



**Flourish: the ecpd project**

**Funded under the JISC Users and Innovation: Personalising Technology Programme.**

**Final Report**

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# 1 Executive Summary

## 1.1 Aims and Objectives

Flourish's overall aims were to ease the administrative burden experienced by learning, teaching and research practitioners at the University of Cumbria through the use of a flexible learning system, PebblePad. Flourish encouraged staff to:

- Use the PebblePad personal learning system to aggregate records of learning and achievement into e-portfolios to be used for professional purposes, including professional accreditation and academic qualification;
- Store and reflect upon evidence of their development.

As a consequence of the activities involved in meeting these aims, Flourish was able to identify:

- The challenges that arise when a personal learning system is used for continuing professional development;
- Successful approaches to introducing a personal learning system for CPD.

Flourish ran from March 2007 to March 2009.

## 1.2 Terminology: Personal Learning System vs E-portfolio

An understanding of the distinction between the two terms *personal learning space* and *e-portfolio* will enable an understanding of how Flourish met its original aims, fostered some unanticipated activities and the ethos underpinning the Project.

The term e-portfolio has been defined as:

a purposeful aggregation of digital items – ideas, evidence, reflections, feedback etc., which 'presents' a selected audience with evidence of a person's learning and/or ability. (Sutherland and Powell, 2007).

Flourish activities revealed that an e-portfolio was an essential component of a flexible, personal learning system, but not the entirety. The PebblePad system is a personal learning space that allows for the aggregation of digital items, whilst allowing the user to participate in online communities and engage in dialogue with a variety of colleagues, peers and professionals in a secure, password protected environment. With the addition of an institutional online space, a 'gateway', the user can share 'assets' (items created by individual account holders) and allow others in the same gateway to view them for a variety of purposes including assessment, accreditation or review.

Throughout this final report, the author has used the term PLS when referring to the wider PebblePad system, and the term e-portfolio when referring to the specific use of the PLS when an aggregation of evidence is needed to demonstrate proof of learning or development activities.

An understanding of the difference between a PLS and an e-portfolio has taken time to develop within the Flourish team. At the end of Flourish, the project team now has a much more sophisticated view of the software and its capabilities. In addition, the

Flourish Project has developed as this understanding has matured, allowing for opportunities not envisaged in the original bid.

### 1.3 Overall Approach

Flourish was led by a Project Manager based in the Centre for the Development of Learning and Teaching (CDLT). Flourish Project partners were Pebble Learning who provided the PLS. All staff at the University of Cumbria were offered the opportunity to have their own PebblePad account. By the end of Flourish approximately 600 staff out of a possible 1,800 had PebblePad accounts. Specific support was offered by the Flourish Project team for activities such as using a PebblePad account for the annual appraisal, application for the University of Cumbria Teaching Fellowships, submitting assignments for academic qualification and professional accreditation.

### 1.4 Key Findings

- 1.4.1 The introduction of a PLS for staff CPD does encourage academic staff to use an e-portfolio with their students.
- 1.4.2 Whilst ostensibly the e-portfolio is a personal learning tool, the institutional ecology can facilitate or militate against successful adoption by users. Therefore senior management and institutional processes need to recognize their pivotal role in supporting the use of such tools.
- 1.4.3 Although asking staff to change their habitual way of recording their CPD can be challenging, staff acknowledge that it can be done with appropriate support, and this in turn has the potential to enhance their teaching practice.
- 1.4.4 The attitude of the person receiving, assessing or introducing the PLS or e-portfolio (such as a tutor, an assessor or a line manager) is critical to whether a PLS or an e-portfolio becomes fully embedded. An increased level of personal engagement and investment with a portfolio presentation warrants greater levels of sensitivity and responsiveness from the recipient.
- 1.4.5 The use of an e-portfolio for professional accreditation is still in its infancy, with barriers (such as attitudes of mentors and accrediting bodies to a member's choice of e-portfolio) still to be overcome if e-portfolios are to be an accepted form of applying for accreditation.
- 1.4.6 Adopting an action research approach allowed the Project to adapt and change in an appropriate and timely manner. Having a flexible, iterative approach to project management allowed for revision and fresh perspectives that took advantage to unanticipated events and opportunities.
- 1.4.7 Those involved in assessing aspects of an e-portfolio need to be confident (but not necessarily skilled) IT users.
- 1.4.8 Engagement with technology through the Project has acted as a springboard to wider engagement with other technologies.
- 1.4.9 Embedding the use of a PLS for CPD involves negotiation and discussion with a variety of institutional departments including Human Resources, Marketing, Information Technology Services, Learning and Information Services and the Research Office.

- 1.4.10 There exist a number of different views of about the purpose and status of a 'project'. Any lack of consensus and any lack of clarity within the institution can impact upon success of the endeavor.
- 1.4.11 A 'project' is not necessarily the best method for introducing a change on this scale. Staff perceptions of a project mean that they are cautious and unwilling to be the test case, especially when they are taking time to document their own development. There have to be tangible and immediate benefits to engaging in this new way of working.
- 1.4.12 Formal paper-based processes do not necessarily transfer successfully into an online environment. Transferring the processes from one medium to another should be viewed as an opportunity to revise and enhance existing processes. Exactly the same is true of curriculum processes.
- 1.4.13 Transferring activities from paper-based processes to electronic ones can reveal anxieties and skills deficiencies that were often otherwise masked.
- 1.4.14 Introducing and embedding a PLS into a professional course can substantially change the learning activities, leading to re-design of activities and in the long term a revision of the learning outcomes.

## 2 Background

St Martin's College, one of the institutions that became part of the University of Cumbria in August 2007, submitted the bid to the JISC. The University is an amalgamation of St Martin's College, the Cumbria Institute of the Arts and the Cumbria campus of University of Central Lancashire. Flourish has operated in a complex situation where processes from legacy institutions have been adopted as a short-term answer whilst longer-term solutions are sought. The context is complicated by the fact that the university is highly dispersed, with seventy miles separating the two main campuses. Many colleagues were therefore (and still are) unknown to one another, even if they work in similar areas. This context can be seen in a positive light, with an opportunity to do things differently and try new approaches to existing activities.

Prior to Flourish commencing, there was nowhere for St Martin's staff to store their work, privately reflect upon their achievements and then share this with a variety of internal and external colleagues in an appropriate and timely manner. Evidence of CPD was stored mainly on paper, and most staff relied on face-to-face presentations or email with attachments to distribute information about their CPD and professional interests. When Flourish started in March 2007, a majority of academic staff at the University of Cumbria had not come into contact with an e-portfolio and were, therefore, unfamiliar with the potential benefits that e-portfolios offer.

E-portfolios are becoming an increasingly familiar tool in 21<sup>st</sup> century education. Yet despite discussions in the HE sector about the value of an e-portfolio or online space for every student (DfES, 2005) there had been minimal discussion about a similar system for academic staff. At an international level the importance of staff use of an e-portfolio was highlighted if students were going to effectively engage with the processes (Stefani, 2005, p 11) but these calls tended to be lone voices. The introduction of a PLS or an e-portfolio for staff CPD had never been considered by the legacy institutions (although there had been some use of an e-portfolio with students), and was viewed by staff as innovative and unusual. Furthermore, an e-portfolio system for students had not been considered in any depth by the legacy institutions either and at the time of gaining the JISC funding less than fifty students

at St Martin's College had e-portfolio accounts. It was, and still remains unusual within the sector, to have a PLS for staff in place before having a system for every student. Figure 1 describes the existing activities and processes prior to the start of Flourish and the Flourish responses. The introduction of a PLS for the key activities was a complete change of habit and way of working for a majority of staff, making the Flourish Project ground breaking for all the legacy institutions, which goes some way to explaining some of the challenges to implementing the aims and objectives.

Fig 1: Pre- and Post-Flourish Activities

Activity	Brief description	Pre-existing process	Flourish activities (more details in Implementation section)	Post Flourish activities proposed
<b>Appraisal</b>	Once a year.  All staff.	Paper based  Microsoft™ Word document.  Requires printing to complete process.	2007 CDLT pilot with departmental staff (n=14)  2008 Wider implementation with other departments. Offered to all staff through workshops and team away days.	Flourish lessons learnt shared with HR to inform institutional review of Appraisal in 2010.  2009 Faculty of Education using PLS to support the appraisal process offered to all staff.  Continued use of PLS for appraisal with departments who piloted it in 2007/8
<b>PgCLTinHE</b>	Programme compulsory for all new academic staff.  3 modules.  Run by CDLT.  Average cohort size 40.	Personal Academic Journal paper based. Assignments – a mixture of paper based & face-to-face observations.  VLE embedded in course structure for information & online discussions.	Staged introduction of PebblePad – see Fig 4 for more details. All students (n=83) have engaged with Pp during their study on the PgCLTinHE since the start of Flourish.	Continued use of PLS to support and record learning. All assignments will continue to be submitted via PebblePad Gateway across all three modules. All participants and staff have an account and are required to engage with the software.
<b>Professional Accreditation</b>	Numerous professional bodies requiring engagement.	Very difficult to gain an overview of the situation as the professional bodies are diverse & numerous.	HEA professional standards integrated into University's own CPD scheme – application using PLS. Number of bodies contacted for feedback on application or accreditation via e-portfolio.	Fully embedded as the required form of submission for University's own scheme. Reviewers have to engage with the applications via the PLS.
<b>Conference Sharing</b>	Staff development funded activities such as attendance at conference require dissemination report.	Written in Microsoft™ Word template. Responsibility for dissemination remains with individual member of staff.	Voluntary use of PebblePad gateways to disseminate conference learning. Some use of blogs to disseminate.	Liaison with HR to explore tactics to encourage staff to disseminate more widely.  Emerging evidence that staff are beginning to informally report back to disseminate.
<b>Team Building</b>	Complex & fast changing environment with new teams created after the merging of the University's 3 legacy institutions. Highly dispersed setting with some campuses 70 miles apart.	Some attempts at team building tried through VLE. Team meetings take place either face to face or via the institutional video conferencing suite.	Workshops arranged to introduce whole teams to PebblePad. Activities during the workshops designed to encourage team building.	Line managers enquiring how to use

### 3 Aims and Objectives

The objectives of the Flourish Project were:

- To encourage staff to use an e-portfolio to store evidence of learning and reflect upon this;
- To encourage staff to use an e-portfolio to demonstrate evidence of their development;
- To raise awareness of an e-portfolio amongst academic staff so that they can consider using an e-portfolio with their students;
- Disseminate the activities and outcomes of the Flourish Project to the wider HE community;
- Identify the challenges that arise when an e-portfolio is introduced for staff CPD;
- Trial and evaluate the use of an e-portfolio for a variety of CPD activities;
- Identify successful approaches to designing processes for introducing and embedding the use of an e-portfolio.

