Welcome!
This newsletter is the first for UWA’s new Personal Learning Environment (PLE), also known as the software PebblePad, or the generic term ePortfolio. As part of the communication strategy for PLE, we aim to provide a monthly newsletter, a project website, and a monthly lunchtime meet-and-share. You are receiving this newsletter because you are teaching in a course implementing the PLE, have shown interest in it, were on the review reference group, or engaged in live pilot implementation in 2013. Feel free to pass the newsletter on to interested UWA staff and students, and if you do not want to receive it in future, email Shannon.johnston@uwa.edu.au.

How did we get here?
Review, exploration, and shortlisting process
In 2012, CATL commenced a review, exploration, testing and shortlist investigation of educational ePortfolio tools, with the support of vendors and a volunteer group of academic staff in a support and advisory reference group comprising Diana Jonas-Dwyer and Astrid Davine (FMDHS Education Centre), Sally Male and Roberto Tognini (FECM), Joshua Reynolds (SIS), Catherine Lees (Business) and Mark Pegrum (Education).

As a result of this process two products were shortlisted: Mahara (https://mahara.org/) and PebblePad (http://pebblepad.co.uk/). Both are fairly sophisticated educational ePortfolio systems – enabling students to gather, reflect on and collate data, as well as to seek feedback from peers and teachers. PebblePad also has a teaching, learning and assessment component, ATLAS, which provides a far more sophisticated link with educational processes.

Live Teaching Pilot Study
Due to its greater range of teaching and learning applications, relative sophistication, interest by UWA staff, and dynamic development planning, PebblePad was implemented in a live pilot in 2013. Volunteer staff used it in real teaching, learning and assessment activities. Staff and students supported the evaluation process. Academic staff teaching units in Public Health (Colleen Fisher, Ania Stasinska), Health Professional Education (Diana Jonas-Dwyer, Zarrin Saddiqui), Nursing (David Stanley), and PhD students in the School of Agriculture and Resource Economics (under Atakelty Hailu) were taught about the software, were supported in new curriculum design and developing templates and workspaces for using with students, and their students were also trained. Support was provided by both CATL Trainer/Educational Developers and the FMDHS Education Centre eLearning staff.

Many important lessons were learnt during this pilot phase, especially in regards to curriculum design, implementation and support strategies. The dedicated work of these academic staff and their students resulted in CATL deciding to implement a limited license for approved courses in across-course implementation from 2014.
What is “PLE”? 

PebblePad is an educational ePortfolio tool. This means that students upload evidence, called assets, of work according to set or their own determination. Ultimately a number of evidence items can be collated into different kinds of online portfolios, with reflection. The individual evidence or the collated webfolio can be shared with peers, teaching staff, or external people for review and comment. Actual use and potential is far broader – from recording lab experiment processes and outcomes, to communicating and reflecting on the process of research degrees, developing portfolios for professional accreditation, planning for and providing evidence of learning.

The big difference with other systems such as the LMS is that the student manages their own learning, as it occurs across the course of study, is reflective and developmental. It is now more commonly referred to as a Personal Learning Environment. PebblePad has two components – Pebble+ and ATLAS. The PebblePlus is the true PLE. It is solely accessible by each individual account owner – staff or student. ATLAS is where staff can view shared or submitted work, provide templates for students to work to, and where shared communication and activity is viewed.

If you would like a demonstration of UWA’s new PLE using PebblePad software, please contact help-elearning@uwa.edu.au.

What is UWA’s limited license implementation?

Essentially, UWA has a license for 2000 active accounts. There is no difference between staff and students in terms of counting accounts. Staff who use the PLE for teaching and learning can also feasibly use the Pebble+ personal learning environment to create their own ePortfolios, CVs, development plans and so on. CATL will evaluate and revise this figure each year in accordance with interest and need.

UWA has introduced the PLE as an alternative approach to teaching and learning – a developmental, reflective, across-course, and learner-centred learning platform to promote change in approaches to teaching and learning needed for effective use of the PLE. Only approved courses are able to use the PLE. To gain approval, academic staff must present a business case demonstrating the curriculum design of this system across a degree program or major (or similar).

