



Queen Margaret University
EDINBURGH

Student guide to creating a blog

This guide includes:

- An introduction to blogs
- Reasons why you might choose to keep a blog
- Instructions on how to create, view and post to a blog
- Instructions on editing and linking to a blog
- Instructions for sharing blogs
- Suggestions of where to go for help

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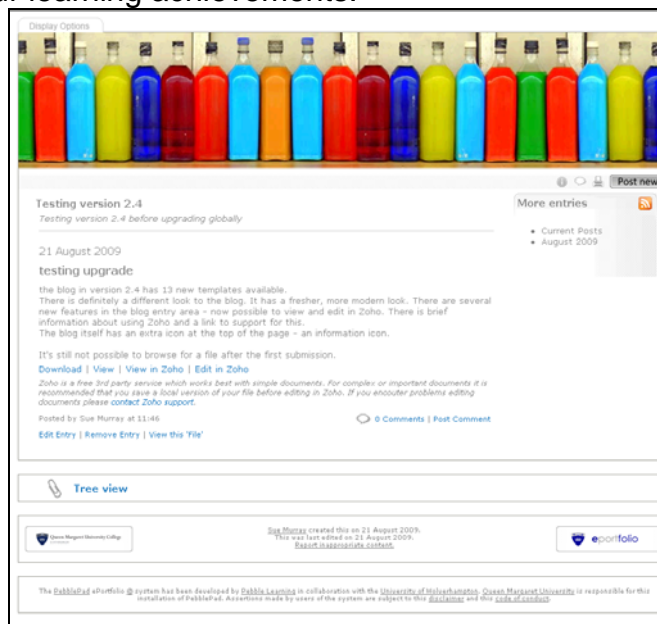
Acknowledgements

With thanks to Pebble Learning, for allowing us to incorporate materials from their online user guide: PebblePad © Copyright Pebble Learning 2008

1. An introduction to blogs

A blog is an online diary or learning journal which can be used on a regular basis to record your experiences during your time at Queen Margaret University (QMU). You might be asked to create a blog when on placement or when working on a project. You can also share your blog, or selected parts of it (thoughts), with tutors and colleagues so they can comment on your experiences and on what you are learning.

A blog is a single web page that lists entries, known as thoughts, created in date order with the most recent at the top of the list. You can either post entries directly or you can post existing thoughts and files to a blog. A blog can also be added as a section to a webfolio (see our guide to webfolios). At QMU, we want you to include elements of reflection in your blogging which can help your future learning development and which can be used as evidence of your learning achievements.



An example of a blog

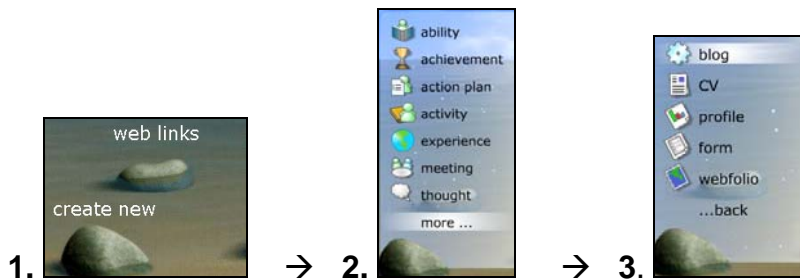
2. Why should I keep a blog?

By writing things down, not only will it help you record an event, but also it will help you to clarify your thoughts and emotions. Writing a blog is also a useful way of working out strategies for coping in the future and to think about what training or further development you require. You may use an entry in a blog as evidence of learning, in preparation for tutorials, or as a basis for discussion with tutors, especially your Personal Academic Tutor.

Further information about the use of blogs can be found on our ePortfolio web pages: <http://www.qmu.ac.uk/eportfolio/whatsin.htm>

3. How to create a blog

To create a new blog, open your PebblePad account and using the **create new** menu go to **more...** and then select **blog**.