Underpinning Flourish was the belief that if students are going to have to engage with e-portfolios, then staff have to use one for their own learning and development, using the experience to inform decisions about e-portfolio use across the educational sector.

The project sought to achieve its aims through five key activities outlined below. Text in italics indicates where the aims changed.

- Embedding it as a fundamental element within St Martin's Post Graduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (PgCLTinHE).

This aim was achieved in incremental stages, and now, at the time of writing the e-portfolio is the backbone of the course, with students required to engage with their e-portfolio at many points throughout their study and as part of the assessment process.

- Piloting it with staff as part of the appraisal process;

Staff in CDLT piloted the use of the e-portfolio to support the appraisal process in 2007 and a wider group of staff piloted its use in 2008.

- Recording and sharing the experience of practitioners' attendance at conference through publishing to Conference Gateways, a key component within the e-portfolio system the project has chosen to use;

*Competing priorities, borne out of the creation of the new University have meant that the redesigning of the staff development funding process is still under consideration. On a more informal level, some staff have chosen to record and share their experiences, but not in the ways outlined in the original aim. Staff have preferred to use a blog, contribute to a PebblePad blog or use a webfolio and create a hyperlink to it from their personal webpage.*

- Working with professional accreditation bodies (e.g. the HEA, SEDA and CILIP) to evaluate the efficacy of applications by e-portfolio;

*This aim changed as it became apparent that University of Cumbria staff who needed to remain registered with their professional body were reluctant to try a new method of recording their CPD when the stakes were high (i.e. their professional registration). As a result of this, Flourish did contact a number of professional bodies for feedback to gain an overview of e-portfolio acceptance. In addition, the e-portfolio was used by staff who were applying for HEA membership or fellowship through the University of Cumbria's own pilot scheme, which has now been accredited with the HEA.*

- Implementing e-portfolios to smooth the forging and enhancement of cross-departmental relationships between staff within a newly formed institution.

*This aim changed to introducing e-portfolios with the aim of forging cross departmental relationships. In the context of operating in the new university, asking staff to implement a new way of working on top of other more urgent activities was often too much. In reality, many staff were so preoccupied with the formation of new faculties and departmental restructures that they did not have the time to learn a new piece of software, even though many were willing to admit that this would help with team communication in the long term.*

As Flourish matured, the Project Manager became more confident about the approaches to adopt to fulfill the aims, recognizing that a more flexible approach was necessary. This did not mean abandoning the specific activities outlined above, but adding an additional aim that allowed allow staff the opportunity to articulate how they thought an e-portfolio could support their own working practices, thus meeting the original aims, albeit not through the process of engaging in the five key activities outlined above.

## 4 Project Methodology

Flourish used an action research approach, and sought to work collaboratively with colleagues from all parts of the University. Flourish was viewed as an opportunity to scrutinize working practices in relation to the institution and develop the notion that an e-portfolio has the potential to enhance staff CPD. Using a cyclical approach, the Project's aim was to enhance practice, taking lessons learnt from one iteration to improve the next stages of the processes undertaken.

Action research is open ended. It does not begin with a fixed hypothesis. It begins with an idea that you develop. The research process is the developmental process of following through the idea, seeing how it goes, and continually checking whether it is in line with what you wish to happen. Seen in this way, action research is a form of self evaluation. It is used widely in professional contexts such as appraisal, mentoring and self assessment. (McNiff, 2002).

Within the action research framework, Flourish was conducted using an Appreciative Inquiry Approach. Appreciative Inquiry was formulated by Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) as a means of identifying and developing 'what works' rather than focusing on problems. It is described as "the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999). This approach is justified in the context that e-portfolios are likely to be an important part of the higher education landscape for years to come and that it is vital, therefore that staff engage. In addition, as Flourish is not an evaluation of the e-portfolio software chosen for the funding, this approach to improving and enhancing what already exists fits with the philosophy of the Project.

We based our evaluation on Glenaffric's [Six Steps to Effective Evaluation](#)<sup>1</sup>.

The Project was also informed by the Users and Innovation Development Model as a means of introducing and testing the use of the PebblePad system. From day one of Flourish PebblePad was introduced into real life, authentic work settings and used in place of the existing processes, albeit with a small number of users in some cases. By using the Users and Innovation Development Model as a point of reference, the Project team had a visible model that could be used as evidence of Flourish's intentions to take into account users' reactions to the processes. The model was deemed appropriate for planning stages of processes. The users had to be convinced that by trialing the software for authentic and sometimes high stakes activities, their feedback and evaluation would inform future use. The Project used the development model in the spirit in which the model was designed:

'to ensure that technology is used effectively and efficiently in the support of user and institutional goals'. (JISC, 2007)

The Flourish Project team was careful to stress to all involved in the use of the PLS and those who participated in the research, that the aim of Flourish was not to

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/programmes/reppres/evaluationhandbook.pdf>

evaluate the PebblePad software, but to evaluate the use of aspects of a PLS for CPD. Some users had difficulties distinguishing between evaluation of the processes we were suggesting the PLS be used for, and evaluation of the software.

The Flourish team welcomed feedback from users at all stages of the Project, both informally through chance conversations and comments at the workshops, and formally through anonymous online surveys, one to one interviews, focus groups and documenting the experience of using a PLS through a PebblePad blog that was shared with the Flourish Project Manager.

## 5 Implementation of Flourish

### 5.1 Overview

Flourish recognized that senior management support would be needed to ensure the success of the project and represent the stakeholders in the Project. Being able to refer to senior managers as supporters of Flourish has benefited when trying to persuade staff to explore the opportunities an e-portfolio offers them and when engaging key services. In addition to the senior management, a representative from Pebble Learning was also a Board member. The Flourish Board managed by exception.

Regular meetings between the project partners, the University of Cumbria and Pebble Learning, provided a useful method of building trust, giving feedback to one another and aligning the work being done for Flourish with the aims and objectives in the bid. There was a spirit of critical friendship between the partners that ensured that the work relationship remained cordial and mutually beneficial. Whilst Flourish aims were never concerned with evaluating the software, the Project did provide an opportunity for the software developers to gain feedback from users in authentic situations and make enhancements to the PLS. Both the concept of e-portfolios, a PLS and the PebblePad software continues to evolve. In this context it is possible to point to a number of PebblePad developments influenced by the needs of Flourish users. A list of the enhancements is included in Appendix A.

At the outset Flourish had to address issues such as data protection and the implications if defamatory, obscene or unlawful content was published or shared by account holders. In liaison with the University of Cumbria's data protection officer, Flourish and Andrew Charlesworth from JISC Legal, an overview of the information legislation implications of e-portfolios was written. (See Appendix B).

Offering all staff, including administrative support staff, a PebblePad account paid dividends as many administrative staff were in a position to take a lead within their department with initiatives such as a newsletter to encourage a sense of belonging to a team. Staff were alerted to the fact that they could have a PebblePad account through global emails, leaflets and all new academic staff were approached by Flourish staff directly.

Flourish found that staff had concerns or identified challenges regarding the use of the PLS, namely:

1. Length of time they would be able to access their account and therefore the value of engaging with the software and the longevity of their account.

The perception that Flourish was a temporary 'project' has been detrimental to ambitions of Flourish. In email correspondence and in University committee minutes, key university staff, external to the Flourish team, have described it as a 'small scale pilot'. In reality, Flourish was a 'pathfinder' exercise designed to end with e-CPD as a required and accepted part of the culture at the University of Cumbria.

Flourish has responded to these concerns in a number of ways:

- Reassurances have been offered to staff from the outset about the reliability of exporting their work from the PLS and storing the whole e-portfolio locally. In this way they can continue to access the information created in their e-portfolio.
  - The Flourish Project Manager worked to ensure that decision-making University of Cumbria committees are aware of the Flourish work and the importance of continuing to fund a PLS for staff. The Project Manager has used her influence to ensure that e-portfolios for both staff and students remain on the agenda of committees such as the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee.
  - The anxieties expressed by staff revealed a lack of confidence or knowledge in the University's procurement processes, particularly for the purchase of educational software. This led to the Flourish team developing a more generic process designed to address these anxieties and put in place a series of processes that supported technology enhanced learning throughout the whole of the University. At the time of writing this, the new procedures are being approved by formal University committees with the aim of being policy in 2009.
2. Even though PebblePad uses the most widely available version of Flash Player (v7 released 2003) not all staff PCs had the required Flash Player installed to run the PebblePad software. When they returned to their workstation and found that they couldn't successfully log on, they blamed their own lack of IT skills and often gave up trying to use the software at this point. This barrier did have an impact on user engagement, delaying appraisals if the e-portfolio was going to be used and creating a time barrier for staff who attended a workshop and wanted to try out the software as soon as they returned to their own workstation.

Flourish responded to this by:

- Adapting the PLS log on page to include information on how to identify whether Flash Player was installed, and instructions for downloading it or requesting that it be downloaded.
- Liaising with ICT services to ensure all staff PCs automatically had Flash Player installed.