For guidelines in preparing a business case, please contact help-elearning@uwa.edu.au.

Which courses are approved for initial implementation in 2014?

The following courses have been approved to use the PLE from January/Semester 1 2014:

- Doctor of Medicine (see: Assoc Prof Diana Jonas-Dwyer)
- Master of Nursing Science (see: Assoc Prof Diana Jonas-Dwyer)
- Master of Public Health - Clinical practice (see: Prof Colleen Fisher and Ania Stasinska)
- Bachelor of Philosophy (see: Assoc Prof Kathy Sanders)
- Graduate Research School (see: Dr Michael Azaradis)
- Graduate Diploma in Education (see: Asst Prof Michelle Streipe)

Three other courses are in final approval stages.

Update for January 2014 Implementation Project

The implementation of UWA’s PLE is a complex project. It involves

- Contractual and licensing
- Technical features (environment, UWA URL, integration with pheme login, branding)
- Business Case and approvals
- Staff, student training, preparation and support, and access to system

Thanks are extended to the following people for positive responses to requests across the activities listed below: (Acting) SDVC Prof Alec Cameron, CATL Director W/Prof Denise Chalmers, UWA.
Lawyer Kim Heitman, Information Services (in particular Cheryl Denton, Nicola Robinson, Derek Sherin, Craig Williams), the IS Research and Learning Services team that provide IT support to students (Jill Benn – Associate Director, Felicity Renner, Catherine Clark, Roz Howard, and Dan Chan). The CATL team of Astrid Davine, Silvia Dewiyanti and Rebecca Lawson have invested much effort and time into the project process in all aspects below under the guidance of Shannon Johnston.

### Status of activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project task</th>
<th>Project activity</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Work Outstanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legalities</strong></td>
<td>Contract</td>
<td>Approved, signed, complete</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Technicalities</strong></td>
<td>Environment creation</td>
<td>Environment is created</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>URL</td>
<td>Approved and implemented</td>
<td>Direct, deep link to UWA environment still under work</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Branding</td>
<td>In progress</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pheme integration</td>
<td>In final planning/approval phase</td>
<td>IS to approve architecture then implement</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Staff and Students</strong></td>
<td>Approving courses</td>
<td>First round applications received and approved</td>
<td>Waiting further information from 3 courses</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff preparation</td>
<td>Not yet commenced</td>
<td>Training, support early Feb</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Staff support</td>
<td>Processes and resources complete</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Training of student IT support staff</td>
<td>In progress</td>
<td>Late January</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Student training</td>
<td>In progress</td>
<td>Week 1 or 2 of semester</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Student support</td>
<td>In progress</td>
<td>Ask@UWA question upload currently in progress</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to system</td>
<td>In progress</td>
<td>Waiting pheme integration * staff accounts manually created 14th Jan</td>
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### PLE Case Study

Each month we’ll share a story about a use of the PLE at UWA.

This month’s case study is presented on page 4.

### Contact details

For PLE implementation matters, please email help-elearning@uwa.edu.au.

*Implementation project leader:*

Dr Shannon Johnston
Assistant Professor Higher Education Development (eLearning)

*PLE Trainer / Educational Developers*

Ms Astrid Davine, CATL Trainer/Educational Developer
Dr Silvia Dewiyanti, CATL Trainer/Educational Developer
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

CASE STUDY SYNOPSIS
An application of PebblePad as part of the pilot phase carried out during semester 2, 2013.

Key learning included:
- the value of a small-scale introduction of the system to students
- that the PLE is particularly suitable in work integrated learning projects
- the value of formative assessment and multiple submissions in students’ learning and familiarity with the system
- that students require support in rethinking how work is completed
- that the reflection tools and webfolio process was appropriate to meet the needs to guide students into reflective learning practices
- the presentation of professional, outcomes-directed, evidence-based learning could be identified.