plans, report SO15 pulls together all of the Action Plan content for a particular course; the quality of content can then be easily reviewed by Curriculum Managers. Similarly, report SO14 allows managers to easily view all information regarding Progression Audits for a specific course, identifying patterns of 'at risk' students, and also alerting managers where Progression Audits have not been completed.

Wendy Davies commented: "From a managerial point of view... I can see what's going on across the college – I can see what grades the students are achieving, how much work has been marked: it's a very powerful tool".

In order to maximise the use of eTrackr^{ip} as a Management Tool, Steve Humphries has been meeting with the Curriculum Managers and showing them which reports in eTrackr^{ip} are useful to them specifically and explaining how to use them.

Functional Skills reporting

With regards to the tracking of Functional Skills, North Kent College has worked closely with VLE Support to produce a new report, which produces a central source of information for all students studying on Functional Skills programmes. This has overcome a specific problem with regards to particular Functional Skills courses, whereby students in the same class were studying qualifications at different levels. The report requires Functional Skills courses to be set up in a specific way, whereby one unit is used to indicate the student's level, and the other units are set up to track progress. Wendy Davies remarked: "The Functional Skills report has made a huge difference; Sheila Dance (Assistant Principal, English, Maths and Support) is delighted; she has something she can look at centrally".

Functional Skills English Tracking Sheet

2015-16

Course Code	Course Name	Course Leader	Student Ref	Forename	Surname	Level	English Reading Booked	English Reading Achieved	English Reading Claimed	English Speaking and Listening Formal	English Speaking and Listening Informal	English Speaking and Listening Achieved	English Speaking and Listening Claimed	English Writing Booked	English Writing Achieved	English Writing Claimed
A4D101Q-1516-51255	Functional Skills English - THU 11:30AM - C		10466272			E2	/	/		/	/	/	/	/		
A4D101Q-1516-51255	Functional Skills English - THU 11:30AM - C		10464341			E2	/	/		/	/	/	/	/		
A4D101Q-1516-51255	Functional Skills English - THU 11:30AM - C		10467429			E2	/	/		/	/	/	/	/		
A4D101Q-1516-51255	Functional Skills English - THU 11:30AM - C		10464587			E2	/	/		/	/	/	/	/		

NB: Names have been removed from above image for confidentiality reasons.

Plans for the future

As the college strive to continue their improvement journey, Wendy Davies is hopeful that eTrackr^{ip} will play a key role: “We are aiming to move towards outstanding and eTrackr^{ip} is one of the tools we hope can help us on that journey”.

The college is planning to extend the use of eTrackr^{ip} to as many curriculum areas as possible over the course of next year, and to continue their efforts to make staff usage more consistent. The college has already had some success with regards to setting target grades in eTrackr^{ip} and using the new, automatic L3VA calculations, but will look to extend the use of these features in the months ahead.

The project leaders are also aware that there are various features in eTrackr^{ip} of which they are not yet taking advantage. For example, they are looking at ways to increase the use of Cause for Celebrations, specifically with regard to tracking a ‘student ambassador’s scheme’ in this way, uploading certificates and so on as file attachments. As a result, they hope to improve student engagement with eTrackr^{ip}. The college is also considering enabling parental access to eTrackr^{ip} in the next academic year, following the initial pilot.

VLE Support would like to thank North Kent College for their support in producing this case study and look forward to continuing to work with them in the years ahead.

Jon Openshaw and Tim Lyth, VLE Support