I didn't have the right version of Flash on my PC here, so that was a nightmare because I couldn't get into it anymore. I couldn't understand what it was to begin with so then I eventually found out, then I tried to get Flash, so there was a little bit of a hiatus where I didn't use it. And I discovered the other day, when [a colleague] got a laptop out... I recognised this screen of bubbles so I said, "You haven't got the right version of Flash on there." feeling very technical, and I couldn't believe that there could be a laptop you could borrow that doesn't have the most up to date stuff on there. That's the trouble, technical hitches. I would have been really fed up if I'd have got that if I'd set time aside for something.

Andrew, University of Cumbria Lecturer

One of the biggest challenges facing the Flourish team was account creation as there was no automated way of doing this available with existing University of Cumbria systems. Accounts created for staff were done manually by personnel in the Flourish Project Team and took up considerable time for the Project administrator. Flourish purchased a single sign on solution from VLE Genius (<http://www.vlegenius.com/jsp/ssogenius.jsp>) with the aim of enabling users to move from their PebblePad account into Blackboard and visa versa, without needing to login. Whilst VLE Genius did successfully enable single sign on, the decision was made by the Flourish Project Manager not to install the Building Block on the live Blackboard server, because concerns were raised about the ease with which any member of staff with Blackboard system administrative rights could potentially mimic another user's log on and thereby access that user's PebblePad account.

On the PebblePad system, once a user has changed their password this information encrypted. The VLE's system administrator's ability to access other users' accounts in a VLE is one of the things that sets them apart from systems like PebblePad This was seen as a risk particularly when feedback from the appraisal pilot highlighted concerns about privacy and security. This issue of privacy and security was also raised in conversations with the Centre for Recording Achievement with anecdotal evidence that employment unions were expressing concerns employers hosting their employees' e-portfolios. Pebble Learning hosted the e-portfolios for the duration of the Flourish Project.

Processes for encouraging staff to explore the benefits of using the PLS included self enroll workshops; e-learning retreats; small grants to explore use of the PLS alongside existing working practices; animations explaining the benefits of using an e-portfolio for CPD. These processes can be viewed as key to the process of embedding an innovation within an institution and are indicative of the 'grass roots' approach adopted by Flourish initially.

Fig 2

Type of activity	Benefits	Drawbacks
Workshops	Effective method of introducing an e-portfolio	A slow way of engaging whole departments. Took months for the Flourish message to percolate through to a wide range of colleagues
	Well attended by interested individuals and e-learning champions	Labour intensive for Flourish staff, particularly in a dispersed environment and follow up support difficult to sustain in remote campuses
	An effective means of publicizing Flourish and its aims in a low risk environment	
E-learning retreat (discussed in more detail below)	Staff removed from day-to-day distractions	Difficult for staff to maintain enthusiasm once they return to their work
	Intensive specialist support given to attendees	Financial cost can be high
	User community fostered & nurtured	Not accessible to all staff (due to work or personal commitments)

	Cross fertilization of ideas amongst users	
Animation (short animation made available on You Tube). Go to <a href="http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=6B3tujXlbdk">http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=6B3tujXlbdk</a> to view.	Easy to access for staff with an internet connection	Follow up information/support necessary, as the animations are such quick introductions.
	Provides a quick overview of the benefits of an e-portfolio for CPD	

## 5.2 E-learning Retreats

Flourish staff knew from the outset of the Project that engaging staff in new practices and habits would not be easy. Lack of time is frequently cited as a reason for not engaging in e-learning practices. As a response to this, Flourish planned for and arranged two e-learning retreats in 2007 and 2008 at a location away from the usual work setting. The aims of the retreat were to give teams of staff the opportunity to explore the PLS in a low risk, informal setting.

Successful applicants had to be part of a team and prior to the retreat they had to identify an area of their working practice to concentrate on and develop this idea collaboratively whilst at the retreat. Activities on the retreat were designed to have multiple objectives – to learn how to use the software, to build a team spirit and to develop their team project plans.

In 2007 a total of four teams with 14 participants attended. For a summary of the 2007 retreat go to: <http://tinyurl.com/2007retreat>

In 2008 a total of four teams with 9 participants attended. For a summary of the 2008 retreat go to: <http://tinyurl.com/cqxyt5>

### Outcomes:

Staff confidence in using the PLS grew, some choosing to start using it with students, others continuing to use the PLS for the activity identified for the retreat. Staff gained an overview of how e-portfolios are being used across the sector, not just at the University of Cumbria. Some attendees have developed an intense interest in e-portfolios, attending e-portfolio/e-learning conferences and contributing to internal debates about the use of e-portfolios with students across their faculty.

Staff recognized that meeting other teams from other faculties broadened their views of the organization and gave them an opportunity to learn how colleagues in other disciplines approach CPD and Personal Development Planning. This interest has been sustained after the retreat with requests for a user group to be set up. Overall, all participants agreed the two day retreat was an excellent staff development opportunity.

Since the last retreat, one faculty has decided to run their own two day retreat to examine the use of the PLS for monitoring and sharing teaching practice internally.

## 5.3 Grants to support staff

As Flourish matured, it became apparent that staff needed motivation to explore their own use of a PLS, and for this exploratory work to have as much value as the five key activities identified by the bid authors. The Flourish Project team were sensitive to the tension between a PLS where the user was in control and the prescribed

activities the Project was asking staff to engage in. To this end, in the second year of Flourish, academic staff were invited to apply for funding allowing them time to investigate how a PLS could best enhance a specific aspect of their practice and give regular feedback to the Flourish Project Manager via the PebblePad blog tool. Ten successful applicants were encouraged to give feedback in a manner that promoted meta-cognition and a developed an awareness of the use of an e-portfolio for personal development. They were required to write a blog entry once a week describing how their specific use of an e-portfolio was progressing and share this with the Flourish Project Manager. Projects included:

- a) using an e-portfolio to support research within the Faculty of Health;
- b) using an e-portfolio to support collaborative research in the Faculty of Education;
- c) exploring ways of documenting and reflecting on working practices in the Faculty of Education;
- d) using an e-portfolio to support the peer observation process in the Faculty of Business, Social Science and Sport;
- e) using an e-portfolio in the run up to appraisal (NB not necessarily *for* appraisal) in the Faculty of Education;
- f) using an e-portfolio to record current research progress in the Faculty of Health.

These small scale projects have encouraged the staff involved to think about how to use the PLS effectively, compare it with other applications, such as freely available Web 2.0 tools, and consider their own very personal development.

#### **Outcomes:**

Staff have grown in confidence using the PLS for their own development. Staff are now confident users of the PLS and most feel that they would use an e-portfolio with their students. Those who didn't want to use the PLS with their students either didn't like the design of the software (one person) or were comfortable using the PLS for their own development, but didn't want to introduce another new tool into their teaching practice (one person).

Staff who blogged regularly reported that they were becoming keen to explore other technologies to support learning such as using audio files to give student feedback via a blog and using vlogs to communicate with their students. The blogs shared with the Project Manager recorded staff attempts to innovate their practice with newer technologies and the Project Manager emerged as a key part of the support needed to 'problem solve' when participants tried a new method but encountered problems implementing their ideas.

Staff who used the PebblePad blog regularly commented that keeping this record did help them manage their work either by being able to record and reflect upon how much they were doing, or be able to use their activity in their PLS as evidence when appraised (e.g. when using the PLS to document research activities). Staff acknowledged that it hadn't been easy to keep a blog, but towards the end of the required period of eight weeks, they were beginning to feel they had formed a habit of recording their activities and were hopeful that they would continue with this way of recording their progress and development. Those who did blog regularly did appreciate feedback comments from the Project Manager. Only one member of staff was negative about the process of using the PLS, and in particular PebblePad for this purpose. This member of staff was a regular user of social networking sites such as Ning and whilst he valued the process of assessing PebblePad, he did not find it as useful for his activities as the Web 2.0 tools he was regularly using. Towards the

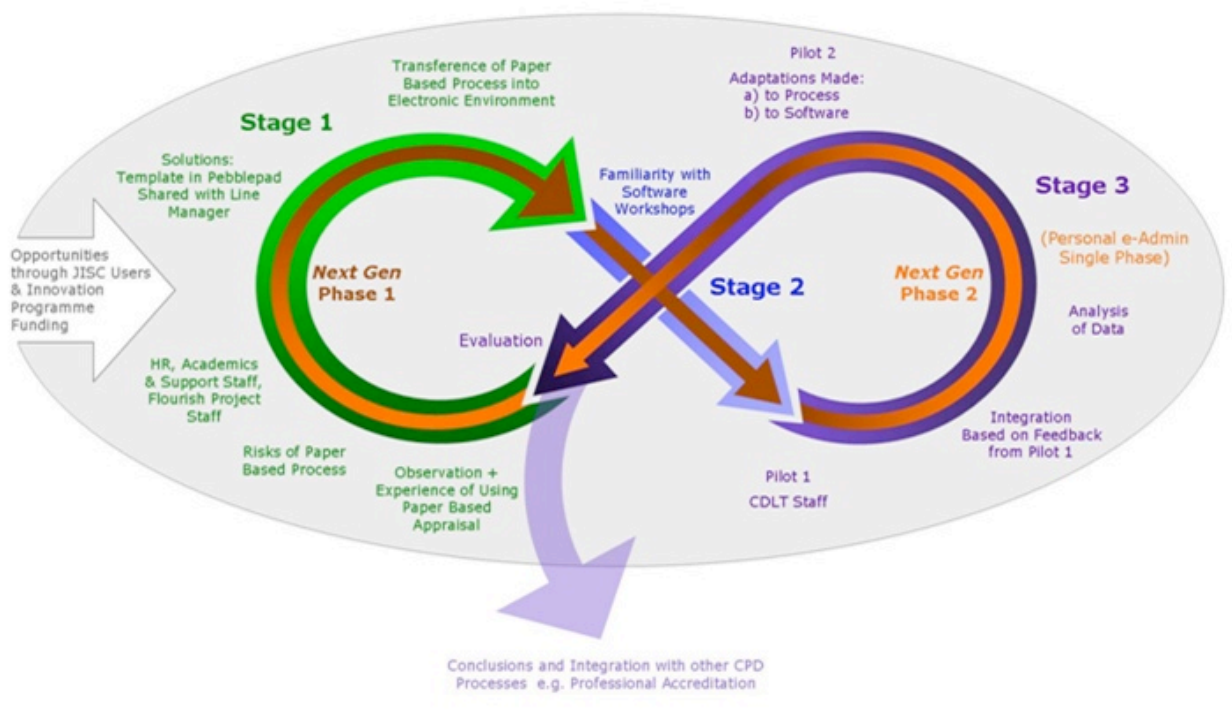
end of the period of blogging, the Faculty of Education announced that it was encouraging staff to use the PLS for appraisals. At this point the staff using PebblePad could begin to envisage how this tool could ease the administrative burden and reduce duplication of effort whilst demonstrating how they were meeting their objectives.

