

Southern Regional College

	eportfolios
Centre/Organisation	Southern Regional College
Programme(s)	Key Skills IT
Awarding Body(s)	City & Guilds and BTEC
Learner numbers	10
Contact details	Ursula Quinn, Programme Manager

Background

Southern Regional College (SRC) is one of the six new area based colleges in Northern Ireland. The college works from 6 campuses, including the main ones in Armagh, Newry and Portadown, as well as a large number of community based centres. The constituent colleges have always been innovative in their use of technology and community developments in Armagh are featured in the DVD *e-assessment systems for the future*. The new college is keen to maintain this reputation for innovation and wants to move forward with e-assessment, in particular, the greater use of e-portfolios.

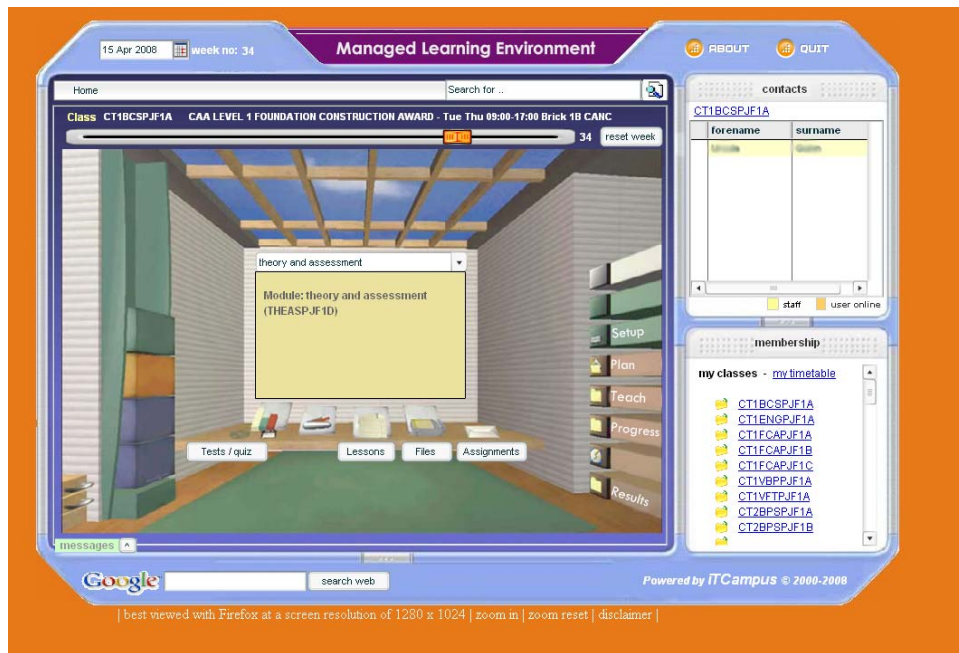
How they started

Staff delivering the Key Skills IT qualification at Portadown were keen to use their VLE system to encourage learners to take responsibility for their own learning and for the management of the evidence required for their portfolios. Since they were expecting to gain an IT qualification, it seemed both logical and a way to supplement the learning programme for learners to use an e-portfolio. Portadown uses IT Campus, an open source platform developed by Queens University. This route was chosen to provide:

- Lower costs
- Greater flexibility for development
- Scalability as use grows
- A system tailored to the needs of the college
- An integrated e-learning and e-portfolio platform
- The system is SCORM and IMS compliant

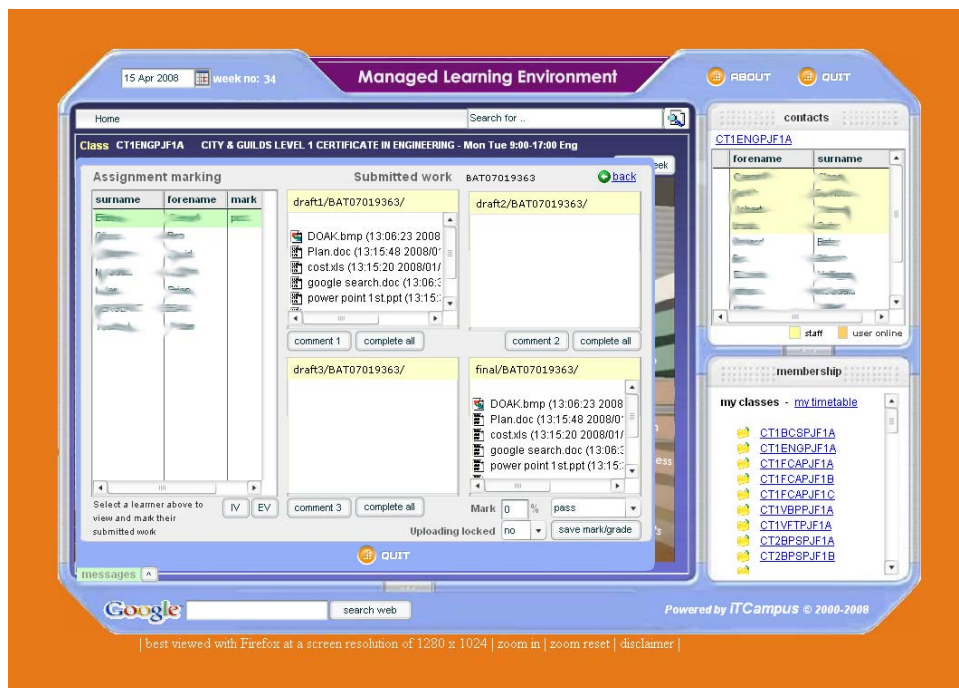
The college has put significant IT staff resources into the development of a system that meets their needs but they now feel that they have the core of a system that fully meets the needs of learners, staff and external organisations such as the awarding bodies they use.