Step 1

A pad will appear on the right-hand side. On the first page there are areas to add an appropriate **title**, select a **tag** (a tool to help you organise and manage your assets) and add a **description** for your blog.

Step 2

Select either the **number 2** button or the **next** arrow on the navigation bar to move to the next section. Section 2 is where you can choose a header for your blog.



A selection of templates is available to choose from, using the drop-down menu.

Please note: an alert triangle will appear when you browse the templates. This is to remind you to check the contrast between the text and the background of your blog – to ensure it is readable. You can **Preview** at any stage, using the magnifying glass icon.

If you prefer, you can create your own template by scrolling right down to the end of the list and selecting **create new template**. (Please see PebblePad's online **Help** menu for full details on how to create a custom template – available using the ? icon at bottom right of each pad).

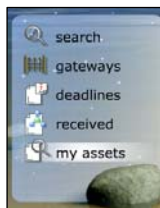
Step 3

Once you have set up your blog select either the **number 3** button or the **next** arrow on the navigation bar to move to the last section. Here you can choose to do a number of things with the blog you have just created:

- view and post to blog;
- send to: person, web, gateway, activity log (if enabled), word;
- add a review;
- add/edit link;
- tag this asset.

You can also simply click on the green **tick button** to save and close your blog.

4. Viewing and posting to a blog



To view or post to your blog, open from your asset store. To do this go to the **view** menu, select **my assets**, and then find your blog in your list of assets. Once you have found your blog in your asset store, select it and then select **view and post to blog** from the options on the right-hand pad.

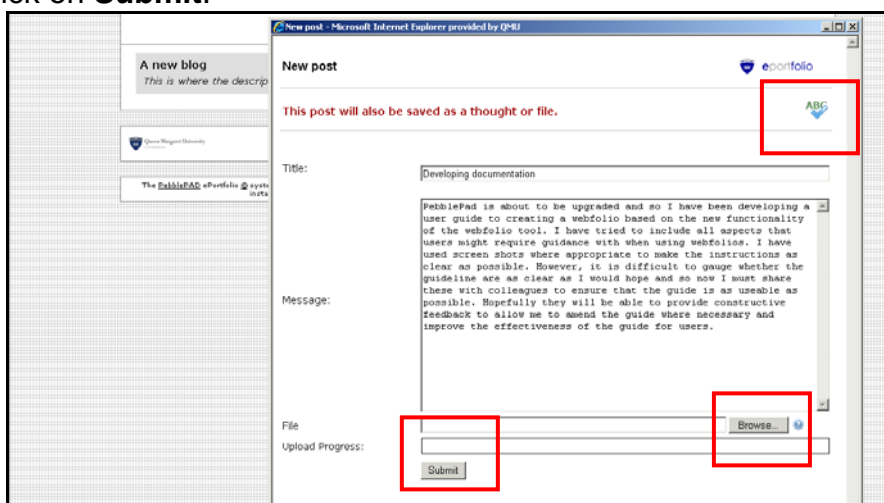


The example demonstrates a new blog that has a **header**, a **title** and a brief **description**.



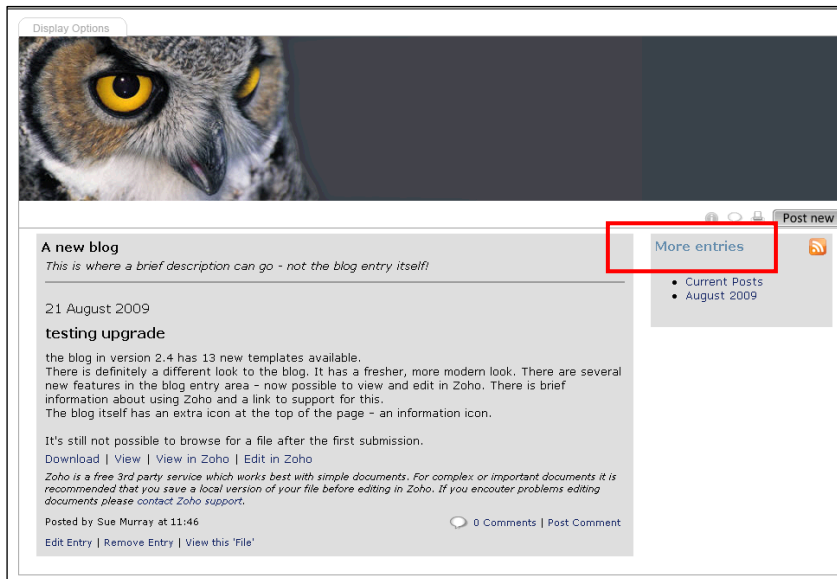
A new blog with header, title and description

