

**An evaluation of the impact of pedagogic processes  
for personal development planning (PDP) and e-  
portfolio development at the University of  
Wolverhampton.**

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# Executive summary

## *Background*

In May 2000 the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) *et al* issued a policy statement on the need for the development of a Progress File for Higher Education. This policy statement came from recommendations within the *National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education* more commonly referred to as the Dearing Report (1997). The guidelines gave an implementation date for Progress Files as the start of the academic year 2005/6, from this date the QAA could include PDP in their institutional audit.

Within the University of Wolverhampton, PDP was strategically placed within the Institution's Learning and Teaching Strategies. An outcome from these strategies was the development of an institutional framework for the process of PDP which set out that the main outcome should be a formative, student-centred process that provided a product that documented a student's achievement and experience at the university. The PDP processes were envisaged to be integrated throughout the whole of the student experience, they were to be developmental and used with tutor guidance. A consequence of this framework was the development of an electronic tool (PebblePad<sup>®</sup>) to support students with this process.

## *Aims of the evaluation*

This evaluation of the impact of pedagogic processes for personal development planning (PDP) through e-portfolio builds on previous reviews of PDP processes and ePortfolio development project reports. It aims to assist the institution and in particular the Blended Learning Strategy to achieve the student entitlement that *all students should have opportunities to engage in electronic personal development planning (ePDP)*. The evaluation has used the institutional framework for PDP processes and referred to the QAA PDP Quality Standards (see appendix 1) for the evaluation objectives. These objectives are that PDP should:

- be a formative student-centred process,
- provide a product that documented a student's achievement and experience at the University,
- be integrated throughout the whole of the student experience at the University,
- be developmental,
- be used by students with tutor guidance.

## *Key findings*

1. By embedding PDP practices within the modular scheme all students have opportunities to engage in PDP. At level 1 this is well documented and easily identifiable. However at levels 2, 3 and postgraduate little research and evaluation has taken place. This is not to say that PDP processes do not take place in these levels but they tend to be articulated as employability or professional development activities, including placement learning.
2. Apart from two academic schools, with a third in the development stage, there are no integrated PDP teacher-led activities being evidenced at programme

level. Teacher-led PDP activities tend to be situated in individual modules which may or may not relate to other modules. There are four schools that use the concept of contextual studies that cover academic, professional and employability skills, but PDP practice often does not draw on previous levels, evidence or activities.

3. ePDP activities submitted online for feedback provide opportunities for staff to identify students at risk at an early stage through analysis of non-submissions and non engagement with tasks. They are then able to provide just in time support and thus potentially increase retention and attainment.
4. ePDP activities can be onerous for staff (particularly with large group sizes) as often can be perceived as 'add on' to discipline content. Students can sometimes see it as onerous too, unless they can see the value and benefit and how it fits with the bigger picture of their learning in HE and their chosen career path.
5. ePDP activities and pedagogies have been developed by 'champions'. Since the Pathfinder ePDP project this 'pool of talent' has grown significantly. Now, at level 1, there is at least one person in each school conversant with ePDP issues.
6. Existing pedagogies for ePDP are being expanded, and have had an impact on formative assessment activities. Currently, this is quite localised, based in modules rather than integrated throughout a course, and driven by specific members of staff.
7. Two CETL areas, Active Volunteers and Student-to-Student (S2S) mentoring have embedded ePDP opportunities outside of the taught curriculum.
8. There has been a growth in staff development opportunities for ePDP with the establishment of the Blended Learning Unit.
9. The University has gained an international reputation in the field of ePDP.
10. What started as a tool to support PDP processes, the ePortfolio system is now becoming a space that is being used to support a much wider concept of ePortfolio based learning.

## *Recommendations*

Recommendations that are considered advisable:

- The University should consider offering University-wide verified PDP/ePDP. This should link into any discussion relating to the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) suggested by the Burgess committee.
- The University should commission a pilot focusing on integrating ePDP activities into the holistic landscape of learning in HE. Where students will have the opportunity and support to develop eportfolios that encourage the inclusion of experiences spanning the taught, experienced and lived curriculum (Yancey, 2007). This should be linked to the refocusing of the

undergraduate curriculum project and should incorporate activities and evidence at all levels within a programme. This should include evidence from both formal and non-formal learning including extra-curricula activities. The emphasis for this should be on transferable employability skills and graduate outcomes.

Recommendations that are considered as desirable:

- Existing staff development opportunities need to continue. Further developments need to be focused on designing or redesigning learning, teaching and assessment in a blended learning environment.
- The University should gather good practice and ePortfolio pedagogy from ePortfolio champions and members of ePortfolio research projects to offer examples to inform the refocusing of the undergraduate curriculum project. The start of which can be seen at:  
<http://www.wlv.ac.uk/default.aspx?page=18450>
- Further research should be carried out on how ePDP can be used to improve feedback and non-submission of work and how this impacts on student achievement and progression.
- The University should capitalise on its growing national and international reputation on ePDP and more recently, in the area of ePortfolio based learning. Particularly focusing on providing a web based presence under the Blended Learning Unit which offers consultancy to the sector.

