

Student Perspective

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During my time as a student at the University of Wolverhampton, I must admit that my personal experience with PebblePad was limited. When I first began studying four years ago, I underwent a short, optional introductory training session (given by the school of Humanities, Languages and Social Sciences) on PebblePad. At the time I thought there was little or no use for an 'eportfolio' in my chosen subject (War Studies) because it was a fairly traditional 'pen and paper' subject. But looking back, I must highlight my own ignorance. However, I continued to study and did not use PebblePad for the duration of my degree which was mainly due to the lack of integration with my subject area and there were few enthusiasts wanting to use an eportfolio. In addition, I did not have enough time to famil-

iarise myself with PebblePad due to personal study commitments.

I now find myself working for the Institute for Learning Enhancement at the University of Wolverhampton, which was the first institution of its kind to have a full site license for PebblePad and also was involved with the pilot projects. Working in such an environment and being surrounded by e-learning, it was much easier to see how I could personally benefit from using PebblePad. So, I started out with a blog.

Just over a month later I now have almost 40 assets in my store, a blog that I use to track my progress and aid my research on a daily basis, and even a couple of webfolios.

Even though I've only been using PebblePad frequently for several weeks, it's fair to say that I've become an eportfolio addict, and have never looked back.

So what do I find most useful with PebblePad? Well, it gives me the chance to selectively record and reflect on significant events and link them with other data from the institution or my own research. I can also share particular assets with my line manager so she can track my progress too. PebblePad puts me right in the centre of my PDP and allows me to work how I want to, when it suits me.

I like how PebblePad puts you in the driving seat, but let's you do the driving. In my current environment, which is primarily a research one and includes attending a variety of conferences and HE events, I'm able to

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keep track of the people I've met and the knowledge I've gained. Oh, and it's even easier with the PebblePad iPhone app, which would have been really useful as a student!

With the introduction of the 'graduate attributes' to the new undergraduate curriculum at Wolverhampton (with digital literacy being at the fore) and the emphasis of employability in the HE sector, I feel confident that all our students will see the benefits of PebblePad like I have, because they will recognize the need to distinguish them-

selves from others in an increasingly competitive job market. It's no longer just subject specific knowledge that students get from a degree, it's the additional vocational skills too that employers want. I believe PebblePad will play a vital role in this process and it's

also a great opportunity for lecturers and academic staff to enhance the modules they teach and how they teach them.

1. What do you know now that you wish you'd known when you first started using PebblePad?

I wish I'd seen the potential of PebblePad whilst studying, in the sense that I would have been able to collect information relating to my course and use a webfolio to store that information

and in turn collaborate with other students on my course. This would have made information sharing much easier and convenient for us all.

2. How would you sell the idea of PebblePad to new students?

With the current focus on employability within the HE sector and even the wider economic climate of the country, students are increasingly having to present more than 'just a degree' to potential employers. With rising numbers of people entering HE and going to university, employers need to see evidence of students going that extra mile to develop personally and professionally.

With PebblePad, students are able to reflect and evaluate their own PDP and in turn evidence their skills and knowledge that they have gained whilst studying, to employers. This is a really crucial part of making sure our students gain employment after they have finished studying and the message needs to be cascaded down from academics into the student body.

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

PebblePad is an easy way to monitor and keep track of a small or large group of students. For instance, lecturers and academic staff could utilise PebblePad when designing a formative assessment for their students. The lecturer could ask their students to design a webfolio around a particular topic area which they would contribute to throughout the year. This piece of work wouldn't have to be graded and could be used to track engagement and a student's understanding of the particular subject area. In addition, PebblePad is an easy way for those staff members who might not be 'digitally literate' to learn how to use technology in a fun and simple way, in order to enhance their students experience in and outside of the classroom.

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Case study by Will Varnam

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