



Using PebblePad for professional development in universities

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A case study from PebblePad's 2016 'Future Ready' conference on preparing and equipping learners for their journey.

The Context

At the University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) in Queensland, Australia, PebblePad has been introduced university-wide as a teaching and learning tool. While the focus during rollout has been on program-wide alignment and mapping to ensure a consistent student experience, attention has also been given to the ways that PebblePad can be used for professional development in the institution. This case study provides an overview of three staff initiatives.

In the first example resources have been created to support staff performance management (PPR). These templates (and eventually a workbook) were used in the Learning and Teaching office (C~SALT) for two years and then rolled out institution-wide through a series of Professional Development sessions as an option for staff to record their PPR.

The second example is a workbook developed in conjunction with Paramedicine to capture professional development (PD) by sessional staff. This workbook will be used to evidence numerous PD activities and show sessional staff a pathway to either further professional accreditation or further academic qualifications.

The third and final example is a workbook to support academics in their applications for OLT (the Office of Learning and Teaching) teaching citations. Traditionally staff struggle with gathering the evidence required to support their citation application and also with the rigorous structure of the application as a whole. This workbook has space for applicants to find and enter evidence across their teaching experience, space for early drafts and write-up and guided space to formulate a teaching philosophy.

It is hoped that through further immersion in PebblePad for professional development, the platform will be further embedded into the daily habits of academics and support staff. A potential

possible flow-on effect of this is that the use of PebblePad is normalised for academics, meaning any barriers to using with students are diminished or removed. Additionally, when academics are using the tool for their own professional development they may also see and create other ways that students might use it for their evidencing and portfolio requirements.

Example 1 – PPR Portfolio

The Problem

As an early initiative, staff in the C~SALT office trialled using PebblePad to create a portfolio for guiding the annual Performance Planning and Review (PPR) conversations.

This started as purely a training example for a new team member in order for her to become familiar with the environment and tools in template creation. The premise behind this was that it is more meaningful to create resources that have a use and purpose rather than 'dummy' resources.

The Approach

The team consulted the institution's PPR Guidebook and created templates to guide staff through the development of their PPR Portfolio. The elements included in this portfolio were a CV, a position description, a self-evaluation statement based on feedback and self-reflection, and a Future Planning section including setting goals, actions and evaluation.

Once the templates were created they were distributed to the C~SALT team through two workspaces, one for each supervisor. The eportfolio learning designer also created a series of short narrated screen casts that demonstrated how to find and fill in each template and then how to put all the individual components into a portfolio.

The Results

The original outcome of building templates to teach a new team member the PebblePad system was achieved as well as the outcome of having some examples to show prospective users. Additionally, positive outcomes included the opportunity for C~SALT staff to experience using different elements of the PebblePad system, to build their CV and to keep records of their job feedback and goals.

Lessons Learned

The first iteration had involved separate templates that team members needed to compile into a portfolio themselves. This became confusing for a lot of the team and many did not make a portfolio. In the second year the resources were released as a workbook which meant that team members just needed to fill in the pages of the workbook (which were the previous templates) and then submit the workbook. They did have to attach any CV items or a PDF of a CV and Position Description.

Using short videos demonstrating this process proved helpful for team members and this 'just in time' method of training was then used in courses where students needed to locate, edit, save and submit templates and workbooks.

When scaling the roll-out to the entire institution it was evident that a greater support and training system was needed to ensure that supervisors were able to find and engage with any submitted portfolios.

Further refinement of this process is anticipated and it is hoped that the PPR portfolio model may also be used for promotions and personal development programs.

In Brief – Showcasing 'Future Readiness' with PebblePad

- Showcasing year-to-year job feedback and achievements through the PPR portfolio.
- Evidence is gathered for professional development and promotions.
- Staff members are modelling evidence-gathering practices which leads to an authentic experience when guiding students in portfolio use.

Example 2 – Sessional Development Workbook

The Problem

The Paramedics team were looking for a way to track the PD of sessional teaching staff and to show these staff members how their PD can lead to a career in academia.