# 1. Context.

## 1.1 PDP at the University of Wolverhampton

Within the University of Wolverhampton, personal development planning (PDP) was strategically placed within the Institution's Learning and Teaching Strategies (LTS) 2002-05, 2005-06 and 2006-10. In 2008 a Blended Learning Strategy (BLS) was created as an appendix to the Learning and Teaching Strategy. The BLS is articulated in terms of student entitlements of which one is: *students should have opportunities to engage with ePDP*

As an outcome of the 2002-05 LTS was that an institutional framework for PDP processes was established which set out that PDP should:

- be a formative student-centred process
- provide a product that documented a student's achievement and experience at the University
- be integrated throughout the whole of the student experience at the University,
- be developmental
- be used by students with tutor guidance.

This framework was re-titled from PDP (personal development planning) to PACE (personal, academic, careers and employability) planning and development (Figure 1) to reflect more closely the activities and outcomes potentially at different levels that the institution wished student's to achieve. For example, at Level 1 the emphasis might be on personal and academic development and planning moving onto career and employability development and planning in levels two, three and Postgraduate study

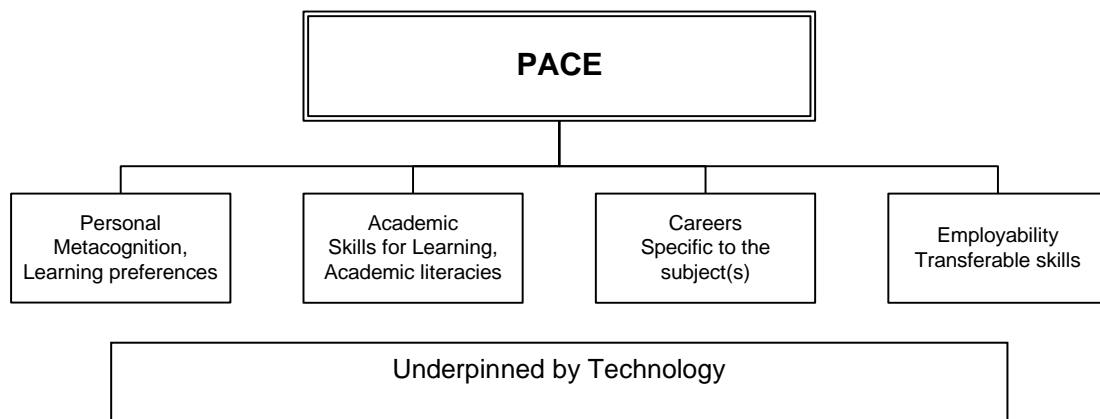


Figure 1. Formative student-centred **process**

At an institutional level it was decided that for both practical and pedagogical reasons to provide a paper-based system for recording PDP to all students would be inefficient and would go against the institutional ethos of using technology to support learning. As a consequence of this framework came the development of an electronic

tool PebblePad, to support and deliver the PACE process. At the start of the academic year 2005/6 this tool was rolled out across the whole of the University.

In June 2007 a review of PDP at level 1 showed that all academic schools were using PebblePad in some way to deliver PDP in the first year (undergraduate) curriculum.

Between May 2007 and May 2008 the University ran an HEA funded Pathfinder Project to embed the use of ePDP activities into the Level 1 curriculum of two modules from each of the 10 academic schools. This project included 31 level 1 lecturers and 1810 Level 1 students. Modules ranged from groups of 15 to the largest module with 350 registered students. The project was important to the institution as an opportunity to move past 'champions' and early adopters of the ePortfolio tool to build personal capability in staff and institutional capacity to increase the quality and amount of PDP activities in the level 1 curriculum. [www.wlv.ac.uk/pathfinder](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/pathfinder)

## 1.2 ePortfolio.

The concept of our ePortfolio system is:

*"A system which allows users, in any of their learning identities, to selectively record any abilities, events, plans or thoughts that are personally significant; it allows these records to be linked, augmented or evidenced by other data sources and allows the user to integrate institutional data with their personal data*

*It facilitates self-awareness, promotes reflection, supports enrichment through commentary and feedback from the recipients of shared assets. It grows, develops and matures as the user accesses it, without constraint, over time. It provides tools for aggregating assets in multiple forms; for telling myriad stories to diverse audiences and ensures absolute user-control over what is shared, with whom, for what purpose and for how long*

*It is a personal repository; a personal journal; a feedback and collaboration system; and a digital theatre - where the audience is by invitation only".*

What is an ePortfolio? [www.wlv.ac.uk/eportfolio](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/eportfolio) 2009

Though the majority of ePortfolio and PDP activities take place within PebblePad, PDP processes are also found within WOLF, in particular the use of group forums, and by the use of Word documents and email. There are key differences between WOLF and PebblePad that affect how the different software is perceived as supporting PDP processes.

