making the case

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PebblePad, although supplied by the university, is **my** private learning space that provides an environment where I can create, manage and record my learning. My PebblePad learning space embraces many aspects of my education including informal knowledge and skills acquired outside formal course requirements. In my course PebblePad is not used for assessment but I routinely enter its realm to plan, record, question and reflect upon content and ideas. I value the privacy that is offered by PebblePad whilst appreciating the freedom and ability to share work.

> Within PebblePad I have numerous 'working assets' that provide an ongoing record of my formal and informal learning. Later these assets provide a rich resource for creating published items such as webfolios. Since using PebblePad I have developed a better understanding of how I learn through recording and reflecting upon my learning process. As I am not restricted by assessment requirements I have the freedom to choose the assets that best suit my needs throughout the semester. In the past my study has been disorganised but PebblePad has given me tools such as action plans and reflective thoughts to guide me towards improving the way I organise my study. PebblePad gives me the freedom to work in a way that suits both my creativity and a learning style that evolves in a non-linear way.

Recently I applied for a position as a zoo education officer, a role which would combine my love of education and passion for animals. Stored within PebblePad I have assets that evidence my teaching career, veterinary nursing studies, wildlife care and community activities. I used these assets to create a presentation webfolio that highlighted what I would bring to the position. Although no provision was made for an eportfolio within the application, I placed a link in the covering letter: https://eportfolio.csu.edu.au/pebblepad/viewasset.aspx?oid=488111&type=webfolio&pageoid=488112.

Whilst re-reading my stored reflections and activity logs I realised the extent and range of knowledge and experience that I had acquired within these fields. For a person who struggles with confidence in her own abilities, this was a revelation that may yet remain undiscovered without PebblePad. Since using PebblePad I have achieved higher marks than ever before in my studies. I believe that this is because it is **my** private learning space that I choose how and when to use. PebblePad gives me the freedom to be able to plan, learn and reflect upon the variety of my experiences in an individual way and find connections that help me to produce better assessment submissions.

In 2013 I will complete my Master of Education research project. My PebblePad will be used to plan, document and tell the story of my research. I have not yet decided upon my strategy but it will include an action plan, a blog and reflective thoughts. I dream of completing a PhD; perhaps autoethnographic research on using PebblePad to research plan and present a PhD? I must go and create a 'Thought Asset' in my PebblePad mobile application to save with my other ideas for future research.

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

I am able to use scaffolds such as reflective thoughts when I need some help to get my thoughts or other information recorded but not yet polished. This gives me the chance to record drafts with an outline to guide my thinking, know exactly where I have filed it, and return later to edit and share if I want to, or keep private the thoughts and ideas that I am not yet ready to share.

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

Go into PebblePad and 'play' – set up the first page and layout the way you want it (mine is bright pink and purple). Create an asset, e.g. plan a shopping trip or a day out with an action plan. Use a reflective thought to reflect on the past week or a recent big event. Create a webfolio for your dog, cat or a hobby by first collecting photos and creating assets to build it with. Take the time to play and explore without the pressure of an

assessment. When you are ready choose one aspect of your study, create an action plan and follow it through with another asset. Build up your knowledge slowly – use it for yourself and not just for assessments.

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

Be a PebblePad user yourself! Be familiar with the tool and its applications and be willing to share the way you use it and some things that you have created. Introduce it at the beginning of a course, take it slowly utilising an asset at a time, and scaffold the tasks initially. Demonstrate to students how individual assets can come together to create a webfolio of their learning before asking them to complete a webfolio themselves.

Encourage the use of the gateway for sharing of assets and encourage students to start a dialogue about each other's ideas. Don't miss the collaboration and sharing potential because it is being lost in assessment.

Take the chance to see assessment as ongoing; encourage students to share assessments with you as they progress, and offer support and encouragement or intervention if needed. See using PebblePad as a way to incorporate ongoing real support, not just as a way to receive 'live or die' end of semester course requirements.