## 6 Implementation of specific work packages

### 6.1 Appraisal

University of Cumbria Human Resources department were keen to encourage staff who voluntarily wanted to complete their annual appraisal using PebblePad. Flourish transferred the existing, paper based appraisal document to a template in the PLS (HR had requested that no wording be changed). In 2007 a small-scale pilot was implemented within CDLT where all departmental staff (16 in total) were encouraged to use the PLS to complete their annual appraisal. Figure 2 shows how Flourish used the Users and Innovations Development Model in the local context.

Fig 2



Based on the feedback from Pilot 1 adaptations were made to the process of using the PLS for appraisal. Developments and enhancements in the software implemented in the interim period between 2007 and 2008 also helped to improve the process. Figure 3 is a summary of the challenges identified in Pilot 1 and the responses implemented before Pilot 2 that involved a wider range of academic and administrative staff, all of whom were volunteers.

Fig 3

Challenges	Steps taken in Stage 3 to overcome challenges	Comments
Queries about security and privacy	'tick box' included to confirm that the appraisal was completed by line manager and appraisee. This replaced the signature.	Staff remained uncertain about the validity of a document without a signature.
	'Gateway' history tool designed by PebblePad developers & installed – allowing gateway owners to track the history of administrators' viewing permissions	Satisfactory way of tracking permissions granted to view and when these were allowed.
Confusion over process and non completion of appraisal in PebblePad	More information on process through tip sheets to line managers & appraisees	Confusion reduced. However, for line managers the process still allowed for a variety of appraisal formats including paper. Time spent on reading appraisals submitted therefore increased.
Line manger support necessary	Human resources voiced support for using PebblePad through appraisal training workshops. Information sheets handed out to line managers attending appraisal training.	Faculty of Education's announcement that all line managers have to accept appraisals submitted using PLS has increased staff confidence that PLS is worth using.

### Outcomes:

The reactions from staff to using the PLS for appraisal have been mixed. Because engagement in the e-portfolio appraisal process was voluntary, line managers frequently had to review two different types of appraisal – the e-portfolio one and the paper based one. This adds to the administrative burden for the line manager, rather than reduce it.

Because it's a kind of personalisable environment, everybody tends to do things in slightly different ways which is fine when you're an appraisee because you feel like you've got a lot of flexibility, but if you're the appraiser what I've realised is that it actually requires you to be even more competent with PebblePad and I had a conversation with my line manager who said the same and he was fairly...grumpy about that.

*Jane, Principal Lecturer, University of Cumbria.*

The largest of the five faculties in the University, the Faculty of Education, made a decision to encourage staff to use PebblePad to support the annual appraisal process has been received well by faculty staff who are already using the PLS for their own reflections. Users could see the benefits of using the PLS for multiple purposes.

Firstly, the good news: we can use PebblePad for the appraisal process!... My project has been based around me managing and monitoring my performance in relation to my new role. This occupies about

20% of my workload and as such will form an equally large part of my appraisal. The fact that all the work that has gone into this project will have another use is just fantastic!

*Ben, Faculty of Education Lecturer who received funding from Flourish to record his performance*

Staff who have used the PLS for their appraisal commented that over time it is becoming easier to administer their appraisal and share evidence of their development with their line manager.

Staff are reluctant to use the PLS for appraisal if they anticipate resistance to its use from their line manager. This is a major reason for non-engagement cited by those staff who had the opportunity to use the PLS for appraisal, but chose not to. Thus the attitude of the e-portfolio recipient was critical to whether users adopted this technology to support their appraisal. Emerging from the feedback was the need for recipients of the e-portfolio appraisal to be sensitive when dealing with this new style of presentation. Some appraisees had invested considerable time in creating their e-portfolio appraisal and needed positive feedback from their appraiser about this effort.

Being unable to change the wording in the paper based appraisal document when transferring the process into an electronic environment resulted in a clumsy process. The findings from Flourish are going to inform HR's review of the appraisal process in 2010.

## 6.2 Post Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education

Using the PLS to support learning on this professional course was seen as an opportunity for future academic staff to become acquainted with an e-portfolio through their own studies. Through a requirement to create and submit their assignments participants experienced first hand the PLS in an authentic context. Figure 4 illustrates the stages of embedding the use of PebblePad into the PgCLTinHE throughout the duration of the Flourish Project.

Fig 4

<b>Research Yr 1</b>		<b>Research Yr 2</b>		<b>Research Yr 3</b>	
Jan 07 cohort/802 submission in Jan 08		Jan 08 cohort/802 submission in Jan 09		Jan 09 cohort/whole programme in June 2010. Pp embedded in all activities.	
<b>801 Pp activities</b>	<b>Support Method</b>	<b>801 Pp activities</b>	<b>Support Method</b>	<b>801 Pp activities</b>	<b>Support Method</b>
Voluntary use of e-portfolio for personal academic journal	Timetabled face to face writing sessions in PC lab x 1	Reflective writing assignment.	Timetabled face to face writing sessions in PC lab x 1  Tutor support including formative feedback.  Tip sheet.	Reflective writing assignment.	Timetabled face to face writing sessions in PC lab x 1  Tutor support including formative feedback.  Tip sheet.  Pen Drive with 'click me' direct link log & online tip sheets plus portable apps.
				Peer observation process (prep & reflection)	Tip sheet & email reminders
				Summative assessment – critical evaluation of teaching plans	Tip sheet  Tutor support
<b>802 Pp activities</b>	<b>Support Method</b>	<b>802 Pp activities</b>	<b>Support Method</b>	<b>802 Pp activities</b>	<b>Support Method</b>
		<i>Summer '08 Change of course leader</i>		<i>Proposed</i>	

Patchwork Text assignment	Timetabled face to face writing sessions in PC lab x 1  Tip sheet  Tutor support including formative feedback.  Lunch time trouble shooting sessions.	Peer observation process (prep & reflection)	Tip sheet & email reminders	Peer observation process (prep & reflection)	Tip sheet & email reminders
		Patchwork Text assignment	Timetabled face to face writing sessions in PC lab x 4  Tip sheet  Tutor support including formative feedback.	Patchwork Text assignment	Timetabled face to face writing sessions in PC lab x 4  Tip sheet  Tutor support including formative feedback.
<b>803 Pp activities</b>	<b>Support Method</b>	<b>803 Pp activities</b>	<b>Support Method</b>	<b>803 Pp activities</b>	<b>Support Method</b>
Voluntary use of e-portfolio for personal academic journal	Upon request	Formative sharing of key stages of research process	Timetabled face to face writing sessions in PC lab x2. Formative feedback opportunity. Tip sheet	Formative sharing of key stages of research process	Timetabled face to face writing sessions in PC lab x2. Formative feedback opportunity. Tip sheet
		Summative written report submission & optional hyper link from e-portfolio to digital recording of presentation	Tutor support and advice regarding appropriate way of presenting report within their e-portfolio.	Summative written report submission & optional hyper link from e-portfolio to digital recording of presentation	Tutor support and advice regarding appropriate way of presenting report within their e-portfolio.

In Research Year One the participants' reaction to using PebblePad for assessment was mixed and ranged from being enthusiastic to being resistant. Some enjoyed the experience and saw immediate benefits and conveniences, viewing its use as a 'positive experience'. They liked being able to hyper-link to other sources of information and they liked having all their work in one online space. A small number of participants could not see the benefits of storing and reflecting on their work in this manner.

I did not feel that there was any benefit to using an e-portfolio. An email with a Word document attached would have exactly the same effect. The only possible benefit I can see is saving paper and hence the environment.

*University of Cumbria PgCLTinHE student*

Some saw the process of creating their assignment in the PLS as 'labour intensive' and the necessity of learning to use the software as 'wasted time'. This has raised the question amongst the PgCLTinHE tutors of whether the programme learning outcomes needed to be revisited and the obligation courses such as the PgCLTinHE have to introducing new technologies to new HE practitioners. Many of the PgCLTinHE tutors felt that it would be negligent if participants were not introduced to a variety of technology enhanced learning tools, particularly as flexible and distributed learning is central to the University of Cumbria's strategic vision.

Based on feedback from Research Year One, activities and resources were increased (see Fig 4) in stages throughout the duration of the Flourish Project, leading to full integration and embedding of the PLS as a central part of the student experience.

There were four primary reasons behind this thorough embedding of the e-portfolio into the PgCLTinHE :

- Students received a signal that PgCLTinHE tutors were committed to the use of an e-portfolio and were therefore more confident when using it;
- Students requested that its use was more integral to the course through the Course Consultative Committee;
- Students could use the e-portfolio to support their application for accreditation with bodies such as the HEA and the NMC.
- The course team saw opportunities for efficiencies.

Course tutor reactions to using the e-portfolio for assessment has been mixed. The permanent course team was positive about the convenience of having the assignments easily accessible from any PC with an Internet connection.