WOLF (the VLE).is described as providing *a range of tools and facilities by which tutors can deliver enhanced learning material in support of classroom-based teaching and tutorial contact. WOLF does offer collaborative tools to facilitate discursive activity among classes and smaller workgroups. WOLF is tutor driven with staff being able to see all areas of student contributions in the software.*

PebblePad is a personal learning space where no-one can access another person's account or view materials unless shared by the owner on an individual basis or published to a Gateway (A Gateway can be thought of as an institutional space, the place where assets (define assets) can be published for viewing by other users such as tutors, peers or external moderators).

### 1.3 Evaluation methodology

This evaluation rests on a variety of quantitative (see appendix 2) and qualitative data; some of this data arose naturally, some has been repurposed and some was especially gathered as indicated below.

- 1. Data sources:** this included relevant internal and external documentation, internal reviews and external project reports, raw evaluation data gathered for other purposes and repurposed (including face-to-face, video and telephone interviews), mapping of practice, quantitative data from University systems (very limited) and discussions with key stakeholders including, students, staff and senior managers.
- 2. Formative evaluation:** through creating a narrative that collated baseline data with qualitative data obtained from staff, examples of practice, key events and activities the evaluation was able to analyse an initial draft of collected data to then develop a further, comprehensive, holistic overview of all the ePDP activity across the university that then led to the final summative evaluation exercise.
- 3. Summative evaluation:** this summative evaluation hones down the holistic big-picture narrative to address the key objectives in the light of feedback and reflections from key stakeholders.

## 2. 2 Evaluation against the institutional framework

### 2.1 Objective – that PDP should be a *formative student-centred process*

The concept of PDP for this framework comes from the idea for a progress file which emerged from the National Committee of Inquiry in Higher Education (Dearing and Garrick Reports 1997). PDP is defined as ‘a means by which students can monitor, build and reflect upon their personal development.’ (Dearing 1997, recommendation 20). PDP is further defined (QAA *et al* Guidelines for HE Progress Files, 2000) as ‘a structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performance and / or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development.’ Within the University framework this is defined as a formative student-centred process. This process was deemed to have most impact (who by?) and uptake if it occurred in the taught curriculum.

#### 2.1.1 Outcomes

*i.* The majority of PDP activities take place in the taught curriculum though tutor-driven activities. Examples of these activities can be found at: [www.wlv.ac.uk/pathfinder](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/pathfinder) These are predominantly aimed at developing personal and professional attributes in students but also include the development of study skills, reflection, self analysis, confidence, self esteem, sense of belonging, subject knowledge, collaboration, critical thinking and meta cognition and learning how to learn.

*ii.* Research and evaluation of a recent cross-university HEA funded Pathfinder project looking at embedding ePortfolio in level 1 has shown that students like using electronic methods for their learning, teaching and personal development planning (PDP) but that they must see a value and benefit by undertaking those activities.

*iii.* Students found that by using an ePortfolio they had the ability to go backwards and look at their previous work, as well as plan forwards, both of which they saw as being really useful. 75% of the 606 students who responded to the Pathfinder evaluation questionnaire said they enjoyed participating in ePDP.

*iv.* At level 1 ePDP processes are mainly focused on acquiring academic literacy skills and academic socialisation. Activities tend to focus on a mix of: 1, articulating personal attributes, abilities, reasons for selecting a particular course or subject, and aspirations frequently recorded as ‘*about me*’ and; 2, activities that explore the academic expectations of a particular course or subject. At levels 2 and 3 the emphasis is more on developing and evidencing transferable employability skills and specific career attributes.

*v.* The majority of PDP/ePDP activities have an element of both formative and summative assessment. Students commented that this affected their engagement with tasks as 75% said that they would not have undertaken PDP/ePDP tasks unless they were assessed.



## 2.2 Objective – to provide a product that documented a student's achievement and experience at the university

At an institutional level it was decided that for both practical and pedagogical reasons to provide a paper-based system for recording PDP to all students would be inefficient and would go against the institutional ethos of using technology to support learning. As a consequence of this framework an electronic tool PebblePad was developed to support and deliver the PACE process. The provision of a specific tool to support PDP/ePDP processes does not exclude local paper or electronic products being developed and used. There is no one University-wide product that documents a student's achievement and experience at the University

### 2.2.1 Outcomes

i. The most widely used teacher-led process for the production of 'documents' that show a student's achievement and experience at the University is by module based scaffolded webfolio templates (fig 1). Scaffolded templates are used in all academic schools with both large and small class sizes. Characteristics of the scaffolded webfolio templates are that they:

- have multiple formative activities that are taken throughout the module
- create a whole webfolio for summative assessment
- are written to guide students through a reflective process
- give examples of the language and writing style that the teacher expects this work to be produced in
- ask students to link evidence of their progress and achievements