To add an entry to the blog select **Post new**. Give the post an appropriate **Title** and then write your entry in the **Message** area. You can write as much or as little as you wish. If you wish to attach a document or image, there is a facility to **Browse** your document folder or memory stick for files to upload. There is also a **Spell Check** facility (ABC tick). Once you are happy with your entry click on **Submit**.



Example showing spell check, browse and submit

Please note: the **Browse** for attachments option is only available with **Post New** – if you return to **Edit an Entry** you no longer have the facility to browse for items to attach (see **section 5.2** for instructions on an alternative method of attaching items as links).

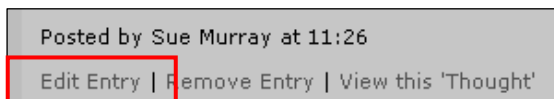


You can see that when you post a new entry, the following details are recorded:

- date;
- subject title;
- author name;
- time of posting.

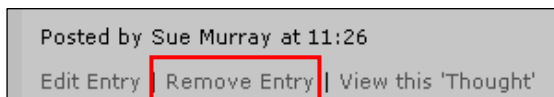
Demonstrating a new post to a blog

Current Posts is the default view, but entries can also be organised and searched by individual months – just select the month link under **More entries**.

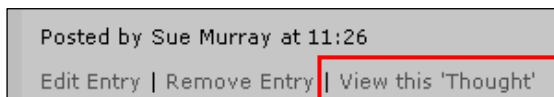


If you wish to add more to your entry after posting, or to make changes, select the **Edit Entry** option. **Note:** the original date and time of posting will

remain unchanged regardless of how many times you return to edit an entry.

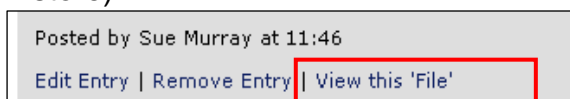


If you wish to delete an entry select **Remove Entry**. This will remove the entry from this blog, but the **thought** will still be available to you as an asset in your asset store (for future use).



Note: All entries that you create in a blog are stored as individual assets called **thoughts**. Selecting **View this**

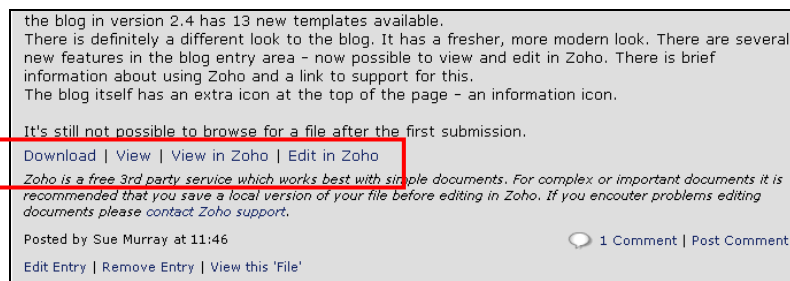
'Thought' will open your thought as an individual item – e.g. this can be useful if you wish to print a particular entry rather than the whole blog. However, to make changes to a blog entry/thought you need to choose **Edit Entry** in your blog (or **edit this asset** if opening a thought from your asset store).



If a file is attached to a blog entry, then the view option changes to **View this 'File'**.

