The use of ePortfolio in Health Professions Education

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Context

ePortfolio was used in a postgraduate level unit in health professions education. The unit was offered both in Semester 1 and Semester 2 2013 with 6 and 18 enrolled students respectively. In Semester 1, ePortfolio was used as a compulsory assessment. Students were asked to create a professional webfolio which presented their achievement of the learning outcomes specified for the unit as well as the university educational principles. In Semester 2, eportfolio was used as an alternative assessment. The same task was given to students who opted for creating a professional eporfolio as their major summative assessment.

Learner activity

Students were asked to complete custom templates and submitted to the workspace. These completed templates or assets submissions were to provide evidence of their learning. The unit coordinator provided feedback for submitted assets.

At the end of semester, they were asked to re-use their collected asset (that were generated from completed templates) to create a professional webfolio. The professional webfolio presented a reflective summary and assets to demonstrate unit learning outcomes and university educational principles.

The above activities were provided to enrolled students in this unit. The different was enrolled students in Semester 2 were asked to create a professional webfolio as an alternative major summative assessment component.

Features of PLE used

- Templates developed by the unit coordinator and shared to students to use in creating assets
- A workspace to facilitate students assets submission
- Feedback provisioned by the unit coordinator
- Professional webfolio developed by students to present their assets and their learning outcomes

Experience

Portfolio was already part of the major assessment in the unit so it was easier to translate it into electronic platform. The unit coordinator created all the templates by herself so it was a learning process for her as well and worked well. Offering an alternative in major assessment as the Unit Coordinator did in Semester 2 was a good way to accommodate students’ interests and circumstances who were not able to do group work.

However, in both semesters, student motivation on using PebblePad was low. The assessment high weighting, encountered technical issues during the orientation as well as the use of a new system might contribute to students’ resistance in using this environment.

For the future use, the unit coordinator has implemented more time to provide feedback for students as well as start using the system to familiarize students with the system before running an orientation.

Two students responded to the survey of the PLE use. Both students were from IMED5802 Semester 1, 2013. Both respondents indicated that PebblePad was not easy to use and the importance of training and support in using the system. They agreed that they encountered difficulties in understanding the tool. One of them mentioned that the system was not user friendly. However, both of them recommended UWA to acquire an ePortfolio tool for teaching and learning purposes.

CASE STUDY SYNOPSIS

An application of PebblePad as part of the pilot phase carried out during semester 1 and 2, 2013.

Key learning included:

- Accumulate and re-use a variety of assets
- Document their learning process
- Create professional and attractive personal ePortfolio
- ePortfolio as an alternative assessment
- Create customisable template
- Shared templates, samples and information.
- Creating a professional ePortfolio as an alternative assessment
- Feedback provision via ATLAS

Student Comments

“I found it confusing to use at first but once I got my head around it I was fine. I found it to be a great tool to use once you understand it.”

“I had the freedom to present my work more artistically.”

“I think it is a great tool to use for putting together assessments. It is a new technology, which as an older student I initially had issues with but embraced it once I understood how to use it. There was a fair bit of determination I must say in conquering it!!”