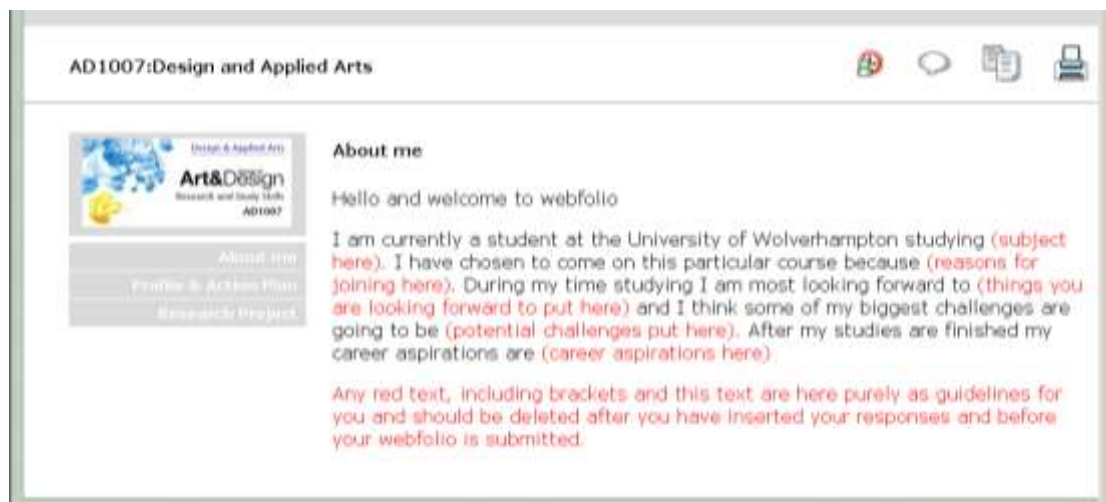


Figure 1. Page 1 of the scaffolded template for AD1007 Research and Study Skills

Students are asked to personalise and publish the template to a named tutor's gateway for comment, feedback and/or assessment. Students can be organised into tutor groups or be given open access to submit work to an open gateway.

*ii.* The use of scaffolded templates and gateways has shown an increase in the early identification of risk and submission of work. An illustrative case of this is shown below:

This is a School-wide core level 1 module with 440 students enrolled. It is taught in four iterations by subject and specialist study skills tutors.

- Week 1 students download and personalise a scaffolded ePortfolio template provided by their tutors
- Students were expected to personalise and submit their assessment ePortfolio in week 3
- Week 3: 210 ePortfolios were submitted.
- Week 4: students are reminded that ePortfolios needed to be submitted for formative feedback
- Week 5: 330 students had submitted at this point. The 140 students who had not submitted were contacted by their tutor (electronically initially)
- Week 6: 110 students identified potentially 'at risk' as after repeated reminders they still had not submitted any work. Staff were then able to make contact (personally to the student and also through their personal tutors) to enable the identification of support needs and any non-academic issues that might be affecting the student. Through this contact issues were highlighted such as IT facilities had been stopped through non payment of fees, non-attendance at the taught sessions, some misunderstanding of the instructions given. All issues raised were able to be addressed before it was too late for the student to complete their work.

*iii.* The gateways provide a 'one stop shop' for assessment. They provide an electronic receipt of work that is time and date stamped. The work is locked on the gateway during the assessment period, thus not allowing students to make any modifications or amendments to the work after submission. Members of staff who are marking or moderating are able to have individual discussions spaces within the gateways relating to each asset, should it be required. Moderation and external examining is made any time any place as URL links can be sent to moderators. They can access the work for online moderation at any time and in any place of their choice. All grades and feedback can be input into the gateway itself and so ensure there is equity of experience. All student feedback and grades are released at exactly the same time at the click of a button. The assessment gateway can then be archived and a copy of all the assets published for assessment is taken at the point of assessment and held in an archive for quality assurance purposes and potential future auditing. By archiving the students are still able to work on the original asset as a carbon copy has been taken for archiving purposes.

*iv.* Apart from some courses in the School of Health and Education there are no programme level products that document a student's achievement and experience at the University. The School of Legal Studies is exploring an employability profile that could be used throughout a student's experience. This would sit outside of the taught curriculum but could be used by teaching staff. It would include informal learning and appropriate extra-curriculum activities. This profile would be based on the HEA graduate employability profiles that are referenced against subject benchmarks. All other examples of PDP/ePDP activities currently sit within individual modules. These are often stand-alone modules that in four Schools (SAD, SAS, SCIT and UWBS) form part of a contextual studies strand that services a number of courses. Modular activities within these strands do not necessarily have practice that refers to pedagogies and outcomes of previous or future modules.

v. Some negative student feedback on using an ePortfolio to document their development related to not liking the PebblePad software. However, when this issue was unpacked, some reasons related to particular technical 'events' but the majority were about the instructions and reasons why and how they should be using it. In the recent Pathfinder project, 75% of the 606 students questioned said they enjoyed the ePDP tasks in PebblePAD, 35% commented that they would have rather done the PDP task on paper

vi. External moderators who have used ePDP (in particular PebblePad) have commented that they valued the following:

