Using PLE for clinical placement reflections and professional webfolio in Public Health

CONTEXT
PLE was used in two public health placement units – one undergraduate and one postgraduate. The units had 31 enrolments, with the same activity and assessment requirements. During the unit, students were on placement with a health-related agency. Staff decided to trial the use of an ePortfolio, rather than paper-based documents, so that students had the ability to develop a professional looking portfolio and reflections and share work with their academic and agency supervisors.

LEARNER ACTIVITY
Students were asked to provide timesheets and reflections of placement activity regularly and other documents once (e.g. contact information forms, assessment of learning outcomes and oral presentation marking sheets). The main component of assessment was the Learning ePortfolio. The Learning ePortfolio contained a Learning Plan, where students decide on five Personal Learning Outcomes that will help them achieve the unit outcomes. Students were asked to separately document each of their Personal Learning Outcomes, the evidence that demonstrates achievement of the outcome, and a reflection of how well they have achieved the outcome. Students were also asked to complete a project report based on their work at the health-related agency and provide a project presentation to their agency supervisor and colleagues.

FEATURES OF PLE USED
- Template developed by unit coordinators for students to use in reflection
- Microsoft Word forms developed by unit coordinators for students to use
- Student-developed webfolio based on guidelines in unit outline
- Submission of assessment pieces

EXPERIENCE
The Unit Coordinators feel that overall the program worked well and was appropriate for teaching and learning requirements of the units. In particular, PLE is well suited to the assessment requirements of both the undergraduate and postgraduate practicum units. The online assessment of portfolios was convenient, easy to undertake and provided students with instant feedback. The Unit Coordinators found that PLE offered a good mix of tools and this meant that they could create templates in the program as well as upload documents and forms created in other programs (for example Microsoft Word). As with many new programs there were a number of technical issues that need to be ironed out. These were mainly around students’ ability to access the program at their host agency, issues around formatting and the inclusion/upload of documents.

All students respondents (n=17) agreed that PebblePad met the unit’s purpose or required use. 71% agreed that they found PebblePad easy to use, and 88% recommended that UWA acquire PebblePad as an ePortfolio system for teaching and learning purposes. Students encountered some technical difficulties (71%), primarily the slowness of the system and formatting/display issues.

Student Comments:
“I’ve used the reflections for the first three weeks and every week after that. I thought it was really useful, I liked having a template.”

“In terms of the portfolio, in our learning guide it told us what we needed to put in there anyway... because that wasn’t templated that was probably a good thing because it was our control of how we wanted to set it out so it was more, I suppose, personal or creative.”

"I think this is a really useful system cause, I don’t know, it just allows you to review everything and go back to it and add to it.”

“I found it was quite slow.... It was lagging, it was quite frustrating.”

Teaching staff: Prof Colleen Fisher & Ms Ania Stasinska
Practicum Reflections

Save record as ...

Please save your reflection as ‘Reflection_Surname_Week#’

These form the basis of your reflections in your Learning ePortfolio and/or Report. Students should post a reflection on their experiences at Practicum each week for weeks one to three; and thereafter three weekly. To pass the unit you must post reflections as per the Unit Schedule. You will receive feedback on at least three postings from your Academic Supervisor, including one in the first three weeks. We are ensuring you do your reflections on an ongoing basis so you can use these as the basis for your reflections in the Learning ePortfolio. In addition, you will be able to observe improvement in your confidence, skills and knowledge over time.

Your reflections do not need to be long and rambling. Rather we prefer very specific reflections on, for example, something that you observed and that influenced you; something that you felt you did well and why; your response to constructive feedback; how something relates to what you have learnt in Health Science; such as specific scientific knowledge, public health principles, project management etc.

Description

What happened?
What is being examined?

Interpretation

What is most Important/ interesting/ useful/ relevant about the object/ event/ idea.
How can it be explained?
How is it similar to ad different from others?

Image 1: Custom reflective template created by Professor Colleen Fisher and Ms Ania Stasinska