

Press Release

September 2010



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Natalie Ferer
Head of Finance
South Thames College

South Thames College rolls out Advanced Business Solutions finance system following merger with Merton College

South Thames College has gone live with a financial management system (FMS), with integrated electronic procurement, document imaging and business intelligence functionality from Advanced Business Solutions (ABS), formerly COA Solutions. The go live was in July 2010 with the second phase of the project, involving the implementation of an automated workflow solution, due for completion by October 2010.

The decision to implement ABS' FMS was driven by South Thames College's merger with Merton College, an existing ABS FMS customer. With the FMS live at South Thames College (now incorporating Merton College), administration has been cut, orders are sent to suppliers more efficiently, commitments are recorded instantly and supplier payments are timelier, enabling the finance team to add considerable value to the organisation. Moving forward, the FMS will also streamline procurement and improve both financial control and the visibility of financial information.

South Thames College merged with Merton College in August 2009 to better serve its local communities and draw on expertise from both colleges to enhance quality and the student experience. The merger prompted the need for a strategic review of the colleges' existing software systems.

Natalie Ferer, Head of Finance at South Thames College, says, "South Thames and Merton Colleges had been using two different finance systems. When we merged, the decision was taken to use the same finance system across both colleges to streamline processes and enable financial visibility. We also identified that cost savings could be achieved through the use of a single finance system and by cutting stationery, postage and document storage costs."

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Ferer continues, "On reviewing both systems, we recognised the superiority of the Advanced Business Solutions FMS as it demonstrated ease-of-use and the ability to integrate with our other software solutions. We also recognised the quality of the ABS support team."

ABS' system has automated procurement across the college and will be providing total spend visibility. As the finance team no longer needs to carry-out time consuming administration such as data entry, more focus can be given to value-adding activities. Departmental managers now have more control over the ordering process. Orders and invoices are also authorised more efficiently and goods received more promptly.

Ferer comments, "Our college-wide procurement solution makes it easy for staff to correctly order goods and services, providing us with total visibility of spend and improved financial control whilst minimising the risk of maverick spending."

As all purchase invoices are being scanned and electronically stored (using Version One's technology) and then matched against the order using the electronic procurement functionality, this is further streamlining purchase-to-pay efficiency, eliminating lost invoices whilst freeing-up space that's being used to store paper documents. The workflow solution will further automate a number of paper-based finance processes, such as cheque payment requests, expense claim submissions, sales invoice requests, internal recharges and new supplier requests.

Ferer says, "Paper invoices are no longer getting lost during the invoice approval process and the time taken to process an invoice will be greatly reduced. Moving forward, we plan to go as paperless as possible in the finance function."

With the integrated business intelligence solution, there will be a more collaborative approach to budgeting. Budget managers will soon be able to directly view and interrogate budgetary information in real-time rather than have to rely on static month-end budget reports from the finance team. With this collaborative approach, the finance team will be able to spend more time actively supporting budget managers and other staff involved in financial management, further improving the budgeting process.

Once workflow is live in October 2010, South Thames College will consider implementing ABS's budgeting and forecasting system to further streamline efficiency in the finance department.

About Business Solutions

Advanced Business Solutions, an Advanced Computer Software Group plc company, provides leading integrated business applications and services that enable public, private and third sector organisations to retain control, improve visibility and gain efficiencies whilst continually improving corporate performance. It's award-winning software systems comprise core financial management, procurement, human resource and payroll systems, integrated with a range of collaborative, document management and business intelligence solutions. It also provides managed and bureau service options.

Advanced Computer Software Group plc is the UK's leading supplier of software and IT services to the health, care and commercial sectors. It comprises 3 main divisions and has 7000 customers and 800 staff worldwide.

For more information

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