

A personal learning system

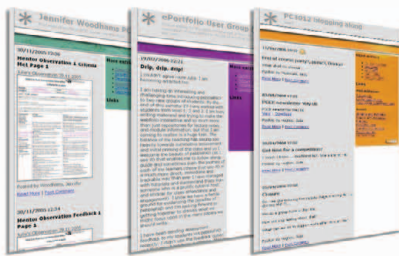
not *just* an eportfolio

About PebblePad

PebblePad is much more than an eportfolio. It is a Personal Learning System being used in learning contexts as diverse as schools, colleges, universities and professional bodies; by learners, teachers and assessors; for PDP, CPD and L&T.

PebblePad has been designed with the learner at the centre of the system. It provides scaffolding to help users create records of learning, achievement and aspiration and has a reflective structure underpinning all of its core elements.

PebblePad supports personal learning whilst providing a powerful suite of tools to improve learning in institutional contexts. Conversation, communication and collaboration is easy in PebblePad; items can be shared with trusted individuals, published to group pages or made public to the world-wide web.



Over time users can create, store and review multiple 'assets' which can be aggregated into powerful presentational portfolios, called WebFolios, to provide rich stories of learning or achievement for myriad purposes including:

- Assessment (formal and informal)
- Advancement (promotion or transition)
- Appraisal (self - peer - 360°)
- Accreditation (professional bodies)
- Application (course, job, funding)
- Articulation (informative story telling)

How is it being used?

In FE PebblePad is being used for tutorials, individual learning plans and, in one innovative project, for creating collaborative online journals charting the design and build of a kit car. The WebFolios they create in this project are shared with tutors and external engineers who comment on the students' work: the finished items act as digital manuals describing how the car was built and how it should be maintained.

In HE the uses are many and varied:

- Research students use PebblePad blogs to provide an ongoing record of their activities and accomplishments thus keeping supervisors informed of their progress.
- Art and Design students create amazingly rich 'portfolios' of their designs and the design process, enriched by the commentary of others.
- Students on overseas placement record their unique experiences, reflect on cultural differences and link practice to theory through their journals, action plans and blogs.
- First year students use the Learning Profile tool to self-assess their abilities before evidencing these skills or creating development plans.
- Trainee teachers build powerful portfolios of evidence including lesson plans, teaching resources, lesson observations, feedback and reflections.
- Car designers chart the evolution of their projects including sketch diagrams; meeting records; design reviews; first prototypes; CAD drawings and final designs.
- Project groups use the system to share ideas; record progress and to create collaborative WebFolios of project plans; group discussions; role allocations; presentation transcripts and presentation slides.
- And in many, many other ways.....

Wherever there is a process of learning, or where learners present evidence of their abilities, PebblePad can support and enhance that experience for both the learner and the teacher.

Beyond formal education PebblePad can be used to record workplace learning, volunteering, sporting or leisure pursuits or any activities the learner determines are worthy of storage. And, it's not just for 'learners'! Teachers and other professionals are using PebblePad to record and evidence their personal and professional development for a variety of reasons including appraisal and conformance with professional standards.

The Institute for Learning provides a version of PebblePad called Reflect to all of its 200.000 members teaching in the learning and skills sector.

Where is it being used?

PebblePad has been enthusiastically embraced across the UK since its release at ALT-C in September 2005. New institutions are coming on board all of the time and in September 2008 we are able to count 100+ institutions where PebblePad is being used. Increasingly institutions are seeing the benefits of site licences though we continue to support much smaller pilots to enable individual teachers, small teams, subjects or departments to begin using the system. We estimate that over 500,000 users have PebblePad accounts including some who have purchased personal accounts direct from the PebblePad website.

Because PebblePad is a commercial system it provides all of the advantages of full-time professional support and development whilst embracing all that is good about community development. Current users have a strong voice in the development and direction of the system through the PebblePad User Group and JISCmail list

PebblePad adopts Web Services and Open Standards to ease interoperability with other systems; we have led the community in the adoption of the IMS ePortfolio Specification to make sure that our users have the best possible opportunity to transfer their eportfolio assets from one system to another. Users can also export their Webfolios and all linked items as websites. This means they can load their Webfolios into a personal web space or create a CD-ROM to showcase their talents.

As learners are likely to be using a number of web-based facilities we have provided tools to allow linking to photos and videos held outside of PebblePad on systems such as Flickr and YouTube. We also have extensive support for RSS and Atom.

If an institution does not offer ePortfolio services for their alumni, Pebble Learning provides personal accounts for individuals to purchase. So when a learner leaves one episode of formal learning they can transfer their eportfolio to a personal account and continue to record their learning experiences whatever the context.

PebblePad has been selected for use on a number of JISC-funded projects including:

- the **ePISTLE** project which used eportfolios to support progression and transition;
- the **LIPID** project which linked the personal learning space (PebblePad) to institutional data (SITS:eVision);
- the **eAPEL** project which aims to support students making APEL claims using eportfolios;
- the **Flourish** project which is using PebblePad with university staff to support all forms of eCPD and eAdmin;
- the **MELaS** project where PebblePad groups receive and interact with SMS messages; and
- **PortisHEad**, the UCAS application project providing students with the tools to create rich and informative eportfolio applications to university.

How does it work?

PebblePad is built on a sophisticated architecture which links a stunning visual interface with a SQL database and other systems using .Net Web Services. Authentication is made easy through all common access protocols including LDAP, Shibboleth and Single Sign On. PebblePad can be integrated into WebCT, BlackBoard, Moodle and any other learning system or Student Management System. All an institution needs is a Microsoft server and SQL database; all users need is any common web browser with the free Flash-player installed.

We can provide hosting for any installation from small pilots to institution-wide deployments – including pain-free migration when you are ready. Current customers have remarked how easy PebblePad has been to implement and maintain. If you would like to speak to some of our current customers who are happy to share their experiences with you please contact us and we will put you in touch.



Contact us

For more information about the innovative ways that PebblePad is being used by evermore institutions contact us at:



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