

Comparison of ePortfolio tools.

There are many commercial ePortfolio platforms available, a number of which were reviewed in conjunction with the Learning Technology Department in UCC. The main ePortfolio tools that were assessed are summarised below.

Platform	Is simple and user friendly	Works well with University VLE	Cost to student	Technological support requires for set up	Technological support on a full time basis	Open Source	Existing Academic Use
ARC	Yes	Yes	None	Yes	No	No	Yes
Max Exam	Yes	No	Yes - not until the first exam	Yes	No	No	Yes
Liftupp	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Blackboard	No	Yes	None	Yes	No	No	Yes
Halogen	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Mahara	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Potentially	Yes	Yes
PebblePad	Yes	Yes	Yes - 20 euro per student and free after graduation	Yes	No	No	Yes

After careful consideration, the platform that seems to fit best with the requirements of Medicine, Pharmacy and Nursing is **PebblePad**.

Analysis of PebblePad ePortfolio: Grace O’Leary Learning Technologies Unit UCC 2015

What PebblePad offers	Description	Comments/ remaining questions
Personal learning space	Each account holder has access to this and can customise it to their own liking. Lecturers, tutors (only on invite), students etc... all have access to a personal learning space. Staff can use it to develop and record their own personal learning.	This allows individuals to organise their learning, personalise their learning.
Share learning with individuals or submit for assessment	There is a ‘personal share’ option where the users can share with one or many individuals (peers or tutors) of their choice, make it public, submit for assessment.	Useful for teamwork, collaborative learning, inter-professional learning, interdisciplinary learning. What does making it public mean? Only items chosen by the student are shared with public – the people they wish to share them with) Can you share with people who do not have a PebblePad account – yes e.g. CV to future employer - by giving them password and sharing the sections you wish to share only
Can embed links	Users can embed links to websites they found useful, to a reflective piece that supports their assertion that they have fulfilled a competency, to YouTube resources, other resources etc. The can include links to certificates etc. They have achieved if they feel it is appropriate to the assessment they are submitting or the portfolio they are submitting for assessment. It also allows student to compile a CV as there is a CV section also and this can be shared with future employers.	Useful for showing connectivity of learning – using different resources to support learning and consolidate learning. The embedded links allow you to have continuous flow in assessing the project – the link opens within the document you can have a quick look to see the relevance and move on – increased convenience in assessment as everything is in the one place and in logical order.
Pre-made Templates	Many premade templates are available which can be used as they are or modified slightly to the users’ needs.	Ready-made templates give a great start to a tutor or lecturer and also give good ideas on how to adapt it or design one’s own template.
Option to build your own template	Training is provided on how to build your own template and many options are offered, for free text to	Allows direct transfer of what is currently assessed in paper format

	<p>limited number of words to tick box style options.</p> <p>Option for students to self-assess in words of graphically using a Likert scale</p>	<p>to an electronic document for submission.</p> <p>Again Links to supporting evidence can be embedded in the text the student submits for assessment.</p>
Option to do tagging	<p>This means that if the students complete a task or does extra courses or engage with extra material and put it into practice they can use it to support completion of a number of competencies where appropriate. They can present a reflection linked to a number of competencies.</p> <p>Each item that is logged on PebblePad can have a tag attached by the student - e.g. chemistry (all items relates to chemistry can have this tag attached to them (Chemistry) and are stored in the asset folder. All items related to reflection 1st year can be tagged as reflection 1st year and so on. Then if you are looking for items related to chemistry just click on tag and all items appear in the asset folder.</p>	<p>Allows for connectivity of learning and gets the student to see where the different modules, workshops, labs, placements, tasks on placements they complete etc. can be used to provide cumulative evidence of competency completion.</p>
An asset folder	<p>This allows the students to save any documents, word, pdf, PowerPoint, videos , podcasts etc. that they found useful and want to use and return to for revision or later reference point they can store it in their asset store and it remains accessible to them</p>	<p>Useful for revision purposes or to quickly refresh information. Also they can migrate it if they opt to move from PebblePad as their learning/training management system.</p>
Has a built in help function on top tool bar	<p>This is there to get information over to the end user – it is present in text and video format.</p> <p>There is also the option to use this help and customise and upload it in more detail or with added assistance.</p>	<p>Good for getting started as staff or student – often the buy-in needs to be from the staff end, the functionalities the students are required can be readily explained to them.</p>
There is a new front page in development	<p>The goal of this is to make it easier for the students who are new to PebblePad to navigate. Their tasks will be right there in front of them they will not need to look for them. It will have up-front the workbook they need to fill in and they just need to open it and type!</p>	<p>Helpful for new students and when they get used to it they can become a little more adventurous and we can guide them as required.</p>
Single sign-on facility	<p>Sign into Blackboard and PebblePad is there in front of you</p>	<p>Students don't like having resources in different places and memorising numerous user names and passwords, one point of access and this is available with PebblePad</p>
Integrates well with Blackboard	<p>Marks can be transferred from PebblePad to blackboard and vice-versa, groups can be set up in one and transferred to another, can grade in PebblePad and send grades to UCC Blackboard</p>	<p>Useful as many people have notes and assessment set up on UCC Blackboard currently – this can still be used with PebblePad</p>
Competency Assessment (Student – self assessing and submitting reflection and evidence for competency approval)	<p>Can create a workbook (from template or taken from a paper document), write reflections attach or link evidence and submit for appraisal</p> <p>Submit to academic/tutor etc. for review. Academic or tutor can approve or reject with written</p>	<p>The forms can be built to suit our needs, if we want feedback and interaction with the student in preliminary stages on drafts, this can be incorporated. If we want written feedback there is an option to for this, if we want to grade it is available, if we want to pass/fail this option is available – it is all</p>