For certain files such as word documents, it is now possible to **View in Zoho** and **Edit in Zoho**, a free 3rd party document editing service. In some

instances it may be quicker to open a document to view in Zoho, however, the appearance of your document will be different to how it appears in a word document. More complex or important documents should be saved outwith the ePortfolio and then edited either in Zoho or word. For further information about this feature see the Zoho FAQ page:
http://www.zoho.com/zoho_faq.html



View options



Use the tools at the top right-hand side of the blog to **view information** (e.g. regarding sharing and tagging), **Add comments**, **Print**, and **Post new**.

5. Copying sections from one blog to another

It is possible to link entries from one blog to another blog – for example, you may have a private blog and find that you wish to share a particular entry from that blog with your colleague or tutor, but not the whole blog. In this instance you could create a second blog and copy selected thoughts from your first blog for sharing to this.

Copying sections (or thoughts) from one blog to another blog can be done in one of two ways: sending to a blog, or attaching as a link.

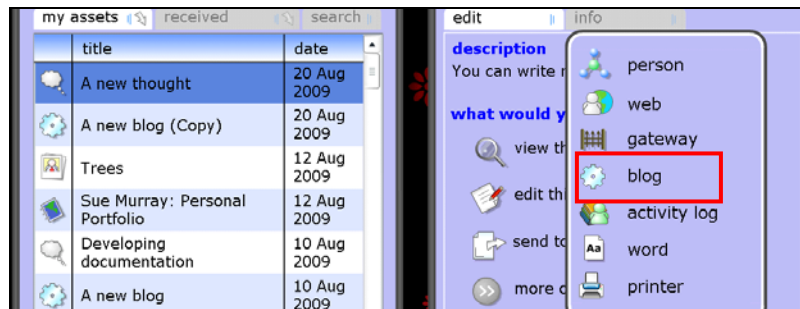
5.1 Sending a thought to a blog

In addition to writing reflective entries straight into a blog, it is also possible to write individual **thoughts** as separate items. If you decide to use this approach it is possible to attach individual thoughts to one or more blogs – for example, you may wish to share a series of thoughts with a colleague, or with your tutor.



A thought is identified by the **cloud** icon.

To move a thought to a new blog, select the thought in your asset store and in the pad that appears on the right-hand side, select **send to... blog**.



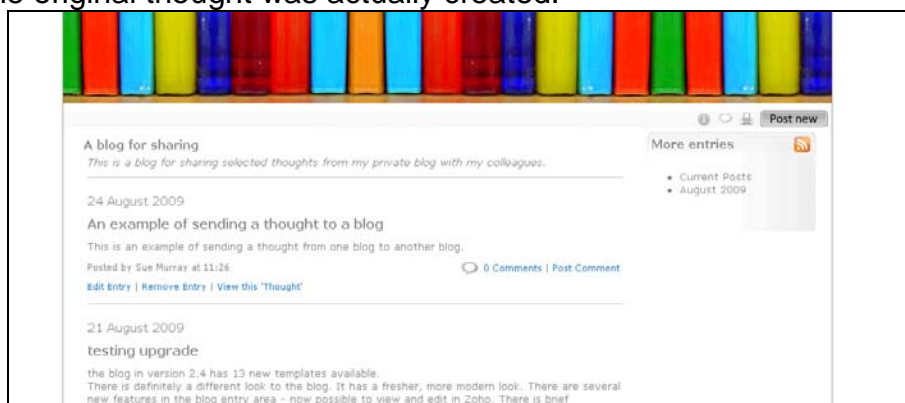
Selecting a 'thought' and 'send to... blog'

Select the blog you wish to send to from the list that appears and click on the green tick to **post to a blog**.



Selecting the blog to 'send to...'