- not having to receive large, heavy paper based portfolios,
- the flexibility within the time frame for moderation and feedback,
- being able to see a wide selection of student work
- the rich selection of materials presented electronically

### **2.3 Objective – to be integrated throughout the whole of the student experience at the university,**

Since the development of the institutional framework Lifelong (*covering the longitudinal journey of a learner*) and Lifewide (*covering the breadth of the learning experience both in and outside formal education settings*), learning have become commonly understood terms. As mentioned in the previous objective there is no one University-wide product that documents a student's achievement and experience at the University

#### **2.3.1 Outcomes**

i. ePortfolios are being used with the following cohorts of students that follow a different pattern of learning to full time study. Examples include: mature returners to education – the family friendly route into nursing in SoH, work-based learners e.g., TUI travel company in SSPAL, Study at distance with construction workers in Hong Kong in SEBE, Foundation degrees in SED and part time distance learners of military history in HLSS

ii. Two CETL areas, Active Volunteers and Student-to-Student (S2S) mentoring have embedded ePDP opportunities outside of the taught curriculum.

The Student 2 Student mentoring scheme developed a webfolio including a blog to support both mentor training and supervision. The blog provides a confidential and supportive space for mentors to support each other through their mentoring relationships. Members of staff are part of the mentoring community and can join mentor debates. Issues that arise can be dealt with before they become major problems. A blog provides an effective, supportive and safe environment to deal with mentor issues in a timely and appropriate way.

The S2S scheme has offered a new element to its programme, creating the opportunities for the first ever mentoring training for Deaf mentors to mentor Deaf mentees in their preferred form of communication which includes the use of British

Sign Language (BSL). All new Deaf and hearing impaired entrants will be offered mentors who can communicate by their preferred method.

The use of the ePortfolio system ability to link any digital file and other digital hardware such as web cams has been successfully put forward for TechDIS funding via the HEAT scheme, (HEAT: Higher Education Assistive Technologies Scheme). The HEAT scheme provides staff working in higher education (teaching staff, library staff, careers officers, staff developers, IT specialists and accessibility or support specialists) with technology with which to develop or uncover an aspect of good inclusive practice.

*iii.* 62% of students who were interviewed for the Pathfinder Project commented that making a connection to the technology in the classroom helped them to buy into activities and additional workshop support outside of the classroom.

*iv.* Reported in the ePortfolio Users Group (ePUG), students who had used the ePortfolio as part of the taught curriculum carried on using the system for their own purposes.

*v.* As the PebblePad software is a personal rather than a managed learning space, no quantitative data can be extracted to see how it is being used unless examples are shared. Examples that have been shared with the evaluators show students using the system for extra-curriculum activities and adding personally selected abilities, achievements and experiences to teacher-led activities.

*vi.* Using PDP/ePDP processes for lifelong and life-wide learning is a personal choice rather than an institutional requirement

## **2.4 Objective – to be developmental**

The institutional framework for PDP processes was aimed at the student experience. Though the tool to support this process was made available to both staff and students, there has been a major impact on staff as well as student development.

### **2.4.1 Outcomes**

*i.* SED, in particular through the national and international work of Julie Hughes, is one of the Schools in the forefront of pedagogic design. As part of the CETL, emphasis has been put on the use of ePortfolios for foundation degree and part time work-based students. A major part of the SED activities has been about developing staff capability. 30 members of staff have been mentored in the pedagogy and use of PebblePad. Mentored staff went on to play key roles in ILE, in the Pathfinder Project and in the Inter/national Coalition for EPortfolio Research (INCEPR) cohort IV. Mentored staff CV's (abilities/experiences) have been used in successful bids for Pathfinder Project (90k), LifeLong Learning Network evaluation of FDs (25k) plus Train to Gain project (750k + HEFCE funding).

*ii.* SED has also taken its experience of using PebblePad into its partner colleges for example, working with Sandwell College to co-deliver foundation degrees in Early Years Services. A group of 50 teacher educators is using PebblePad for its Post-Compulsory Education Partnership (including representatives from UoW, Worcester College, City of Wolverhampton College, TCAT, Solihull, Sutton Coldfield, Matthew

Bolton, Joseph Chamberlin Colleges Consortia and Rodbaston College) are being supported to apply for Professional Formation through IfL REFLECT e-portfolio.

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*iii.* The Pathfinder project took the concept of developmental mentoring (Megginson 2006) to build capability and capacity to embed ePortfolio into the level 1 curriculum. All academic schools were involved in this project. Examples of impact and scalability activities from the Pathfinder project are as follows:

- SAS. Wendy Nicholls: Wendy has up skilled the demonstrators in SAS in the use of ePortfolio and they now support and mark the ePortfolio element of a core level 1 Psychology module. The demonstrators also have bookable office hours in which they support students in their use of ePortfolio.
- SSPAL. Paul Brownbill: After initially using blogs during the Pathfinder project, Paul has scaled his use of ePortfolio by creating a bespoke skills audit for Drama students; this will involve input and engagement from other members of staff on the Drama team. He is using collaborative webfolios to enable groups of students to work on script writing together. His scale of use has also extended to using meeting records within the ePortfolio to support his personal tutees
- HLSS. Andy Sumpter: Andy's ePortfolio use has been scaled up as blogs are now used across the MA programme, involving 2 other members of staff
- SCIT. Brian Penfold/Lynda Holland: As a result of the Pathfinder project an entire module team followed the pathfinder retreat model to take the team away for the day to focus on redesigning the curriculum in the module that was originally identified within the Pathfinder project. The outcome was a redesigned module that had ePortfolio at the core and new members of staff up skilled and teaching on the module.