	<p>feedback or grading or both as required</p> <p>All these workbooks come into one area and are there for the assessor to correct</p>	<p>linked to how we set the workbook up first day.</p>
<p>Competency Assessment (Staff observing and ticking competencies as they are achieved/completed by the student)</p>	<p>Tick achieved or not achieved only or can incorporate qualitative feedback (or both- it depends on how you build the workbook)</p>	<p>Very useful as option to provide qualitative feedback in the cases of not achieved is an important option. Yet the option to provide a tick competency achieved etc. Electronically and not having to put on paper first is a useful function.</p> <p>This is compatible with tablet devices as long as internet access is available – they have some work done on offline templates for areas that have a poor signal – this may be available but at a cost!</p>
<p>Compatible with mobile devices, is available as an app</p>	<p>This is compatible with tablet devices as long as internet access is available – they have some work done on offline templates for areas that have a poor signal – this may be available but at a cost!</p> <p>Is also compatible with smart phones</p>	<p>Quick easy method of assessing competencies, no transcribing form paper to electronic format required, hence reduced possibilities of errors, more efficient use of time.</p>
<p>Facility to change or add to workbook even after it has been rolled out to students</p>	<p>If a spelling mistake or inaccuracy is found after it has been rolled out to 300 students – if you update the template it updates on all 300 workbooks.</p> <p>If you want to pace the release of tasks and only make a portion of the workbook available in semester 1 and the other in semester 2 – you can update the workbook at the end of S1 and it upgrades in all workbooks.</p>	<p>Useful if mistakes are found after new template or workbook is created and you are confident that everyone received the change. Also useful to have the phased release as the students will not be overwhelmed trying to complete everything at once and will focus on the task in-hand.</p>
<p>Can incorporate resources to facilitate competency attainment</p>	<p>Can include video recordings, pdf, links to websites, case studies, embedded YouTube links etc...</p>	<p>Both staff and students can up-load resources to facilitate learning, integration, inter-professional learning and student progression through the competency levels.</p>
<p>Can build template to include action plan</p>	<p>This can be used if a competency has not been achieved, whether the staff or student or both can put together an action plan of what to do to achieve the competency or the competency level required.</p>	<p>Good method of setting/outlining specific tasks. Good at an organisational level from both a staff and student perspective as in a template format – it will guide the plan – i.e. identify goals, methods, timelines and resubmission dates.</p>
<p>Facility to add points of time in</p>	<p>This can be used to clock and keep track of practice hours or CPD points.</p>	<p>Useful way or recording hours and courses completed and keeping information up-to-date.</p>
<p>Workbooks can be embedded inside workbooks</p>	<p>The aim of this is to make it look less cluttered at a glance</p>	<p>Could be useful to keep everything linked – sometimes students study in silos – this could provide an opportunity for integration and suitable assessments in the workshop integrated to show them that learning is not in isolation and needs to be put into context.</p>
<p>Provides analytics</p>	<p>PebblePad will run reports and provide analytics.</p>	<p>Can be useful to monitor engagement, identifying what to improve and what is a good resource etc. Can be useful data for publishing if you are conducting a study?</p>
<p>Levels of access available</p>	<p>You decide the level of access, lecturer's access to all info, students to what you give them</p>	<p>Important for security of student information.</p>

	<p>access to and what they create themselves.</p> <p>Tutors can simply have access via email to approve reflections and competencies and provide feedback through what PebblePad call Atlas – here tutors can have access to tick achievement as well as comment on achievement without having to take out a licence. They are given privileges to the sections they require to support student learners</p>	
Groups and students can collaborate on-line	Students can do a personal share (share with those they choose) or as part of a community in the ‘atlas community space’. This allows groups to be created, tasks to be identified, inter-professional learning etc...	Excellent way to create on-line network and allow students to collaborate even if they are not in the one location. Much feedback shows that inter-professional learning is difficult to organise from the perspective of resources (time, location, clashes of timetables etc...) – on-line collaborations can facilitate this.
Students have access to their portfolio throughout their degree	Each year builds on the previous year and students have access to all prior information -, access to first year material is not lost in second year etc...	Good for vertical integration of information/learning.
Option to export their information if they move from PebblePad	<p>If a student stores their information on their own page and in their ‘asset store’ this information effectively belongs to them and can be exported with them when they graduate or move to a different ePortfolio system.</p> <p>If they are migrating to PebblePad in their professional career all their information can be copied directly across, however, if it is a different ePortfolio system it will have to be exported as PDF</p> <p>Competency booklet and all attachments can be taken with them.</p>	Good as students get to retain a record of their learning and have access to it also for reference or revision in their professional career
Free Life-long access	If a student is enrolled for the duration of their undergraduate degree they get lifelong access to PebblePad for documenting and tracking their CPD.	Useful as it is free and competency mapping and CPD monitoring is becoming part and parcel of all professions – option to suggest to respective professional bodies that PebblePad be their ePortfolio system of choice?
Exporting files	Files can be exported to Google Drive, dropbox, sky drive 365 and stored until a new portfolio system is identified	The ability to export directly to the ‘cloud’ is very useful.

For a complete list ePortfolio tools available on the market please look at the following Epac address:
<http://epac.pbworks.com/w/page/12559686/Evolving%20List%20of%20ePortfolio-related%20Tools>.