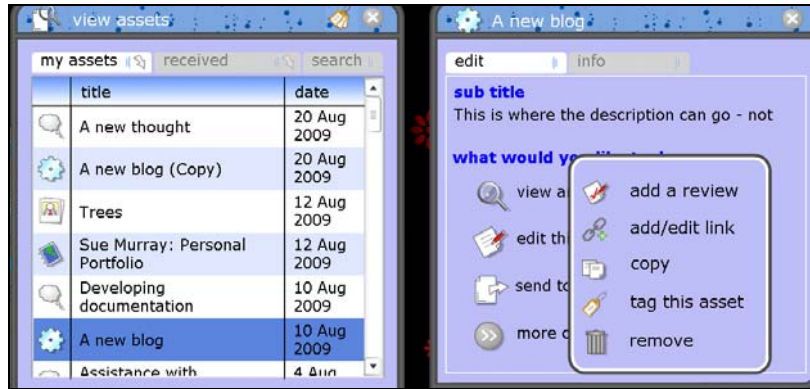
The thought will now appear as a **new entry** in the chosen blog and you will be able to **Edit Entry**, **Remove Entry**, or **View this 'File'** in the same way as with other entries. **Please note:** any thought that you transfer in this way will now appear at the top position in the blog and with the current date – not the date the original thought was actually created.



Demonstrating new thought - sent to blog

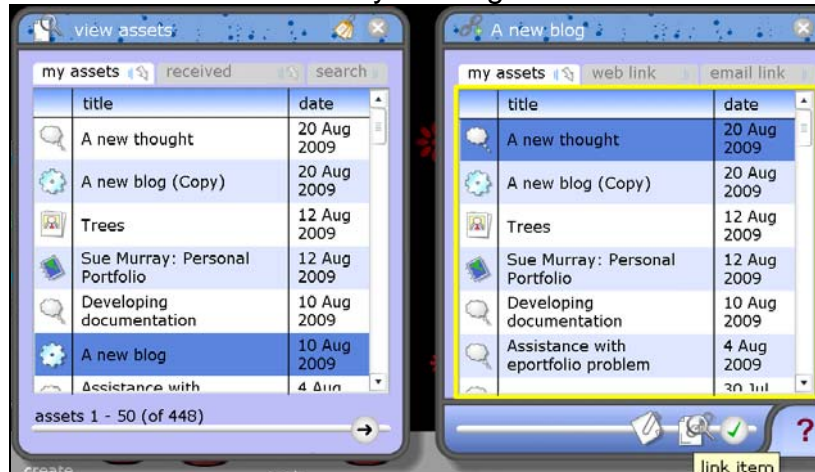
5.2 Attaching a thought to a blog as a link

To attach a thought (or other items) to a blog, first select the blog in your asset store, then go to **more options** on the right-hand pad that appears. In **more options** select **add/edit link**.



Selecting a blog and 'add/edit link'

A copy of your asset store will appear on the right-hand side of the screen and from this you can choose to attach a blog entry (thought), or any other item from your asset store to the blog you have selected. Select the item and click on the **green tick** to link the item to your blog.



Linking an item to a blog

The thought (or other item) you have attached will now appear as a link on the right-hand side of the blog, underneath **Links**. It will not be visible in the list with the other posts to the blog.



It is also possible to attach other items from your asset store, **web/email links** and to **browse for an external file** to attach to your blog using this method (e.g. word document, PowerPoint presentation, images etc.).

The example below demonstrates how to attach a **web link** to a blog. There is also room to add a description of the link which is displayed when you roll-over the link in your blog – this is particularly useful for providing brief information about a link, especially if you are sharing

your blog with your tutor. Remember to select the **green tick** to save changes and attach links in this way.

