

CASE STUDY

Rotherham College of Arts and Technology

Rotherham College of Arts and Technology is a medium-sized further education (FE) College located across two campuses, one in Rotherham Town Centre and the other in Dinnington, with approximately 2,000 full-time and 14,000 part-time students. The College mission statement states that "RCAT exists to serve the educational, cultural, social and economic needs of the local community, and to provide further and higher educational opportunities to a national and international clientele".

"In these turbulent and ever-changing times within FE, Eclipse offers rapid responses to new requirements. A key strength is the Eclipse team – many of whom have actually worked in colleges and have a deep and detailed understanding of the business as well as software."

DAVID HULL, ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL,
ROTHERHAM COLLEGE OF ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY

Rotherham College of Arts and Technology has a history of usage of the Eclipse product having been a long term user of its predecessor Compass for Windows.

As Assistant Principal David Hull explained:
"As happy customers of the CfW product from 1997 we had a decision to take in December 2001 to move to Eclipse. We made the decision to move based on the fact we trusted and liked the staff and the relationship in place with all user colleges. We also liked the product, its ease of use and the price."

RCAT, along with all other user colleges converted to the new Eclipse product during 2002 – the year Eclipse was awarded the kite mark status by the LSC.

Rotherham College of Arts and Technology is now the largest user of all aspects of the Eclipse product and has taken a leading role in spearheading new product development in partnership with the company. Specifically it has provided a major contribution to the development of:

- Work Based Learning
- Distance Learning & Unit Tracking
- Provision Funding Planner

Rotherham College of Arts and Technology is a major reference site for Eclipse and has hosted Eclipse events and Open Days for both prospective customers and users alike.

This case study looks at different aspects of the college's use of Eclipse. Clive Procter, Database Manager, is responsible for the ILR, the production of ILR reports, ad hoc queries and the administration of the user security system within Eclipse. The introduction of the new, fast ILR routines within Eclipse has greatly assisted Clive in his role.

As Clive explains:
"The new ILR routines now take only half an hour to run on our complete database which means I can run the ILR two or three times a day if I wanted to. Generally we run the ILR once a day and the new Eclipse Scheduler functions allow me to set timed runs for early morning. The option to run the ILR for individuals and ranges of students is great and only takes seconds to complete".

David Adamson, Information Analyst, is responsible for providing standard and bespoke reports to Assistant Principals, MIS staff, Heads of Faculties, Heads of Department etc. To carry out this role, David makes extensive use of the Eclipse Transcend module.



David describes his role:

“In previous roles here at RCAT I have been responsible for data entry in a number of different, key areas of Eclipse and I am very familiar with the system overall. I have always found it very intuitive and easy to use as it is a fully integrated system. In my current role I am now responsible for providing reports to key users and other members of staff. I also carry out extensive data analysis and have access to all the Eclipse data tables. As the main user of the Transcend module I have found this to be an invaluable tool to assist me to do my job. I really like the fact that I have access to all data and can make bulk changes to the database. All changes are written to the Eclipse Audit Trail and, if I have made a mistake, I can do a full reversal and rollback which is again, fully audited. This is a great feature”.

Vanda Mangham, Data Entry Supervisor is responsible for overseeing a wide range of data entered into the system.

As Vanda explains:

“I have a good overview of the whole Eclipse product and I find it incredibly intuitive and easy to use. I love the fact that you can find out everything about a student from one place. The Eclipse Action Keys allow me to go to all key areas of the system without going back to the menu or even moving from where I am in the system. I can make multiple searches and drill downs like this in one go. I find these extremely helpful and use them all the time. The management reports are very easy to run and they provide us with up to date information at each stage of the admissions process”.

Val Porter is responsible for registers throughout the college. As a long-time, happy user of the Eclipse Registers module, Val is now overseeing the rollout of Web Registers across the college.

As Val explains:

“We were quite wary of moving to Web Registers as we were apprehensive about lecturers entering their own data. We decided, therefore, to pilot Web Registers starting with the Business and IT departments as we felt they would be more likely to take to the concept! We provided a simple set of register attendance codes for data entry and so far the pilot has very gone very well. The immediate benefits are that the attendance information is right up to date and administration time has been considerably reduced. We definitely plan to roll this out to other departments”.

Jayne Pownall is Exams Development Officer at RCAT. She believes the Exams module is one of the best features of the Eclipse product.

As Jayne states:

“We really like the Eclipse Exams module as it is easy to use and is fully integrated with the rest of the system. We like the links with enrolment and qualifications as it makes our jobs a lot easier and reduces the margin for error. We use all the EDI import and export functions of Eclipse for downloading base data which saves us an enormous amount of time in data entry and we can trust the accuracy of the data. We also use EDI for Exams entry and results. The Eclipse Exams module is always up to date and on top of any Awarding Body changes which is great for us”.

In a recent Ofsted report the college’s MIS system, Eclipse, received the following citation:

“The college's information system provides accurate and timely management information reports on a range of matters, including students' attendance, retention, funding unit achievement, and staffing information. Inspectors were able to place a high degree of reliability on the accuracy of centrally-produced students' achievement data.....”

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