Paramedicine is a discipline where many teaching staff come directly from the field and they do not have an academic background beyond their original qualifications. This can mean that new staff do not understand how to operate in the academic environment.

A group of paramedicine academics wanted to develop a portfolio that could be given to each sessional team member to track PD and show them how to continue through their own academic journey.

The Approach

In order to enhance the quality of teaching and learning within the paramedicine programs the school of paramedicine have developed a program of PD opportunities for sessional staff.

These opportunities are categorised into three level descriptors, 'Early Career', 'Consolidating', and 'Developed', which provide guidance to those sessional staff who wish to follow a path of professional development. The path also includes gaining a Graduate Certificate in Education or a MSc in Education. It is hoped that this approach will help sessional staff start planning their growth and development as academics.

In order to evidence and track this development, a workbook was created where sessional teaching team members are able to include their CV and are then guided through pages about induction, job evaluation, professional development and career pathways. The requirements at each stage are clearly articulated and there is space to include all evidence. For example, the Induction page outlines that all new and ongoing sessional staff must complete induction training at the start of each year. The confirmation of this training is then attached to the induction page in the workbook as evidence.

On the Feedback page staff are asked to seek 360° feedback on their teaching. There are sections to evidence feedback from other sessional staff, students, a space for self-reflection and space for further feedback from other paramedics staff. All resources to assist with gathering this feedback are also located on this page.

Professional development is evidenced on the C~SALT page where staff can evidence attendance at Sessional Staff Development days (twice a year) as well as participation in the centre-led Foundations of University Teaching course. If staff undertake any other professional learning they can also include this evidence.

The final page in the portfolio is a page outlining the process of creating a Personal Development Plan (PDP). A PDP can be created during an informal meeting with a supervisor where information in the teaching portfolio is discussed. There is also a page to sign off that this conversation has taken place.

As an example – there is a guide to what is expected at each stage of the staff member's development. This is the guide for the Early Career stage:

Early Career

- Induction update completed
- Two or more examples of peer-to-peer feedback
- Two or more examples of student feedback questionnaires

- Two or more examples of self-reflection on information derived from feedback
- Engaged with Foundations of University Teaching
- Collating information in teaching portfolio
- Completed teaching portfolio

The Results

The portfolio has only recently been developed and it is intended to be introduced to the Sessional cohort for Semester Two 2016.

In Brief – Showcasing ‘Future Readiness’ with PebblePad

Providing a place to describe and support professional pathways.

Assisting staff to evidence their professional development and teaching feedback.

Encourages sessional staff to improve practice and reflect on teaching practices.

Example 3 – OLT Citation Portfolio

The Problem

When staff members are applying for prestigious teaching awards they are asked to gather evidence and reflect in order to support their applications. The former Office of Learning and Teaching (OLT) in Australia has supported teaching excellence and innovation by way of annual OLT Teaching Citations.

USC has a Grants and Awards team who support all the OLT Citation applicants through a process of mentoring, workshops, and working one on one with applicants to ensure applications are of a high standard. Applications need to follow a rigid process and academic staff often find it difficult to curate this evidence, write the reflections, keep track of the workshop and mentoring sessions, and even keep track of the tight deadlines, especially when simultaneously involved in teaching.

The Approach

In consultation with the Grants and Awards team, a workbook was created to assist with preparing a citation application. The workbook includes attachments to the OLT instruction documents and has sections for:

- Citation bulletins (internal communication).
- The application timeline and key dates.
- Workshop content to revisit and reflect on.
- Evidence gathering from peers, self and students.

- A structured space to develop a teaching philosophy and.
- Space to write up drafts of the application that can be shared with the Grants & Awards team when reviewing the applications.

Lessons Learned

The workbook was introduced during a mentoring workshop and offered as an option for applicants. As the application process was already underway, many applicants had already developed their own approach to gather this information however it is intended to introduce this workbook at the beginning of the next citations round and use it as the main source of information and application preparation.

In Brief – Showcasing ‘Future Readiness’ with PebblePad

- Assists academics to prepare for teaching awards that support teaching excellence and innovation.
- Scaffolds development of difficult concepts such as a teaching philosophy.
- Locates all application guides and support resources together.