The user interface on log-in is intuitive and a key element of success for the college was that users easily engage with the system. Many learners that would be using the system would be from hard to engage groups of, mainly, young people for whom the college experience needed to be positive and encouraging.



The system allows users to access their portfolio from any internet enabled PC. The interface is very user friendly and allows staff to:

- Track learners
- Upload assignments
- Communication with individual learners or whole groups
- Manage the assessment, internal verification and external verification functions

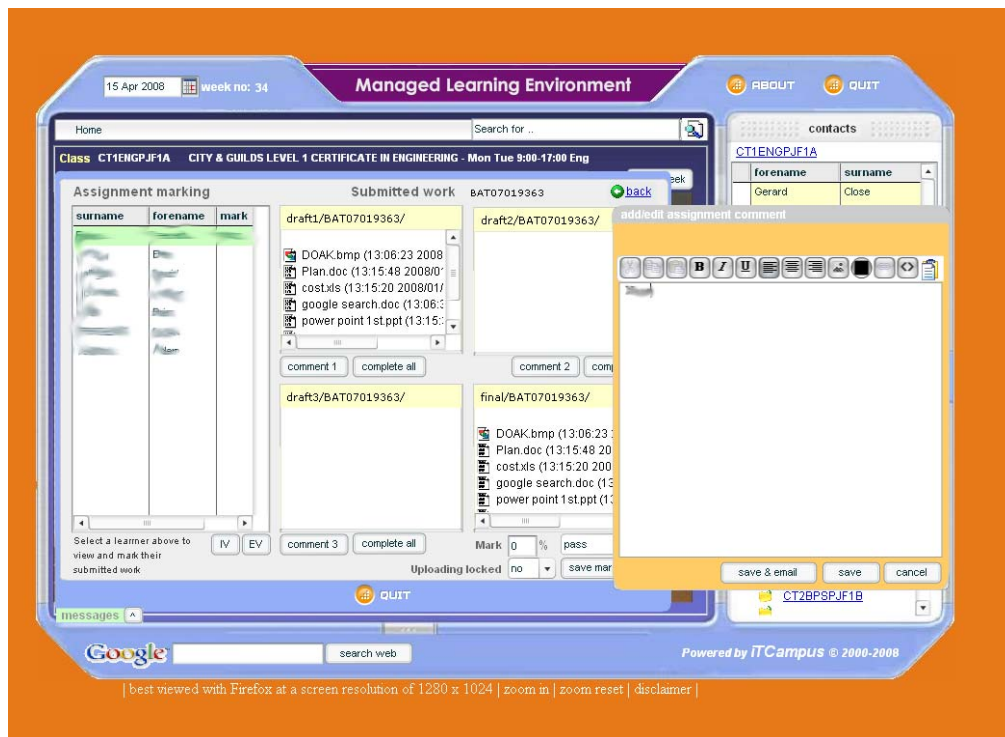


It allows learners to:

- View assignment

- Upload evidence in a variety of formats
- See reviews from assessors/teachers
- Resubmit evidence
- Submit the final version of evidence for qualification

A “four window” feature allows users to see the progress of a particular piece of evidence through the system. Essentially, learners are able to submit a piece of evidence up to three times. On each occasion the assessor can look at the evidence, make notes and comments back to the learner and finally lock the evidence for submission towards the final accreditation. The screen shot above clearly shows this process. The IT tutor for this programme is currently using a tablet PC to write the notes so that they both appear as written “post-its” to the learner and can be seen in their own handwriting to add authenticity to the process.



The college is working closely with their awarding body EV to ensure the process meets the needs of the awarding body.

The use of the system to date has demonstrated its value in engaging learners who might otherwise find building a traditional portfolio difficult. Learners have been able to undertake the whole of their Key Skills IT at Level 1 using IT by both creating the evidence electronically, capturing their learning process – for example by capturing the process used to search Google – and by electronically storing their evidence and having it assessed and verified on-line. The college knows that, for example, learners have been accessing the system from home as well as outside college lesson time.

Progress to date

The college has introduced the assessment e-portfolio into one programme to date. This reflected the particular needs and challenges of that programme and allowed

the IT staff developing the system to make changes reflect users experiences and add features whilst use was limited to a small number of learners. The college therefore feel confident that it has a system that can be rolled out further.

Next Steps

The college now wants to extend the use of the system to the other parts of the programme being undertaken by these learners and to other learners. Other ABs have been approached and have reacted positively. The college also want to extend the system to other campuses.

Through existing use, the college has also identified a number of other developments needed to enhance the system:

- Incorporating a plagiarism system
- Ensuring the system fully meets the needs of awarding bodies
- The needs of other programmes

The college is convinced that the system will, in due course, meet the needs of all their learners. They are also convinced that developing a system to meet their own needs and style of delivery has been the right way to address the issue. It recognises that, whilst the open source core system is “free”, this has and will take IT development time and also require a programme of development for staff using the system.

There are costs attached to approaching e-portfolios in this way however the college believes that the resulting system will have advantages over others being offered in the market place.