I would say that I definitely found it an easier process with it all being in one place...And where the student had used the technology to its full capacity or at least near its full capacity by hyperlinking evidence, it did just become a richer document. It takes away that need to flick to the back and find the appendices, because you can even just hover over the hypertext and it will show you what that document is anyway, you know.

*Debbie, PgCLTinHE Tutor*

However, engaging associate tutors has been challenging, particularly as some of them were at a distance from the University and did not attend training. Associates who embraced the use of the e-portfolio and used it to give regular feedback to students had used PebblePad before for non PgCLTinHE related activities and were on the 2007 E-learning Retreat. The attitude of the tutors in embedding a new way of recording learning and submitting work for assessment is critical.

## Outcomes:

The course team have developed an understanding of how to effectively use a PLS to support learning and improve assessment processes. This process has moved from using PebblePad to enhance one assessment activity to a thoroughly integrated and embedded approach that can now be truly referred to as a PLS. It is anticipated that participants will continue to use the PLS to support their CPD activities once their studies have finished.

All participants have now had experience of using the PLS to support their learning, regardless of their attitude to technology or their level of IT confidence. The course team has ensured that participants are familiar with new technologies and the benefits they offer and are capable of using innovative ways of supporting their own students.

The use of PebblePad for collecting assessment has dramatically reduced the workload for the administrative staff, with a large amount of time saved by not having to collect paper portfolios and photocopy these for second markers and external examiners.

I have saved stacks of time...I have had to send nothing in the post the External examiner and have had nothing to physically photocopy. We have saved on postage and copying costs and not to mention the hours of work that is normally needed to prepare samples, marksheets etc.

*Zoe, PgCLTinHE Course Administrator*

Over time, participants have started to enquire how they can use an e-portfolio with their students. A small number have started to use the PLS to enhance their own practice, using it to communicate with external colleagues. Now that the Faculty of Education have announced that staff can use the PLS to support their appraisal, some participants are going to link their appraisal to the work they have done in the PgCLTinHE, demonstrating how they have met the previous year's performance objectives to their line manager.

Introducing and then embedding the PLS into the PgCLTinHE has provoked a review of the purpose of the VLE. The distinction between the two learning systems has been made explicit to both the course participants and the tutors, and subsequently some activities have been changed substantially. An example of this is the peer observation. Originally a Microsoft Word template was downloaded from the VLE, printed out and filled in by the observer during the observation. Now, the participant has to fill in a form hosted within their PebblePad account and share this with the observer prior to the observation, explaining to the observer the background to the lesson. Responsibility has moved from a tutor driven activity where the participant feels judged to an activity that is much more equitable and an opportunity for dialogue. The peer observation documentation and any subsequent dialogue through PebblePad can then be used as evidence in an assignment.

Through using the software, the PgCLTinHE tutor team are now in a position to fully participate in any evaluation of e-portfolio or PLS systems and construct criteria to inform decision making regarding the procurement of a PLS.

## 6.3 Professional Accreditation

### 6.3.1 University of Cumbria Teaching and Learning Portfolio

The Teaching and Learning Portfolio project in 2008 was part of the University's wider strategy of developing the quality of teaching and learning; it was aimed at supporting the professional development of staff with more than three years experience in higher education. The process was designed to complement and inform the annual appraisal system.

The University's Professional Standards are now aligned with the UK Professional Standards Framework. The Higher Education Academy has accredited the process so that successful staff now also gain national recognition and the status of Associate (Standard 1) or Fellow (Standard 2) with the Academy.

All applicants (n=6) for this review process used the PLS to submit their application to a PebblePad gateway, where reviewers could access and assess the work and make comments.

The process provided an excellent opportunity for genuine reflective practice. I was surprised by the range of evidence which I could identify and to which I could link electronically, in order to demonstrate my commitment...this is a different kind of approach to that which is normally required for promotion or appointment, and I found myself exploring connections between my different roles, both past and present, which was a very positive and developmental experience.

*Harriet, University of Cumbria Learning Co-coordinator*

The University of Cumbria will now continue to use the PLS to accept applications for the professional standards.

#### **Outcomes:**

Some staff who were introduced to the PLS through this activity have continued to use the PLS for a range of purposes, including using it with their students and for team building activities with colleagues. Staff who were successful in their application were very proud of their e-portfolio and three of them readily agreed to their application being used as a Flourish e-portfolio exemplar and made available to a wide audience. These exemplars have given other practitioners an insight into what an e-portfolio is and looks like in practice.

### 6.3.2 Overview of using an e-portfolio for professional accreditation in a wider context.

The overall picture whether a professional body accepts an e-portfolio application is mixed and varied. The number of staff applying for professional accreditation during Flourish was difficult to determine, partly due to the complex situation the Project was operating in. For this reason, figure 4 shows a summary of the current situation regarding application for professional accreditation using an e-portfolio.

Fig 4

Professional Body contacted	E-portfolio submission allowed	Restrictions on e-portfolio type	Comments
Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain	Yes	Only RSPGB tool permitted	Applicants working in an HE institution with an e-portfolio not approved have to upkeep 2 e-portfolios.
Chartered Society of Physiotherapy	Yes	None	Use of recommended e-portfolio system not compulsory
Nursing & Midwifery Council	Yes	None	Verbal reassurances given that any e-portfolio would be accepted.
Certified Member of the Association of Learning Technologists	Yes	None	Variety of methods encouraged. Four applications from the wider Flourish team have been submitted to ALT and CMALT status conferred.
Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals	Piloting e-portfolio submission		CILIP has shown an interest in the Flourish findings.
Higher Education Academy (Individual Route)	No		Applicants download a document from HEA website and fill it in.

if I want to use PebblePad (which isn't approved [by my professional body] as far as I know) then I have the dilemma of reproducing stuff within 2 repositories and that defeats the time saving advantage of e-portfolios.

*Duncan, University of Cumbria Lecturer*

## 6.4 Team Building

The complexity of the context within which Flourish was operating impacted upon this objective. Originally the Project team saw the creation of the University of Cumbria as an opportunity to use the PLS to build newly formed teams. In reality it was a challenge to ask staff to use new software for this purpose when there were so many competing priorities. Flourish tried to persuade staff to create a good team atmosphere through:

- The creation of a regular departmental newsletter;
- Publishing profiles of research interests and roles responsibilities on the web.

Neither of these activities was embraced by the staff on a large scale. Both activities were viewed as a worthwhile activity, but staff just didn't engage when it came to creating a newsletter or a profile. In addition, staff were reluctant to publish their profiles on the web because of the permission route necessary to complete this.

There were some successful team building activities, but these centered on face-to-face workshops or the e-learning retreat. These activities included:

- Workshops designed to teach teams how to use the software, whilst doing activities on PebblePad that encouraged team building (e.g. creating an online introduction and sharing it with a colleague);
- Asking for team applications to the e-learning retreat;
- Using the 'gateway' function in PebblePad to share resources used for team activities such as the 'Carpe Diem' style 2 day intensive course design events and then recording and reflecting on this engagement activity;

There are some indications that the software is being used to build teams inadvertently and that it will take time for staff to realize that a PLS has benefits such as increased communication. A specific objective of 'team building' is a nebulous one and it takes a team leader to realize that they need a tool to create a team or enhance existing working relationships before they engage with this solution.

## **Outcomes**

Although this aim was not fully met in a way envisaged in the original bid, over time, we have learnt and identified that using a team approach to develop an understanding of a PLS has been a key strategy for embedding use of the software. Through other key activities Flourish has made good use of existing teams to develop an understanding of a PLS.

6.5 In some areas Flourish exceeded the objectives outlined in the original plan. Examples of where this happened are:

### 6.5.1 University of Cumbria Teaching Fellowships

University of Cumbria Teaching Fellowship were made via PebblePad in 2008 and submitted to a gateway, which could then be accessed by the assessors, (senior managers). Advantages to asking applicants to submit in this way were a reduction in paperwork, ease of administration for support staff and facility to use a variety of multimedia files as evidence. Whilst the applicants found the process unchallenging, it is difficult to know if the process of applying for a teaching fellowship via an e-portfolio deterred some staff from applying. In 2008 there was a significant drop in applications (from 18 the previous year to just 9 in 2008) however, this could have been due to the complex and changing situation within the newly formed institution and all the associated demands made upon staff at the time. This activity did reveal that reviewers of the applications needed to be confident IT users in order to:

- a) access the system and
- b) realize any efficiencies.

## 6.5.2 Institutional e-portfolios:

In two cases, the PebblePad software was used to collect, collate and demonstrate institutional information. In 2007 the Human Resources used PebblePad to collate all of the HEFCE SAT information and to the best of our knowledge the University of Cumbria were the only HEI in the country to have done this. The process of collating the SAT information involved 12 members of staff. Overall these staff were positive about the experience of using PebblePad for this purpose, commenting that it saved them considerable time. This way of using the software, as a sort of institutional e-portfolio to collect evidence and then display it for formal approval was an unintended outcome of the Project.

## 6.5.3 HEA/JISC Benchmarking Activity

In the second case, when the University of Cumbria participated in the JISC/HEA Benchmarking activity PebblePad was used to collect data and responses and disseminate the information.