*iv.* Evidence of the influence of staff from the University on the national and international ePortfolio landscape can be seen by the following for the academic year 2007-08: over 80 national and international conference, seminar and workshop presentations, over one third of the contributions to HEA SIG on ePortfolios and 30 publications (including articles, book chapters, briefing papers and reports)

This is a testimonial from a member of teaching staff that provides qualitative data to support the claim for being a national leader in the use of ePortfolio:

*"Within twelve months of me starting here as a lecturer I was awarded a consultancy with the social work and social policy subject area of the HEA on the basis of my work in PebblePad. When SWAP some further work doing this year on developing a practice portfolio they came to me. I'm now working with colleagues from the University of Gloucestershire, University of Kent, Staffordshire University and Glasgow University. Last month Rob Ward from CRA rang me up to interview me about what I was doing, and a colleague from Newcastle University emailed to invite me to a meeting to discuss their use of ePortfolios. Amazing!"*

*I can do this work at this level because I've got the tools, the knowledge and the contacts, and I got them from being involved with PebblePad at the University of Wolverhampton”.*

v. Teaching staff that were interviewed said that they would have liked to have had more time to conceptualise PDP, this appears to be a similar situation with many of the students, as 80% of respondent students found it difficult to articulate what PDP was, even though 90% confirmed that it had been explained to them in class.

vi. Staff identified the need to be supported and mentored when risking the use of new pedagogies involving a blended learning approach. To achieve this they perceived that institutional cultures and infrastructures need to make space and time for colleagues to work together. The support needed included time allocated within workloads and buy in from senior managers in the area of mentoring.

vii. Internally there are now two institutional groups specifically for sharing practice and research on the use of PebblePad 1. the ePortfolio users group – ePUG and 2. the ePortfolio special interest group, part of the Learning Technology & Pedagogic Research (LTPR) Research cluster.

vii. The ePUG identified a need for an understanding of new pedagogies for blended learning and particular the use of ePortfolio that were not just translations of paper-based traditions but that fully used the benefits of e-learning. Discussions of this nature include not just learning and teaching but assessment criteria and feedback.

ix. The term ePortfolio is also being challenged as the term used for PebblePad software as the system is not just used as a way of collecting, presenting and publishing artefacts to a third party – potentially what could be defined as an ePortfolio. The term ePDP rather than ePortfolio was suggested by ePUG members to be used reflect more accurately the tasks staff were asking students to undertake. The term ePDP can be defined as PDP activities facilitated by electronic tools.

x. The growth in the use of ePortfolio systems and tools using ePortfolio as a term to describe what is essentially PDP activities supported by electronic ‘tools’ is a different experience than selecting, creating, presenting and publishing an ePortfolio and requires a different set of skills. ePUG member recommended looking at the concept of ‘Patchwork Text’ (Winter, 2005) to enable students to stitch together their learning journey.

## **2.5 Objective – to be used by students with tutor guidance.**

The institutional framework clearly states that PDP/ePDP processes should be used by students with tutor guidance, at present that tends to mean module tutors and the point of engagement.

### **2.5.1 Outcomes**

i. Student evaluations have highlighted that it is key that feedback expectations are set and met and that ePDP tasks are chosen carefully to ensure meaningful feedback can be given and not lost within too many different activities. Less can often be more with ePDP activities, less activities, more focused feedback.

*ii.* Many staff used the platform of ePortfolio to encourage reciprocal feedback and students were surprised, yet pleased that they had an opportunity to reflect and comment upon their feedback. The Pathfinder project highlighted traditional methods were seen as something of a one way street and the end of a module. Feedback via the ePortfolio rated as, 40% of the 606 respondents identified the grade as being the most important aspect of feedback, whilst 40% identified tutor feedback as more important than the grade and 20% identified self assessment with no requirement for feedback being more preferable (self identification of areas I need to improve on) To contextualise feedback frequency relating to this particular data set outlines that the average feedback was given monthly or once during the module, though over 33% received feedback every week. Worryingly 16% of students stated they had never received feedback.

*iv.* HLSS, as part of their CETL activity, have developed eMentoring and electronic feedback and feed forward to students using PebblePad. As the feedback is attached to the student's work there is no issue of the students failing to collect their work or feedback. Students are encouraged to engage with the feedback and to edit and review work before summative assessment. In the feedback URL links to study skills sites including to our own 'Sharpen up your skills' are given to students so that they have direct, concrete steps to help them improve their own learning.

