

# Student Perspective

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### *Germanistik*

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My name is Claudia Herfert and I am 27 years old. I am a Student at the University of Potsdam in Germany. My studies are in Germanistik (German) and Erziehungswissenschaft (Educational Science). This year I am writing my thesis about eportfolios to become a Bachelor of Erziehungswissenschaft. So, to learn more about eportfolios is a very personal interest for me.

I heard about PebblePad first at the University. It was an element of a project the Student Developers Group (SDG) started. We wanted to learn more about eportfolios and its potential for learning processes at the university. The SDG was looking for different eportfolio software to learn more about the differences between them and how to use them as an element of semi-

nars and courses. In this way we heard about PebblePad.

After exploring different eportfolio software solutions like MOSEP and Mahara, we determined that PebblePad is the Software which satisfies our needs best. But we also had to recognize that PebblePad only existed in an English version. So the first step for us to plan a course with PebblePad has been to translate it. So my first year with PebblePad was a year of translations. We sat together and had many discussions about what would be the best translation and we learned a lot about the difficulties of finding the right German words for the little spaces the English words left behind. But we made it and now there is a German version of PebblePad

available. Obviously it should be refined upon.

When the translation was completed, we started to create a seminar about planning and organizing our studies using eportfolios.

We used the form builder in PebblePad to create a study book. In this study book the students can compile notes for the different seminars and courses they attend. They also can attach evidence for the seminars and courses in this book. This element was chosen to train 'organizing competencies'.

Another element of the seminar is to let the students write protocols of some of their courses by using the reflective journal in PebblePad. This element was chosen to train 'planning competencies'. We believe that reflecting on the content of a seminar offers you new interests and gives you ideas for further courses or themes. For this element they have to write down the important facts of the weekly lesson, and they have to try to reflect upon the content of the lesson. We realized that for many students the reflection is very new and exciting, but also difficult. And how we solved this problem and what happened besides, I would like to tell later on...

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

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My only wish was to know the programme much earlier. When I first recognised the existence of PebblePad my studies were almost over. But I did not have any problems using it.

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

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I would tell them that PebblePad is an all-round talent. You can collect all your personal and institutional documents there. And you are also able to share your ideas and documents with all other users, if you like.

Finally I would like to tell you about my personal use of PebblePad. At the moment I am trying to write my Bachelor thesis with PebblePad, because it is the best place for me to get everything together. It is my personal working space. I can collect all my interim results and I can see all my steps of thinking.

“ For me the action plan is a great tool to start working. I can use it everywhere I am, and not only at my own PC. ”

So it makes learning and working easier for me. The only problem that I have is that my lecturers do not use PebblePad, so I have to export my files to show them. But I hope that in the future working with eportfolios and working with PebblePad will have a bigger role at the German universities.

That was my short abstract about experiences with PebblePad. I hope it was interesting for you and you would like to know more about using PebblePad at the University of Potsdam. In April our seminar starts for the fourth time, so there is much more to tell.

But the best point is the wonderful choice of tools. With these tools you can create nearly every document you need, like an action plan or your personal CV. So, with PebblePad you get a new way of learning, which is more concerned with the process than just the results of learning.

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

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PebblePad is a wonderful programme to create courses in every kind of theme except mathematics. You can use it for all items of your course. With PebblePad it is possible to let the students work on their own or in groups. You can create different kinds of forms for your students and you can communicate with them very easily.

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Case study by Claudia Herfert

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