# 7 Outputs & Results

## 7.1 Outputs from Flourish include:

1. Processes for embedding the use of a PLS for CPD, including organizing and running an e-learning retreat, distributing small grants to motivate staff to change their existing habits of recording their CPD, liaison with senior personnel from a variety of services and faculties, running regular drop in workshops for all staff, running collaborative events to introduce whole teams to a PLS.
2. Two short animations '[E-portfolio for Starters](#)'<sup>2</sup> and '[E-portfolios for Managers](#)'<sup>3</sup> available on You Tube. These animations have been reviewed by practitioners from around the globe, ensuring that Flourish dissemination has been far reaching.
3. A series of video case studies illustrating how an e-portfolio can enhance CPD for staff available at [www.flourishproject.org](http://www.flourishproject.org). Whilst the aim of filming these interviews was to discover staff attitudes to using a PLS for CPD, the topics within the films also covered the importance of practitioner reflection and can be reused on the PgCLTinHE and will be made available for use by a wider audience with relevant interests.
4. [Exemplar E-Portfolios for CPD](#)<sup>4</sup>. The staff who created these samples were very proud of the work they had done and were very keen to have their work on public display.
5. One day workshop for educational developers '*Putting the 'e' into educational development*' in association with the JISC Emerge Benefits Realisation Project, e-PIP based at the HEA Physical Sciences Subject Centre at the University of Hull.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6B3tujXlbdk>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtP4UjB8jsU>

<sup>4</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/b4k2co>

6. Contribution to other related research and publications including:
  - '[Effective Practice with e-portfolios](#)'<sup>5</sup> (2008) JISC publication
  - 'The role of e-portfolios in formative and summative assessment' (2009)– a study by CRA for the JISC
7. Project website at [www.flourishproject.org](http://www.flourishproject.org)
8. Pen drive with portable applications and guides to using the PLS designed to ease log in confusion and provide users with a range of electronic user guides. See Appendix B for more information.
9. New processes for procurement and deployment of new technology for learning and teaching at the University of Cumbria. These processes have been developed as a direct outcome of the Flourish experience.
10. A series of filmed interviews with practitioners from across the HE sector who talk about their experiences of e-portfolio for CPD. Produced as part of the [Blossom Project](#),<sup>6</sup> funded under the Benefits Realisation, Users and Innovation Programme.

## 7.2 Dissemination Activities

Boyd, P., Chesney, S. & Marcangelo, C., (2007) [Demonstrating the Professional Standards Through an e-Portfolio: applying principles of assessment as learning](#)<sup>7</sup> at 12th Annual SEDA Conference

Chesney S. (2007) [Flourish: the ecpd project](#)<sup>8</sup> at Personalisation, Development and Planning: The Seventh National Residential Seminar of the CRA An annual event organized by the Centre for Recording Achievement for its UK members.

Chesney, S. (2008) *Choosing an e-portfolio for CPD* at JISC RSC Northwest Choosing & using an e-portfolio" - for Assessment, Personal Development and RARPA. A workshop aimed at educational providers from HE and FE in the North West of England.

Chesney, S. (2008) [CPD and e-portfolios for lecturers: Flourish – the e-CPD project](#)<sup>9</sup> at Next Generation Environments: Papers from the Users & Innovation Programme Conference 2008.

Chesney, S. (2008) *Flourish: the ecpd project* in *On Reflection*, the in house journal of the Centre for Recording Achievement.

Chesney, S., Tan, E. & Chin, P. (2009) *Encouraging staff to use an e-portfolio for their own professional development* at the JISC Next Generation: Technologies in Practice Conference.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/effectivepracticeeportfolios>

<sup>6</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/blossomvideos>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.seda.ac.uk/confs/birm07/programme2.htm>

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.recordingachievement.org/events/postevent\\_detail.asp?id=10](http://www.recordingachievement.org/events/postevent_detail.asp?id=10)

<sup>9</sup>

<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/publications/nextgenerationconference08proceedings.aspx>

Chesney, S. & Marcangelo, M. (2009) *'There was a lot of learning going on' Using an e-portfolio to support learning activities in a professional course for new HE lecturers at Computer Assisted Learning 09.*

Howard, J. Chesney, S. (2007) *Integrating innovative use of e-portfolios into the continuing professional development of staff.* ePortfolio 2007, Eifel Conference, Maastricht, Netherlands, October 2007. An annual international conference examining emergent technologies.

Howard, J. & Chesney, S. (2008) *Flourish: the eCPD Project: Supporting the integration of e-portfolios for continuing professional development*<sup>10</sup> at Networked Learning Conference, Halkidiki, Greece.

Institutional member for University of Cumbria participation in the [Inter/National Coalition for Electronic Portfolio Research \(2007-2010\)](#)<sup>11</sup>

February 2009 Sarah Chesney contributed to Netskills' workshop 'How Can e-Portfolios Support 21st Century Learning?'. This workshop was for HE and FE practitioners and aimed to explore what is meant by e-portfolios. It drew on the work of JISC-funded projects and other significant e-portfolio developments.

## 8 Outcomes

Overall, staff found that learning to use the chosen PLS was straightforward and could see the potential benefits when used over a period of time for a variety of activities.

...were there advantages for the University - absolutely there are. Because it's instant and can be viewed, reviewed in a personal, passworded environment i.e. in PebblePad you only show what you want to show. It's not like somebody fishing in and finding what they want to find. The opportunity to print is there and the opportunity to share is there, and the person you're sharing with can see it where and when they want to, and they can print it if they want to. So the advantage to the University is, yes ok its more private, it should be quicker, or as quick as is necessary, and it's secure and it will always be there. Whereas a piece of paper can easily get lost, or data stored locally can easily get lost.

*Angus, University of Cumbria Learning Technologist*

In all the activities the support offered of workshops and tip sheets was sufficient to get staff started. However, continued engagement was harder to both monitor and sustain. In addition it was a challenge to get staff to substitute one familiar way of working for another, no matter how much support was offered, no matter how many benefits the new way of working offered. Staff were keen to remain in their comfort zone, many comparing the PLS with applications they were familiar with such as word processing software (Microsoft™ Word ), the virtual learning environment (Blackboard™ ) and email (Microsoft™ Outlook). Data gathered revealed that whilst many staff were aware of the benefits to their working practices that an e-portfolio offered, they were hesitant to change their habits.

'People are very comfortable with their big files, lots of bits of paper in...you know...and their course certificate that they went to and their little reflective sheet that they filled in... They feel very comfortable with that. They can look at it and think, look at all that CPD that I've done ...whereas

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.networkedlearningconference.org.uk/past/nlc2008/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://ncepr.org/>

somehow the e-portfolio is more and more, oh what if I lose it and what if I don't, what if I do this and what if I do that... and sometimes you find people printing things off that they've got in their e-portfolio just so they can have the file because they feel more comfortable with that. ...others confessed that they were baffled by and even felt anxious about the array of tools offered to them and implied that this was now becoming a source of stress... it's a bit of a cultural shift to think, yeh I'll have it all electronically.'

*Denise, University of Cumbria Lecturer*

Others confessed that they were baffled by and even felt anxious about the array of tools offered to them and implied that this was now becoming a source of stress.

'there are various electronic communication mechanisms we have ...the basket of these things grows bigger and heavier and it's finding the time to use them all.'

*Karen, University of Cumbria Lecturer*

The strongest driver for use was a team decision to use the PLS, such as the PgCLTinHE course team decision to thoroughly embed the use of PebblePad. This meant that the tutors as well as the course participants had to learn how to use the software. The same can be said of the appraisal process; if a whole team decided to use the PLS, then staff engaged with it and supported one another in its use.

Otherwise, uptake of the PLS for the non compulsory activities was dependent on the attitude to the task and the attitude of the 'sharee' and their approach to CPD.

PebblePad has been my saving grace It's helped me redo my portfolio. I've used it for areas such as SWOT analysis... recording thoughts on what you can do, what you would like to do but haven't got time to do.

*Sally, University of Cumbria Lecturer*

If a member of staff was positive about their CPD experiences, they were more likely to use the PLS for this purpose. However, with regard to professional accreditation, staff were more likely to record evidence and reflect upon this in the format that the professional body approved of in practice. This means that whilst some professional bodies were positive about e-portfolio submissions (e.g. the Nursing and Midwifery Council), staff were still hesitant about submitting an electronic version because the mentors or assessors were not necessarily used to this way of scrutinizing a portfolio. Assessors' reactions to an e-portfolio were generally positive, particularly when questioned about the reduction in paperwork. However there were mixed feelings about the whole e-portfolio needing to be online:

I had to be online to use it properly as although I could export a PDF, this didn't include supporting documents or embedded notes (nice feature). Depending on an individuals work practices or context at a particular time, this could be an issue.

*Assessor for professional body*

Generally, barriers to use were focused on attitudes to CPD and the value of using an electronic environment, rather than difficulty in mastering the software. Barriers included:

Lack of time to devote to recording and reflecting on practice in general;

Lack of confidence that the e-portfolio would become a permanent part of the CPD landscape, so time learning to use the software was often seen as wasted;

Lack of senior management buy in and use. Whilst Flourish was fortunate enough to have the support of many senior managers, this alone was not enough to persuade staff to try using an e-portfolio. Had senior managers used the e-portfolio for their own appraisal or to demonstrate their own CPD activities (such as conference attendance) then the message that this was a worthwhile way of recording and reflecting upon their practice would have sent a clear message of approval.

## 9 Impact

### 9.1 Impact of Flourish upon the University of Cumbria.

The Flourish Project has ensured that a significant number of staff at the University of Cumbria have come into contact with an e-portfolio and had the opportunity to experience using one. At the time of writing this report, 600 out of approximately 1,800 staff had a PebblePad account. These accounts, as mentioned previously, have not been created automatically. Every account was created upon request from the user; so even if the account was never very active, the user had to be aware of PebblePad in order to request an account. To date approximately 200 accounts are inactive. When contacted recently about whether the account was still needed or not, a large majority of account holders replied that they intended to use PebblePad in the near future, and not to delete their account. As a result of Flourish, over 300 student accounts have been created, with some successful use by students in the Faculty of Education, the School of Business (as part of the [HEA/CRA Employer Engagement Project](#)<sup>12</sup>) and the School of Law to support Personal Development Planning.

Flourish has also ensured that the issue of e-portfolios for all students is on the agenda of influential institutional committees such as the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee and key institutional events including a presentation at the University of Cumbria's Heads' Conference. Senior managers are discussing the use of e-portfolios for both staff and students at faculty management meetings. Flourish has ensured that there have been conversations about e-portfolios: without the JISC funding these conversations may well not have happened.