*ii.* Tutor enthusiasm is infectious; tutors need to be convinced of the value of ePDP if they want to enthuse their students. Students were very quick to pick up on tutors who where not enamored or conversant with PebblePad and their engagement often reflected staff views. Evidence for this can be seen in modules with multiple tutor and multiple iterations. Grades and MEQ's show marked difference between such different groups.

### **3. Unintended outcomes**

#### **3.1 Informing the wider HE sector**

*i.* At a recent PebblePad super user group meeting (Dec 08). The University of Wolverhampton was one of 10 institutions present who have been categorised as super users by the product developers, Pebble Learning. In terms of usage, we have an extensive lead on the closest other institution using PebblePad. To put this market lead into context and perspective, at the time of the meeting, The University of Wolverhampton had 19,000 active users and 2191 assessment gateways and the closest usage from another institution in the 10 super users was 3,000 active users and 200 gateways.

#### **3.2 External projects**

Externally the University is part of the following:

- Cohort III of the Inter/National Coalition for ePortfolio Research I/NCEPR. This consists of 10 American universities Sheffield Hallam and ourselves. Our research question is: *What can be learnt from the experiences of ePortfolio early adopter schools as a way to build capacity and build frameworks for scalability across the institution and its partners?*

- Cohort IV of the Inter/National Coalition for ePortfolio Research I/NCEPR. This consists of seven English, 1 Scottish, 1 Dutch and 1 American Universities. The University of Wolverhampton is the only UK University in two coalitions. Our research question is: *What are the facilitating and inhibiting factors in building capability and capacity of staff in supporting the use of ePortfolio?*
- HEA National Teaching Fellowship Scheme project to establish a National Action Research Network on Researching and Evaluating Personal Development Planning and e-Portfolio. (NTFS NARN project). A coalition of 16 universities
- HEFCE project headed by the Centre for Recording Achievement - Developing sectoral policy in e-portfolio practice to support employer engagement and workforce development. Partners included 11 universities (including Wolverhampton, Institute of Physics, Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance and the Centre for Recording Achievement
- TechDIS HEAT (HEAT: Higher Education Assistive Technologies Scheme) Wolverhampton has two projects out of 34 awarded to the HE sector. 1. Multimedia to support mentoring scheme (Deaf 2 Deaf mentoring scheme) and 2. Mobile devices on field visits to places of worship. Both of these projects use PebblePad ©
- JISC Effective Practice with ePortfolio Guide. The guide, *Effective Practice with e-Portfolios*, describes current good practice in the use of e-portfolios, largely comprising of work from the University, as a support to learning and as an aid to progression to the next stage of education or to employment. <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/effectivepracticeeportfolios>
- Consultancy to JISC for the ePortfolio info kit. The infoKit covers the main drivers, purposes, processes, perspectives and issues around e-portfolios, as well as showcasing the wide range of project activity undertaken by JISC and others over the last few years, and signposting projects and research currently underway. <http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/e-portfolios>
- Consultancy and workshops for the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA) on using ePortfolios including: ePortfolio for assessment, employer engagement, work-based learning, post graduate study, non text based reflection, implementation, policy and practice for PDP and ePortfolio
- Requests from other UK Universities for advice and guidance including the following: Coventry, Gloucester, Bedfordshire, Northumbria, Manchester Metropolitan, Reading, Worcester, Aston, Surrey, Exeter, Canterbury Christ Church, Leeds, Teesside, Bournemouth, Plymouth, Chester, Greenwich, Bolton
- Requests from international agencies University of Michigan, Griffiths University and Charles Sturt, University of Melbourne Australia, University of Madeira, International Coalition for ePortfolio Research (20 US, 3 Canadian, 1 Dutch + UK universities)



- HEFCE Project co-ordinated by CRA Developing sectoral policy in e-portfolio practice to support employer engagement and workforce development.

## *Key findings*

1. By embedding PDP practices within the modular scheme all students have opportunities to engage in PDP. At level 1 this is well documented and easily identifiable. However at levels 2, 3 and postgraduate little research and evaluation has taken place. This is not to say that PDP processes do not take place in these levels but they tend to be articulated as employability or professional development activities, including placement learning.
2. Apart from two academic schools, with a third in the development stage, there are no integrated PDP teacher-led activities being evidenced at programme level. Teacher-led PDP activities tend to be situated in individual modules which may or may not relate to other modules. There are four schools that use the concept of contextual studies that cover academic, professional and employability skills, but PDP practice often does not draw on previous levels, evidence or activities.
3. ePDP activities submitted online for feedback provide opportunities for staff to identify students at risk at an early stage through analysis of non-submissions and non engagement with tasks. They are then able to provide just in time support and thus potentially increase retention and attainment.
4. ePDP activities can be onerous for staff (particularly with large group sizes) as often can be perceived as 'add on' to discipline content. Students can sometimes see it as onerous too, unless they can see the value and benefit and how it fits with the bigger picture of their learning in HE and their chosen career path.
5. ePDP activities and pedagogies have been developed by 'champions'. Since the Pathfinder ePDP project this 'pool of talent' has grown significantly. Now, at level 1, there is at least one person in each school conversant with ePDP issues.
6. Existing pedagogies for ePDP are being expanded, and have had an impact on formative assessment activities. This quite localised, based in modules rather than integrated throughout a course, and driven by specific members of staff.
7. Two CETL areas, Active Volunteers and Student-to-Student (S2S) mentoring have embedded ePDP opportunities outside of the taught curriculum.
8. There has been a growth in staff development opportunities for ePDP with the establishment of the Blended Learning Unit.
9. The University has gained an international reputation in the field of ePDP.
10. What started as a tool to support PDP processes, the ePortfolio system is now becoming a space to support a much wider concept of ePortfolio based learning.

