

Case Study

City College Birmingham

"We need a system that can create more timely information for the college and this is being achieved. With Capita ES UNIT-e Student Record and Tracking System"

Rachel Brown

Summary

How Capita ES worked with City College Birmingham to migrate to UNIT-e SRTS, a system sophisticated and flexible enough to provide the College with the level of information it needs, whilst managing and manipulating the substantial flow of data running through the institution.

Background

City College Birmingham is one of the largest colleges of further education in the UK with over 30,000 students, approx 8,000 full time equivalents. It operates across 32 sites of its own, as well as 84 other sites, franchises and partnerships. The college offers over 1000 courses from foundation to degree level.

The college was formed in 1998 by the merger of Handsworth College and East Birmingham College with a single management structure in place by 2001.

The situation

There was a clear need to manage large amounts of data and information coming in from a number of different sources. Software applications were isolated on different servers and there were delays in receiving, collating and reusing data (ie paper based systems). A common database was required to avoid information being keyed in twice. Management information needed to be improved to meet funding mechanisms and audit and inspection requirements. Staff needed to be trained in line with this. Interoperability was a necessity. The MIS was required to become a fully integrated management tool as demand for more sophisticated information increases.



Capita Education Services involvement

Handsworth College had been using the Capita ES Dolphin system since 1993. East Birmingham moved onto the Dolphin system in 2000 after the two sites merged. In 2002 it was decided to migrate to Capita ES's new UNIT-e SRTS and become an early adopter of the system going live in July 2003.

Rachel Brown, Director of MIS at City College explains why: "We needed to put in place a system that was capable of producing high quality information and that would give us a fully integrated system for storing different types of data, that could be more easily manipulated and reported on. The Dolphin system had been successful and this had led to demand for more sophisticated information management and greater interoperability. We looked at the options available to us and decided that UNIT-e SRTS was the system that would best meet our requirements."

About the migration

The move to UNIT-e SRTS went smoothly with only a few minor problems that were to be expected. Implementation was successful and the 02/03 ILR has already been taken off it. "It's gone very well," says Rachel Brown, "The strength of the system lies in its flexibility."

Rachel believes that the key to successful migration to UNIT-e lies in spending the right amount of time at the beginning, working with Capita ES, to get the specification right. "It's vital to decide exactly what you want the system to do" she says, "For example, there are 4 date fields for enrolments but, for our purposes, we decided to use only 3 and this has considerably reduced repetitive keying. The functionality to globally update fields has played a big part in reducing the time to produce error free ILR's etc. It was important that both Capita ES and the MIS director were clear about the business processes and spent time together on this aspect to ensure the success of our project implementation."

Some of the benefits of UNIT-e SRTS to City College, Birmingham

- Reconciliation with partnerships
- Reduces time lag between what is actually happening and what is recorded
- It takes less time for staff to input data and allows them to develop more information management skills
- Better quality of information through more structured data input via proforma's
- Be able to capture additional information for EMA's, Learner Support Fund and records on student discipline
- Can solve problem areas (eg double staffing) by providing additional modules to allow a fully integrated system
- Simplifies information management eg instead of 455 class codes now only one code on ISR, through a modular tiered structure
- Can monitor efficiency of classes even with mixed learning aims and individualised learning hours
- Can identify profit centres and measure budgets against income
- Staff find it easy to use
- Fields can be restricted
- Good interoperability

Rachel Brown says:

"We are getting ahead of the game, returning funding data in time and producing good quality information through the system administration and reporting tools. We have sorted out our LSC income data and can now focus on income from other sources."

The way ahead

With UNIT-e SRTS City College is exploring new ways of capturing data and delivering information to students, teaching staff and managers. They can now identify where a student is at any time – even text messaging him or her if they are late. They can let employers know immediately if an employee fails to turn up for a course. In the future they will look to exploit the system further to give each student the best and most appropriate experience possible be it from an administrative point or from an educational point of view.



UNIT-e at City College Birmingham

- ✓ Student tracking system including generation of ILR
- ✓ Report Generator (flexible reporting system which is easy to use)
- ✓ Office Builder (easier access to reporting through Microsoft office)
- ✓ Resource Manager (including timetabling)
- ✓ Online Registers (capturing attendance information real-time through a fully secure web based product)
- ✓ Finance Manager (for collecting and tracking all student debts)
- ✓ Columbus (On-line student and management information)
- ✓ Applications and Enquiries (tracking for student enquiries through to enrolment)
- ✓ Exams Manager (enabling more exam entries to be done on-line with facilities to send entries City and Guilds and Edexcel for GNVQ's)
- ✓ Dictionary Importer (to add external tables/fields into UNIT-e)
- ✓ Report View Builder
- ✓ Day view
- ✓ Intranet Builder Write Back
- ✓ Events Management