The experiences of those who used the e-portfolio for the PgCLTinHE either as a tutor or as a participant will inform how e-portfolios are introduced and assessed with a wider student body. This part of the Flourish Project is particularly relevant as the University of Cumbria examines and evaluates in practice how to support students at a distance from the main campuses. Methods of electronically submitting assignments is currently being scrutinized within the University, and the Flourish PgCLTinHE experience will contribute to these discussions and decisions.

Flourish has had an impact upon the institutional procurement processes and how a large scale organization deploys new learning technologies. Using the experiences of introducing PebblePad to staff, the Flourish Project staff were instrumental in designing procurement and deployment procedures intended to encourage and support innovation in e-learning.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.recordingachievement.org/employers/default.asp>

Lessons learnt from the appraisal pilot conducted in 2007 and 2008 have informed the decision to use PebblePad to support appraisals in the largest faculty in the University, the Faculty of Education. This decision will increase the number of staff accounts to over 600. Starting with the senior management team and then cascading down to all academic staff, PebblePad will be used in 2009 to support the annual appraisal process. In addition the lessons learnt and recommendations made by the Flourish team will inform the institutional review of the appraisal process that is taking place in 2010.

Requiring application for HEA Professional Standards through the University's own accreditation scheme introduced staff to the concept of using an e-portfolio for collecting evidence of their achievements and this method of application will be used for forthcoming applications.

Perhaps most significant is the impact Flourish will have upon the recent work currently being created for a University wide project, Flexible Futures. One of the central elements of the Flexible Futures is to realise the gradual formation and dissemination of what it means to be a Flexible and Distributed Learning Professional, supporting increasingly diverse and distributed students and new forms of learning. This will require new ways of thinking that go beyond traditional staff-development workshops and CPD training activities and will refer to the lessons learnt from Flourish.

## 9.2 Impact of Flourish on the wider HE community

Dissemination activities and conversations with colleagues at other institutions reveal that using an e-portfolio for CPD is still in its infancy. However, Flourish has had the opportunity to support the use of PebblePad for staff CPD at the University of Hull's HEA Subject Centre. Through a series of consultation days the Flourish Project Manager shared the outcomes and experiences advising how to embed e-portfolio practice for staff CPD. For more information go to: <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/physsci/home/projects/epip>

Flourish aims to make an impact on the sector through the one day workshop open to all interested in using e-learning to enhance or deliver CPD.

As previously mentioned, Flourish findings have informed key reports that will be disseminated across the sector.

## 10 Implications for future practice

Further work needs to be done regarding the use and impact of having to use multiple e-portfolios for professional development, particularly when it involves registration with a professional body. Staff have expressed reluctance to use multiple methods of recording their CPD and this has the potential to impact upon engagement with an e-portfolio.

The attitude and IT capability of those 'receiving' an e-portfolio for review or assessment has an impact upon the extent to which an e-portfolio is used. Further work could be undertaken to build on this issue, particularly as this was a key finding of the JISC funded ELP2 Project.

Concerns raised by staff regarding the longevity of their e-portfolio suggest that more work needs to be done concerning access and hosting of a PLS. Whilst one of the benefits of a PLS are described as the learner being in control or learner centered, if the PLS is no longer funded by the University, then there are implications for control and management of the data. Management of a PLS, and e-portfolio or a repository that supports life-long learning needs to be addressed.

For staff leaving the University of Cumbria there is the option to transfer their eportfolio assets to a PebblePad personal account which is free for 12 months. It will be valuable to evaluate how many staff value their PLS enough to make the transfer and to further evaluate how many maintain the account as a subscription service once the initial 12 months expires.

Flourish has highlighted the need for guidance on such issues as information management including data protection, intellectual property right and publishing of unlawful content that may cause offense. The work of the JISC funded [Web2Rights Project](#)<sup>13</sup> has had an impact on Flourish's approach to IPR and other legal issues associated with publishing and sharing of information through a PLS. Already, on their advice the University of Cumbria, is considering a 'take down' policy that will apply to all applications, not just a PLS.

## 11 Recommendations

The following recommendations are written with specific audiences in mind.

### 11.1 Senior HE managers:

- 11.1.1 The introduction of a PLS for CPD should be seen as an opportunity to revise and enhance the processes it purports to support.
- 11.1.2 If the PLS is introduced on top of existing activities such as an annual appraisal process, there is the danger that this additional layer of learning will alienate those already disenchanted with the process. Use the introduction as an opportunity to review and re-design processes and activities.
- 11.1.3 Careful planning is necessary to ensure that all processes within the institution are aligned. Whilst an e-portfolio is promoted as a personal and private online space, when using a PLS for CPD, it is important that all stakeholders are included in decision-making. In practice this means a considerable effort to get all stakeholders aware of the benefits a PLS offers and aware of how to access the relevant resources. Stakeholders can include human resources, the research office, ICTS and marketing.
- 11.1.4 It may be necessary to conduct evaluations based on user feedback at regular intervals and adapt the newly created electronic processes. In order to balance the benefits of having an iterative process with the amount of time and patience a user has to readjust their own learning in order to incorporate the improvements. It is vital the users are aware of how their contributions improve the whole system. It is important to continue to reassure and demonstrate how their input has enhanced either the software or the process.
- 11.1.5 Using a PLS for activities such as appraisal can bring up issues that have been overlooked or ignored with other processes such as a paper-based one, and may well reveal problems with the existing processes. Where the e-

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.web2rights.org.uk/about.html>

- portfolio is hosted, who has access to the data and how long it will be available for are all important considerations that arise and need addressing.
- 11.1.6 The need for technical support varied widely within the groups using the PLS. Giving staff friendly, easily accessible and flexible support when learning how to use the PLS will reap rewards. Many staff are familiar with using a VLE and a word processing package such as Microsoft™ Word and seek to use the e-portfolio in a similar way. This isn't always an advantage when learning how to use another system.
  - 11.1.7 Careful consideration of the project's perceptions by those it comes into contact with and allow for these considerations to be reflected in the project's name.
  - 11.1.8 Our own understanding and experience of a PLS, gained through Flourish, allows us to now make an informed decision when procuring an institutional system, based on robust and authentic teaching and learning criteria.
  - 11.1.9 If senior managers use the PLS for their own practice, this sends out a clear message of endorsement and approval of the system, the new processes and style of activities they expect staff to engage in.

## 11.2 PgCLTinHE Course Teams:

- 11.2.1 Good induction to and a rationale for using the e-portfolio software are crucial for PgCLTinHE student engagement. If the induction is not effective, then the ramifications can be widespread, as this particular group can spread good or bad publicity very quickly amongst colleagues. Aside from the PgCLTinHE participants, it is very difficult to target induction effectively for the other CPD activities.
- 11.2.2 All members of the PgCLTinHE team, including administrators and tutors, need to support the introduction of a PLS into learning activities and have an understanding of the rationale underpinning its use. This unified approach emits confidence and ensures that participants use the PLS to its full advantage.
- 11.2.3 The PLS will be most effective when integrated into assessment activities for each module. A consistent approach to submitting assignments will avoid confusion and subsequently extra work for administrative and support staff.
- 11.2.4 Offer an array of support materials including printed tip sheets, online help and drop in sessions. Requiring the use of the PLS for assessment may reveal a lack of IT skills that otherwise were masked. One to one help may be the most appropriate way of supporting participants, particularly if completing the course is part of their employment contract.
- 11.2.5 End of module evaluations are a useful means of gathering participant reactions to the use of a PLS, but it is also worth eliciting feedback half way through a module in order to check that all participants are comfortable with using the PLS. This is particularly worthwhile if the PLS is being used for assessment purposes.
- 11.2.6 Participants and tutors need an understanding of the differences between the VLE and a PLS. This understanding may lead to a revision of activities and procedures within a programme.
- 11.2.7 Tutors should take care to filter participants' feedback, carefully differentiating between concerns or frustrations leveled at the PLS and the more subtle underlying anxieties about IT skills; reflecting on practice; academic rigor and work load.

### 11.3 Staff and educational developers:

- 11.3.1 Modeling the use of the PLS can be an effective way of motivating and engaging academic staff.
- 11.3.2 Consider using the PLS for a range of non-educational development activities to encourage staff to consider using the PLS. This may include using tools within the PLS to publicize events or as a means to deliver course content.
- 11.3.3 Although face-to-face workshops effectively introduce the PLS for some staff, there is a variety of methods to engage staff. The blog tool within the PebblePad PLS is a quick and easy way to communicate with staff and start dialogue. It can be used as a means of staff development for off campus staff. Despite the fact that a blog is a different tool to the VLE discussion board, using Salmon's Five Stage Model (Salmon, 2005) as a model to support staff online is valuable.
- 11.3.4 Benefits from events such as an e-learning retreat take a long time to be realized. An evaluation at the end of an event isn't always going to reflect how and when staff are going to use the PLS in the future. In some instances it has taken staff months to return to the lessons they have learnt from our retreats, but over time they have returned and started to use the PLS effectively.
- 11.3.5 Conversations about the PLS with all staff within an institutional have the potential to pay dividends.

## 12 Conclusions

One of the main aims of Flourish was to see how an e-portfolio could ease the administrative burden facing academic and learning support staff. The Project found that there was a tension between transferring existing processes into an electronic environment and the necessity for some staff to learn new skills in order to do this.

This did not reduce the administrative burden immediately, but for staff who understood the potential of a PLS to ease their workload and experienced the PLS first hand, then over time, the burden was eased as users began to realize that items in their account could serve multiple purposes. Creating a climate where staff could reach this understanding needs careful nurturing. Encouraging habitual use for a variety of activities has to be cultivated over a period of time. Flourish was funded for two years and it is only in the final months that the Project staff felt that their work had taken root and started to grow in strength.

