

# Case Study: Esher College develops integrated ILP and UCAS management systems

## Overview:

### Client Profile

Esher College is a leading sixth-form college serving North West Surrey. The College has some 1500 students on its role and was awarded Beacon status by the Department for Education in 2006.

### Key benefits

- Interface design in close collaboration with the college
- Dynamic integration with existing student databases using XML web services
- Access to Students via SharePoint or web
- Students' Individual Learning Plan (ILP) information is captured and managed easily
- Information is integrated onto the same easy-to-use system as other student progress information
- Captures and validates University applications/offers, employment prospects or gap year plans
- Enables tutors to agree ILP action points with students
- Helps to engage students by involving them in target setting



ESHER COLLEGE

## Introduction

Esher College is a leading sixth-form college serving North West Surrey. The College has some 1500 students on its role and was awarded Beacon status by the Department for Education in 2006.

## The Context

Parabola has been working with Esher College since 2005 as its preferred ICT partner.

Parabola delivered one of the UK's first FE SharePoint Portal for Esher in 2006 and has worked in partnership with the College to develop the student management and collaboration system, Marking Records, a flexible mark book, progress recording and ILP application, integrated with SharePoint. The application, which is now installed in three UK FE colleges, is used by Esher to enable students to manage self-assessments and to see their progress against their own targets and those of their tutors.

## The Challenge

The college has maintained student information on UCAS applications, gap year and employment prospects on paper and spreadsheets for many years. Having this information enables staff to help students with their UCAS applications and to focus on helping on helping students make successful choices for their university or employment plans.

Parabola's challenge was to provide an easy-to-use and intuitive system integrated with the existing systems. The additional functionality had to be able to be accessed by all staff in the College, and be easier to use than a paper-based system. It was also important that the students could view their records and be able to collaborate with staff whilst setting action points.

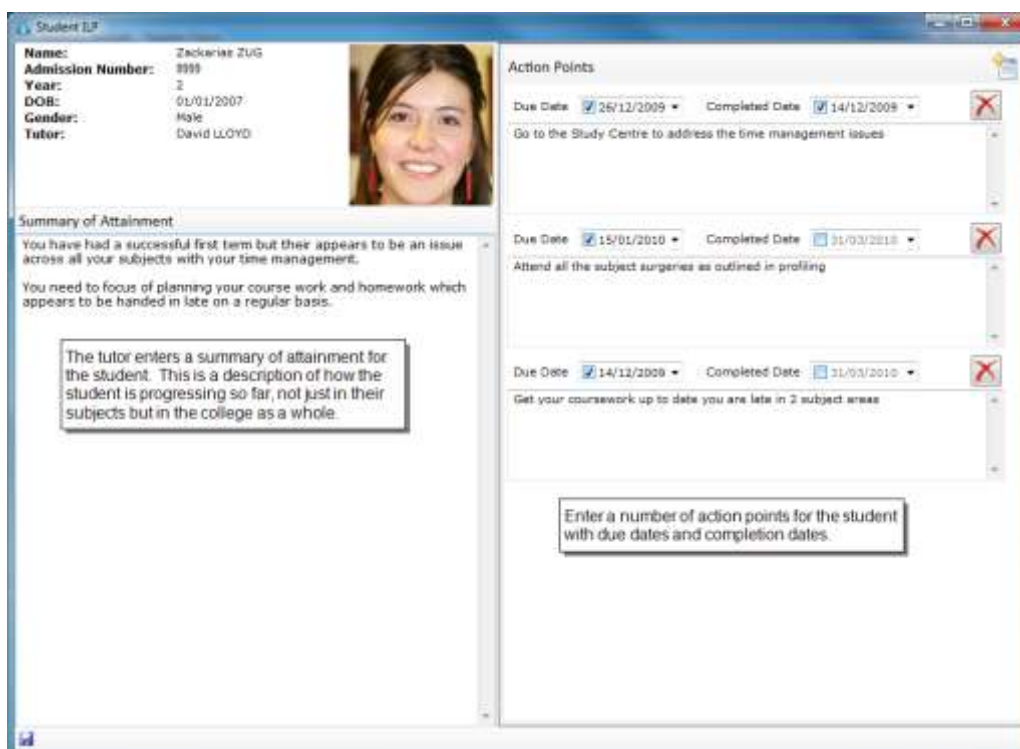
## The solution

The existing Marking Records application, developed by Esher in partnership with Parabola, was chosen as the platform for delivering the new ILP functionality because:

- Staff find it easy to use and it can be accessed from home
- It is already integrated with Esher's existing student records system and SharePoint
- The College needed to be able to view student progress information alongside UCAS and ILP data

The solution includes automated emailing that alerts students and (where relevant) teachers when actions have not been completed by their due date. For example, the system will flag up omissions, such as the ILP not being updated and will alert tutors if futures information on UCAS, employment or gap year options are not fully recorded.