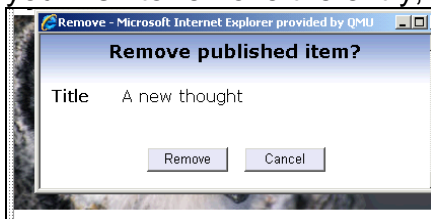


Linking a web link to a blog

6. Removing entries from a blog

6.1 Removing entries

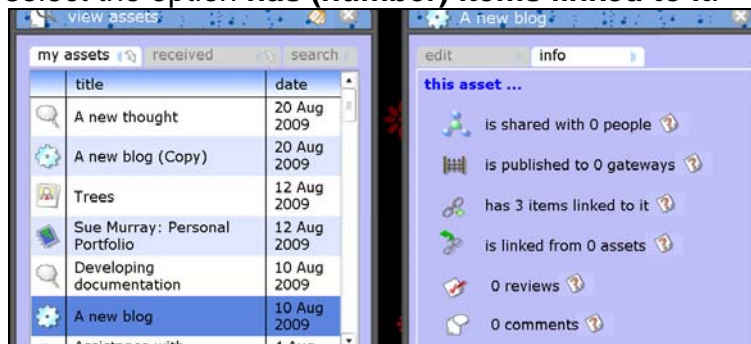
As demonstrated earlier (section 4), blog entries may be removed using the **Remove Entry** option. When this is selected a confirmation window will appear to ensure that you do not remove entries by accident. If you are sure you wish to remove the entry, select **Remove**.



Please note: Although the entry will be removed from the blog, it will still be available as a **thought** in your asset store and could be re-added to your blog at a later date if required, but beware – on re-posting it will appear with the current date and time of posting and not the original.

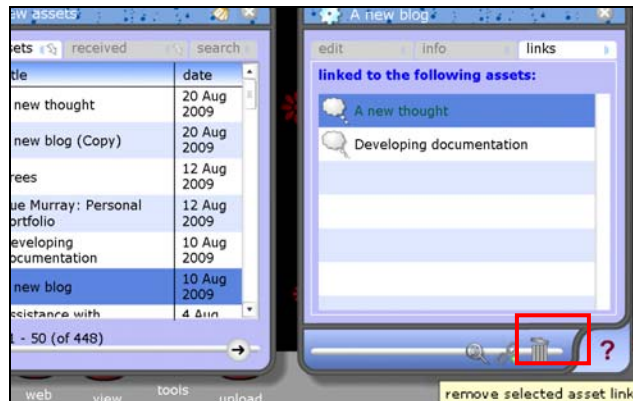
6.2 Removing links

To remove items that have been attached to your blog as links, select the blog in your asset store and then go to the **info** tab at the top of the right-hand pad. On this pad select the option **has (number) items linked to it**.



Selecting information about linked items

A new pad will appear (called **links**). Select the item you wish to remove and then select the **bin** icon at the bottom of the pad. A confirmation message will appear to make sure you do not remove the link by accident. Select **remove link** to continue.



Removing selected links from a blog

The item will be removed from the blog, but will still be available to you in your asset store.

7. Printing

It is possible to print a blog using the **print** icon at the top of the page – however, the print version will not appear in the same format as the online version.



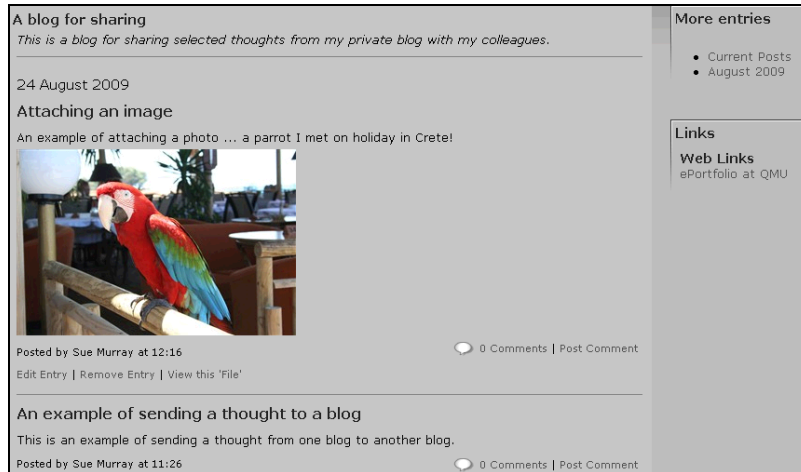
It is also possible to print individual entries by selecting these as thoughts in your asset store and then selecting **send to... printer**.