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# Appendix A

Changes introduced to PebblePad based in part from Flourish user feedback

October 2008

## *Account management.*

Although accounts within PebblePad can be automatically created from LDAP the project-based nature of Flourish required that accounts were manually created resulting in some management issues. Items which were added or enhanced include:

Account management tool can now remove old accounts based on when they were created and last used;

Deleted accounts now don't show up in user searches;

Purge accounts tool allows 'deleted' accounts to be fully removed;

Restore accounts tool allows accounts 'marked for deletion' to be restored;

Change username for an account now enabled to facilitate mapping to institutional username for the future deployment of LDAP;

Deleted accounts remove the username rendering the account inaccessible. Accounts can only be purged if never used or if inactive for 30 days following deletion. Purging accounts removes the user and all their stored assets.

## *Revised thought types*

### Journal

- New blog thought type and does not include a reflection page

### Reflective journal

- New name for the old Journal thought type

### What, So what? Now what?

- Simplified three stage thought with no reflection page

### Reflective cycle

- New name for the old structured thought type

All thought types are accessible from page 1 of the thought entry type. Journal entry is a direct map to blog postings (no reflective field). Entries can be changed from one sub-type to another though data will not always map directly. No data will be lost between moves but may not always show where fields do not support entry.

*Gateway history now records more detail: when people join and leave a Gateway and when settings are changed*

This enhancement is complimentary to the changed gateway roles. As administration permissions will now cascade through a gateway hierarchy (administer gateways below their own [administer only; does not belong to a group; does not have view permissions for content]) it is important to record if any user adds themselves to a gateway and adds permissions they may not have negotiated with the actual gateway 'owner'.

#### *Additions to CV section*

The Personal Details section of About Me allows users to choose an affiliation. If used on a CV the affiliation is represented by its member number (though the number field does allow text entries). A mini-pad has been created to allow users to add new affiliations at the point of editing the Personal Details section.

In addition

All new About Me and CV builder

Default CV options

Revised and expanded personal and contact detail sections

Reusable personal statements

Revised and merged current studies and education into a new qualifications section

New sections

- Affiliations
- Activities
- Beliefs and Values
- Awards, Prizes and Grants
- Language skills
- Publications

# Appendix B

Paper to Flourish Management Board – 10<sup>th</sup> October 2007

## INFORMATION LEGISLATION IMPLICATIONS OF E-PORTFOLIOS - Draft

### 1. Background

This paper considers the implications of the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts for the use of Pebble Pad. It considers whether Pebble Pad content could potentially be accessible to others under information legislation and what implications this may have for users.

Please note that this paper is a 'work in progress' and is intended to highlight some of the issues which may need to be explored further.

### 2. Information Legislation

#### 2.1 Data Protection Act

The Data Protection Act is concerned with the use of 'personal data' – this means any information relating to a living individual. This can include expressions of opinion about someone. It can also include information where someone can be indirectly identified even if they are not mentioned by name. Some examples of personal data are exam results, interview notes and sickness records.

The Data Protection Act places an obligation on the University to manage personal data in a responsible way. This includes, for example, informing people of the way in which their personal data will be used, only disclosing personal data with the individual's consent (or in accordance with specific circumstances set out in the Act) and taking steps to keep data securely.

The Data Protection Act also gives individuals the right to request a copy of any data held about them – this is called a 'Subject Access Request'. This could apply, for example, to a student requesting a copy of their student record, or a job applicant requesting notes from their interview.

#### 2.2 Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act gives access to a range of information held by the University. Information can only be withheld if it is covered by a specific exemption under the Act.

The disclosure of personal data is covered by an exemption under the Freedom of Information Act. In essence this means that any requests for personal data must be dealt with in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act.

### 3. The Legal Status of E-Portfolio Content

Andrew Charlesworth has produced guidance for JISC on the legal implications of E-Portfolios. This is summarised at Appendix A to this paper.

Given that Pebble Pad may potentially be used in a variety of ways, I have assumed in this paper that the University must comply with information legislation in relation to content which is already produced by the Institution in other media. This would apply, for example, to assessed work, appraisals, research or the sharing of documents by staff. As all these uses of information are already covered by information legislation, it seems likely that they will also apply to Pebble Pad content.

However, where Pebble Pad is used for 'personal' work, such as a personal learning log which is not assessed, then the Data Protection Act exemption for information which is part of 'an individual's personal, family or household affairs' may well apply. In this case, it could be argued that the content is equivalent to a personal diary which would not be subject to information legislation.

#### 4. Implications for the Use of Pebble Pad

This section of the paper attempts to consider the proposed uses of Pebble Pad and possible information legislation implications.

	Use of Pebble Pad	Implications
1.	Staff Appraisals	<p>The use of Pebble Pad for staff appraisals should not pose any particular problems, as the content will remain broadly the same as the current paper-based appraisal system. Any legal rights to access information would remain the same whether the content is on a paper appraisal form or in Pebble Pad.</p> <p>If, for example, an appraisee makes comments about a colleague in their appraisal form via Pebble Pad, their colleague could make a Subject Access Request to obtain this information. In this scenario, it is unlikely that the information would be disclosed as it would necessarily also be the personal data of the appraisee themselves. The University cannot disclose this data without the appraisee's consent and must take into account any expectations of confidentiality they may have.</p>
2.	Personal Reflection/CPD	<p>If Pebble Pad were to be used for personal reflection by a learner and the information is not being used as part of their formal assessment, then it may have the same status as a personal diary. In this case, any information recorded in this way would not be accessible under information legislation.</p>

3.	Collaboration/sharing documents	<p>The use of Pebble Pad for the sharing of documents amongst University employees poses no problems, which are specific to the e-Portfolio context.</p> <p>The same good practice rules should be followed whether a member of staff uses Pebble Pad or E-mail to share a document. For example, if the document contains personal data, this should be treated with appropriate confidentiality and the author should bear in mind that individuals may have the right to access the information via a Subject Access Request. Similarly, authors should remember that any non-personal information may be subject to disclosure under the FOI Act unless it is covered by a specific exemption.</p>
4.	Collaboration by researchers	<p>If University staff use personal data as part of their research, they should take care to follow the usual good practice guidelines. This includes, for example, ensuring personal data is held securely and is not disclosed to others unless the individual has been informed about this and has given their consent.</p> <p>If an FOI request is received for unpublished research material which is scheduled to be made public at a future date, then the University can rely on the FOI exemption for 'information intended for future publication'. In these cases the University FOI Panel, chaired by the University Secretary, would make this decision.</p>
5.	Assessed work – e.g. a Pebble Pad learning log	<p>Any Pebble Pad content which forms part of an assessment should be treated in the same way as any other assessed work. In essence, this is the personal data of the learner and cannot be disclosed unless they have given their consent.</p> <p>The learner should be informed of the fact that this work will be assessed and that it will be shared with others.</p>

**5. Next Steps**

The Board should consider whether specific guidance is needed for Pebble Pad users on information legislation issues.

If there are any changes to the use of Pebble Pad in the future, it would also be useful to confirm whether there are any Data Protection implications – for example, if content is to be shared with external organisations such as professional bodies.

Helen Linsley

Secretariat Officer (Records Management)

3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2007

# Appendix C

## Portable Applications

### Problem

Students enrolled on the Post Graduate Certificate Learning & Teaching in Higher Education (PgCLTinHE) were frequently emailing requests for new PebblePad login credentials and/or to complain that they could not login to PebblePad.

The vast majority of these students were attempting to login to:  
<http://www.PebblePad.co.uk/> rather than our own installation at:  
<http://flourish.PebblePad.co.uk/>

This issue was requiring an unnecessary administrative commitment to inform the students of their error and follow-up confirmations that the problem was resolved.

### Solution

Additional help was provided at the login page which allowed users to look up their installation URL if they were unsure of it.

Also, by placing a portable version of the FireFox web browser on a USB flash drive; we could configure the homepage to be the correct URL for the “links” page. This would enable students to carry the URL with them and also to securely store their login credentials, bookmark web-pages and retain web-session data between Windows PCs.

### Portable Office Suite

In addition to the main problem, as stated, some students were finding difficulty accessing suitable software to complete their coursework. This ranged from not having off-campus access to a Microsoft-compatible Office Suite to not having the IT skills to enable capturing of screen shots or recording of audio.

Additional USB flash drive space could be used to provide a complete Portable Office suite, configured to the requirements of these students.

### Included Portable Applications

7-Zip	File “zipper” & archiver
Audacity	Audio recorder
Coolplayer	Audio player
Infrarecorder	CD & DVD authoring
Lightscreen	Screenshot creation
Mplayer	Video player

OpenOffice v3 Complete MS-compatible office suite:

Base (Access)

Calc (Excel)

Draw (Paint)

Impress (Powerpoint)

Writer (Word)

Pnotes

Electronic Post-it notes

SumatraPDF

PDF reader

The Flourish-branded USB flash drives have been distributed to PgCLTinHE students and staff attending “PebblePad in the support of appraisal” workshops.

Benefits

1. Reduction in administrative time spent supporting the PebblePad login process.
2. Supporting students in the development of their own IT literacy.
3. Enabling the use of suitable, location independent, software for the completion of coursework.
4. Inclusion, on the USB flash drives, of Module & Course specific documents (handbooks) increases student awareness of, and access to, course requirements.
5. Inclusion, on the USB flash drives, of Student Support documents (Student Regulations & Learning and Information Services Guides) increases student awareness of, and access to, University requirements with regards to assignment creation and submission.

Beyond these intended benefits some users have requested that additional applications be installed and are using their USB flash drives for a range of extended activities; such as:

1. Multimedia web authoring (NVU Portable)
2. Complex image creation & manipulation (GIMP Portable)
3. File Transfer Protocol (FileZilla Portable)
4. File comparison / merging (WinMerge Portable)

Business & Enterprise lecturers are now distributing this package to some cohorts of part-time PostGrad students.

Provision of the “links” web-page has been expanded to become a complete PebblePad support website that includes step-by-step guides to completing the main tasks required of both staff and students of the PgCLTinHE. This has resulted in a further reduction in basic PebblePad support requests.