

making the case

Lizzie MacKay

BSc(Hons) Midwifery

University of Wolverhampton, UK

When I first started at University I was unaware of what an eportfolio was and what it offered to me as a learner. Learning to navigate a new type of system was a daunting prospect. An enthusiastic lecturer launched the system to my cohort of students, but I was initially confused by both the purpose of PebblePad and the navigation and operation of the system. However, learning to use PebblePad was not hard. I particularly like the adaptability and personalisation of the system.

The first benefit that I quickly grasped was the ability to save work in PebblePad and to access this from other computers and locations. It became a storage device for both assignments that I was working on and information that I wished to access at a later date.

My university tutor has set up several Blogs for students to use that act as a useful way of communication between both students and staff in a secure manor. Health education must support confidentiality; it is very useful to have a secure place to discuss experiences that is not searchable by the general public. Students and staff can share experiences, whilst maintaining confidentiality, to further their personal development in a safe respectful manner that can act to build up a useful resource for future students.

During my three-year degree course I have been able to share and collaborate on work in a group setting, enabling this to happen at a convenient time rather than all having to be available at the same time and location. I have been able to share my assignments with mentors and other external people for feedback and study skill support. Where this has worked it has saved on printing and allowed for mentors to browse my work at their leisure.

Issues encountered

There have been a few problems with sharing work with some external users who struggle to log into and navigate the system.

The spell check is not very easy to use and navigating down the page is also a problem when accessing PebblePad using different operating systems.

1. Describe one thing that you are able to do in PebblePad that you were unable to do in other tools that you had access to?

I have found PebblePad to be a great way to display my work in a variety of ways. The use of media enhances work and webfolios give ease of navigation for the reader. Submission of work via PebblePad has been invaluable during my studies. I currently travel 1hr and 45 minutes to get to the university. If I had to travel in to submit work this would cost me both in time and money for travel expenses. The use of electronic submission also has a positive environmental impact. Not all of our modules currently have exclusive electronic submission but I hope that the university will adopt this in the future.

2. If you had to encourage other students to start using PebblePad, how would you 'sell' it to them?

PebblePad is available for you to access from multiple locations and through multiple devices. It can be used as a storage device for your work, which can be displayed via multiple options. Webfolios can be a good way to display assignments with a large number of appendices allowing illustration to work and easy navigation by the reader. Media can be included on pages and can incorporate both pictures and videos with ease. Work can be shared with external users as well as internal users allowing collaboration for group work and feedback from mentors and study skill support. PebblePad can be used for submission of work having both a positive environmental, financial and timesaving impact. Submission times are also beneficial as the gateway can close at 12pm – a university registry would struggle to allow such late submission.

3. What advice would you offer to lecturers (or course designers) thinking of using PebblePad?"

This is a very beneficial tool for students of all ages. The area of collaborative work can be expanded upon to enable a greater depth of study around a topic. Collaborative group work could be very useful for revising for exams. Electronic submission benefits students and the environment and provides centralised receipts of work received.