## Appendix 1.

### Personal Development Planning Quality Standards (QAA *et al* Guidelines for HE Progress Files (2000) Page 11).

#### Opportunities and entitlements

The minimum expectations for institutional PDP policies are that:

- at the start of a programme, students will be introduced to the opportunities for PDP;
- students will be provided with opportunities for PDP at each stage of their programme.
- the rationale for PDP at different stages of a programme will be explained for the benefit of students (e.g. in student or course handbooks or module/unit guides);
- the nature and scope of opportunities for PDP, and the recording and support strategies will be determined by each institution.

*These minimum criteria are not intended to constrain existing practice or local initiatives and institutional or local policies are likely to exceed these minimum expectations.*

#### Minimum outcomes

On completion of their programme students will have:

- participated in PDP in a range of learning contexts at each stage or level of their programme;
- demonstrated that they can access and use the aids and tools provided by the institution to help them reflect upon their own learning and achievements and to plan for their own personal, educational and career development;
- with support, created their own learning records containing information on the qualities and skills they can evidence which can be drawn upon when applying for a job or further study.

#### Information on PDP

- the opportunities for PDP in student programmes will be made clear in the programme specification and through any other means the institution considers appropriate;
- students who are applying to study in HE will be informed about the institution's policies on PDP;
- at the start of their programme students will be provided with information on PDP in their programme including a rationale for the approaches used;
- students will be provided with information on how they might integrate extra-curricula experiences (for example: voluntary service, part-time employment or work placements, study abroad, fieldwork and working as a student representative or Student Union officer) into their own personal development planning process;
- students will be provided with information on any ways in which their own evidence of learning might be eligible for accreditation;
- formal opportunities for PDP in the HE curriculum will be identified in the HE Transcript.

## Appendix 2 Quantitative data

### 1. University of Wolverhampton Generic data.

#### 1.1 Active users in a 30 day period, 1<sup>st</sup> September – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008

Number of active users\* within 30 days: **18962**

Total number of active accounts: **22815**

*\* The term 'active user' denotes someone who has access PebblePad more than three times in the 30 day period.*

For the same period of time there were 23,000 students in the university (including overseas and part time all who would have access to PebblePad) and approximately 2000 members of staff (PebblePad) is available to all staff, not just academics), this show 76% of the university population are active users.

#### 1.2 Rolling total since 1<sup>st</sup> September 2005

Number of assets published to a Gateway:	<b>40773</b>
Number of shares:	<b>19935</b>
Gateways:	<b>2191</b>
Webfolios:	<b>25268</b>
Webfolio pages:	<b>134178</b>
Files uploaded:	<b>148377</b>
Blogs:	<b>11901</b>

### 2. Gateways

Top level school Gateways cascaded from the University level as of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008

Education Partnerships	3
HLSS	22
ILE	23
SAD	27
SAS	17
SCIT	44
SEBE	5
SED	5
SLS	6
SoH	26
SSPAL	7
Student Union	1
UniLife	1
UWBS	5

### **3. Pathfinder quantitative student data**

In a recent HEA funded Pathfinder project 606 students questionnaires were analysed to gain insight into the student experience of ePDP. Quantitative data drawn from this is shown below:

#### **1. General**

Overall, 75% students enjoyed participating in ePDP tasks and felt it had a value and benefit to their learning.

#### **2. Formative feedback**

40% identified the grade as being the most important aspect of feedback

40% identified tutor feedback as more important than the grade

20% identified self assessment with no requirement for feedback being more preferable (self identification of areas I need to improve on)

#### **3. Frequency of formative feedback**

20% received feedback once during the module

21% received feedback monthly

33% received feedback every week.

16% stated they had never received feedback

#### **4. ePDP support**

62% of students commented that making a connection to the technology in the classroom helped them to buy into ePDP activities

80% felt that the help and support given by their tutors was adequate in enabling them to complete the tasks in PebblePADD

#### **5. Understanding ePDP**

80% of respondent students found it difficult to articulate what PDP was, even though 90% confirmed that it had been explained to them in class.

60% of students said that the level of complexity in the ePDP tasks was pitched at the right level for their learning at level 1.