

Flexible webfolios to record personal and professional practice in Health Care

Using online PebblePad webfolios to provide an effective reflection tool for students studying professional health care practice

The aim

The tutor introduced online PebblePad webfolios in a Level 4 module for occupational therapy students which was combined with Placement.

The aim was to utilise an online web tool to collate a file of evidence, observations and reflections as part of the students' personal and professional development.

Benefits

- Webfolios provide the tutors with flexible access to the students work from wherever and whenever
- Students are able to share work with both peers and tutors providing peer and formative feedback throughout the year
- Webfolios allow the students to regularly record evidence, observations and reflections throughout their degree as part of their professional practice qualification

The approach

At Level 4 in Occupational Therapy the tutor was following the students' personal and professional development through the use of an online webfolio. Continual reflection is key as part of their degree, as they will need to submit evidence to the Health Care Professionals Council (HCPC) to practice on a regular basis when qualified. Over the final two years of the degree they need to provide an audit statement to keep up to date with the necessary standards which culminates in a viva interview at Level 6.

The tutor introduced PebblePad to students and staff through a handbook as part of the module guide, which was available in hard copy and in an electronic version.

To ensure engagement of students with PebblePad, the tutor put on an induction activity and extra workshops to work through a series of exercises to familiarise them with PebblePad. The tutor outlined the benefits of using this web tool to capture evidence and reflection that would help them become Health Care Professionals.

As part of the assessment, Academic Advisor Groups were set up for students to share and comment on others work. Each group had its own workspace where the webfolios were submitted at the start of the year. As students populated their webfolios over the academic year, with evidence of learning, others within their group could comment and give formative feedback on their work. Students were also encouraged to accumulate individual 'assets' to evidence their development to support the narrative in their webfolio, e.g. reflections, summaries of meetings, experiences of a new event.

Once completed the webfolio was marked directly in PebblePad with the tutor providing typed comments alongside their webfolio with a mark against each learning outcome. The overall mark was then automatically transferred to the Blackboard Grade Centre. Students accessed their mark via Blackboard, and their feedback via PebblePad.

Moderation took place in PebblePad, with internal moderators adding comments to the webfolios. External examiners were also given access to PebblePad. An illustrated guide was provided via the module handbook to help tutors and external examiners work within the PebblePad environment.

“It is beneficial as it can be used a resource throughout the course to support our development when applying for jobs once qualified.”

Level 4 student

The Outcome

Using technology to facilitate learning and reflection has provided the following outcomes:

- Webfolios provided an opportunity for students to receive ongoing formative and peer feedback throughout the year from tutors and students
- Webfolios eliminated the need to carry around and store paper-based portfolios (typically heavy lever arch files), as well as facilitating internal and external moderation online without the need and time taken to distribute and receive comments on hard-copies of the student work

Student feedback on using webfolios:

- *“I found PebblePad was a great medium to assemble a portfolio on – it may have taken a bit of getting used to but the way it allows you to link assets to each other and group reflections you have compiled over time makes it an accessible platform for generating a portfolio. I would use it when I finish the course to maintain a portfolio that I could easily assemble and present to the HCPC should I be called to audit. The consistent use of PebblePad would mean no lengthy copying of documents by hand and no rummaging through piles of folders and paper to find what I wanted. Having everything online and in one place also allows you to access your portfolio from any computer with internet eliminating the need to carry around a ‘hefty’ folder. A prime example of moving towards a ‘paperless’ service.”*
- *“I really enjoyed the PebblePad webfolio as I feel it provided the opportunity to be assessed in a different way. Therefore providing a fair assessment and the opportunity to show our skills. Also I think it is beneficial as it can be used a resource throughout the course to support our development when applying for jobs once qualified. Overall I enjoyed developing my webfolio and feel it was refreshing not to be assessed based on another essay.”*

However, the tutor identified that with PebblePad it was difficult to see specifically the changes students had made when they had added to or updated their webfolio.

Profile

Tutor name:

Emma Taylor

Faculty:

Health & Wellbeing

Size of cohort:

Medium (45+ students)

Technologies used:

PebblePad, Microsoft Word, Blackboard Grade Centre, MP4 for talking through how to do

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Future Development

The tutor plans to develop her online practice further by:

- Continuing to look for other online assessment tools that will help to provide effective feedback for the student whilst allowing the tutor to work flexibly
- Planning to use screencast feedback instead of written comments which can then be saved to PebblePad providing more targeted feedback to students
- Obtaining a widescreen monitor to view PebblePad assets and the marking grid/criteria simultaneously

Recommendations

The tutor suggests that anyone interested in developing this approach consider the following:

- Ask for help from your faculty TEL team to get you started
- Use the PebblePad online forum to discuss any issues you have running the software
- Engage students in the process of creating, maintaining and commenting on their own and others' webfolios by using past students to talk about the benefits of PebblePad
- Provide students with specific directed tasks to complete at the start of the year where they have to comment on each other's work