The ILP and UCAS information is automatically published on the College SharePoint Intranet which students and teachers can access securely from on-campus or remotely from home.



Screenshot from final solution

## Parabola's approach

Parabola has worked in close partnership with Esher College for several years and has developed a detailed understanding of its needs – from educational, administrative and technology perspectives.

Initially, the ICT team at Esher wrote a short specification of requirements and agreed this with senior staff at the college. This was then used to brief Parabola. After agreeing a cost for the project Parabola produced a detailed functional specification for the system including mock-ups of new screen designs.

The mock-up shows a software interface with the following sections:

- Window Name:** A header for the main window.
- Student Information:**
  - Name: Anon
  - Admission Number: 01263456
  - Year: 1
  - DOB: 01/01/1990
  - Gender: Male
  - A placeholder for a student profile picture.
- ILP Progression:**
  - Checkboxes for "Is this student taking a gap year?"
  - Duration dropdown menu with options "1 Year" and "2 Years".
  - Section: "UCAS Offers - Current Attainment Points 300 (Dec. Pr. (mng))"
  - Table of UCAS offers:
- UCAS Offers Table:**

University	Course	Grade/Points
UniversityA	CourseA	A
UniversityB	CourseB	A
UniversityC	CourseC	A
- Text Entry Area:**
  - Section: "Question Responses"
  - Three questions (A, B, C) with placeholder text: "Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Nullam mattis lobortis dolor quis ultrices. Quisque lacinia nisi ut mi cursus consequat. Quisque ut nisi tortor. Proin a turpis nunc. Quisque luctus aliquam lacus vel molestie. Sed condimentum mauris ac nulla hendrerit ut volutpat arcu convallis. Mauris accumsan, felis nec aliquam aliquam, massa odio euismod."
  - Section: "Summary of UCAS position How UCAS offers tie in actual/target grades OR summary of alternative aims e.g. employment:"
  - A large empty text box for input.
- Navigation:**
  - Buttons: "First", "Previous", "Next", "Last", "Save"
  - Page indicator: "1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 of 8029"

Mock up of screen produced during design phase

Parabola's functional specification provided Esher with a design and full details of exactly what data would be input, stored and displayed. It also included a set of business rules that govern how business logic of the system works.

The enhancement to Marking Records was delivered within eight weeks.

As Parabola MD Richard Gray explained, "We have established a way of working with Esher that means that we are able to complete projects effectively and efficiently. Our awareness of their ICT strategy, including SharePoint, and our experience with other UK FE colleges mean that we understand academic and administrative requirements and can turn these into a solution quickly and effectively".

## Results

- Once the requirements and the costs were agreed, the project was delivered in 8 weeks.
- The new process has improved management of ILPs for teachers and students
- There is now a single system for all ILP, UCAS offers, employment and gap year opportunities within the College
- Staff and students have access to ILP information on-campus or remotely via the internet
- No new hardware was required and SharePoint continues to be the portal for all college systems

“This extension to Marking Records is another example of the successful partnership approach between Parabola and Esher College. It gives us a real edge in being able to easily capture, maintain and use the wide range of information needed to produce and manage students’ ILPs and the more challenging area of capturing futures information about University, work and gap year opportunities for every student”

David Lloyd, Director of ILT, Esher College

## Technology Used:

- SQL Server 2008
- Microsoft .Net 3.5
- ClickOnce deployment
- SharePoint 2007

## About Parabola

Parabola is a Microsoft Gold partner with extensive experience in delivering solutions using Microsoft .NET, SharePoint 2007 and other Microsoft technologies. Parabola has completed hundreds of successful IT projects both large and small and is a successful provider of collaborative working solutions and IT services to a wide range of SMEs and public bodies. The company has extensive experience in Further Education working for colleges including Esher College, City of Westminster College, Filton College, Kingston College and NESCOL. Other clients include the Royal Borough of Kingston and AMI Ltd.

Founded in 1999, Parabola offers consultancy, project management, systems integration, custom software development, training and support which help organisations achieve their business goals with technology. The company has Microsoft Competencies in Information Worker Solutions (SharePoint Portals and Collaboration) and Custom Development Solutions (Rich Desktop and Web Developments).

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