

making the case

PebblePad: compared to paper


Gathering and presenting a portfolio of evidence is traditionally a paper-based process. Whilst paper offers the benefit of being familiar, it's likely that paper based processes exist more for historical reasons than efficiency or quality. In reality paper is cumbersome to process, slow and inconvenient to navigate through and expensive to move from place to place.

Where organisations are looking to optimise processes, support learners and reduce costs, paper is undoubtedly a poor choice.

Using online systems removes many of the problems inherent in paper. Of course not all online systems are equal, so you need to carefully consider your choice of system to ensure it meets all your needs. PebblePad has been specifically designed to support a wide range of uses from supporting learners in the recording and planning of their learning through to supporting tutors with the whole assessment cycle. This includes the ability to distribute online forms and templates for learners to complete and submit back for assessment. The assessment management facilities include the ability to set deadlines, allow access for multiple markers both internally and external to the organization. Work can be submitted and marked anonymously, and importantly there are easy to use options for providing feedback. When the assessment process is complete there is also an option to archive work for ongoing quality checking. All of these options are available in a safe secure environment without the need to print a single sheet of paper.

Just a few of the many benefits include:

- Instant distribution of templates, forms and other supporting resources with no printing costs for the organisation.
- Access to work as it develops
- Immediate feedback on work
- No transport, photocopying or storage costs for submissions
- Easy access for external examiners to work without the need to travel to the institution
- Robust backup of materials keeping them safe from loss



For Dr Peter Wilson, Head of Creative Arts at Charles Sturt University in Bathurst, using PebblePad on his course has meant there is no longer a storage problem each time assignments are due. A whole room used to be devoted to storing the paper-based portfolios. Now, in addition to more space for the department, students don't submit additional multimedia files as evidence of their progression in fields such as visual arts, drama, dance or music. This evidence is embedded in the PebblePad webfolio.

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Following a course redesign that embedded PebblePad, staff in the Division of Midwifery at the University of Bradford have found that considerable savings have been made. The main saving using PebblePad comes from reduced travelling to placement areas because tutors can monitor and feedback on the students' progress through their portfolios.

If your assessment processes are paper-based (e.g. a paper-based portfolio), ask yourself these questions:

- How much does it cost your department or institution to print and distribute forms to your students?
- How do students evidence their learning? Can they include multi-media files?
- Can tutors easily provide formative feedback as the work is developing?
- Are there options for peer support and review?
- How much does it cost to collect and manage the submitted portfolios and enter data?
- How much does it cost to store the portfolios?
- How much does it cost to transport the portfolios to 1st & 2nd Markers?
- How much time do your tutors spend on administrating the paper-based process?
- How quickly do students receive feedback?
- How do you ensure the portfolios are secure and free from risk of damage or loss?
- How do you handle the loss of a portfolio (either by a student or the department)?
- How much does it cost to mail the portfolios to the external examiner, or if they are too bulky to send in the post, how much do you pay to accommodate the examiner overnight?
- How do you retrieve past submissions to either share with future cohorts or for quality assurance processes?

We contacted 15 of our customers and asked them about the financial savings that had been made by using PebblePad rather than traditional processes. Although hard to quantify, responses show that a programme of study can save between **£15 and £40 per student**. Using PebblePad can also support your institution's approaches to reducing its carbon footprint, through a reduction in travel and use of paper.

Overall, how effective is it for your programme to continue with a paper-based system?

Compared to a paper-based process PebblePad is a low-cost, high impact solution.

Before PebblePad was introduced, tutors in the Department of Education at the University of Bath were transporting up to 15 lever arch files at a time to mark them. Now that students are submitting portfolios via PebblePad, the task of transporting these portfolios has been eliminated.

The Faculty of General Dental Practice (UK) plans to give examiners access to a gateway to see assignments so they will no longer have to travel a day ahead of the examination board thus abolishing the cost of an overnight stay.

Contact



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