Sending a 'thought' to the printer

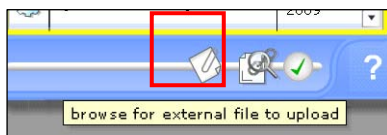
8. Adding images

As demonstrated in section 4, it is possible to attach an image to a blog entry using the **Browse** option on a **Post new** function. Any image you attach in this way will be visible in your new blog entry – as demonstrated in the following screen shot.



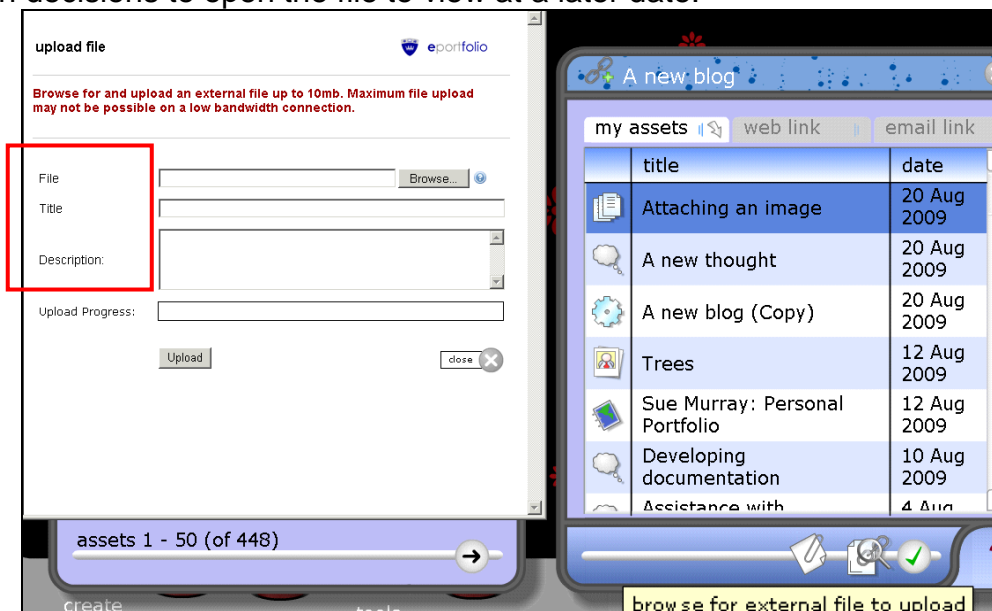
Attaching an image to a blog entry

It is also possible to attach images as links (see section 5.2).



Here you would select your blog, go to **more options... add/edit link** and browse for an external file to upload (using the **paper clip** icon).

You are required to give the file a **Title** and a brief **Description** – this is because the file will be attached as a link rather than being actually visible and so a title and description will assist in identifying the item and will also assist with decisions to open the file to view at a later date.



Browsing for an external image to link to a blog

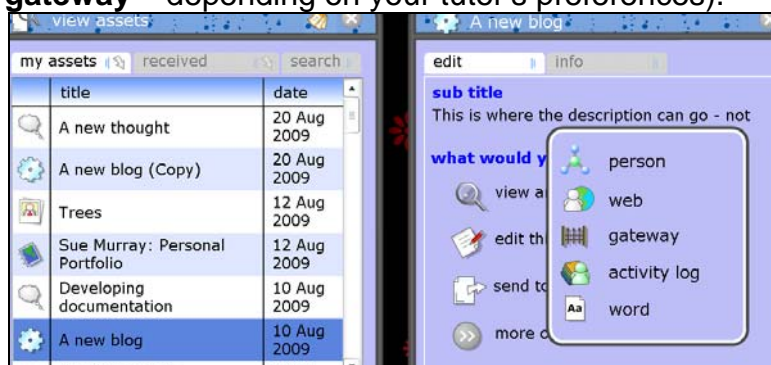
Please note: when uploading external files the size is restricted to 10mb and the maximum file upload may not be possible on a low bandwidth connection.

Attachments and images can be removed from blogs in the same way as links (see section 6.2 for full details). Use the **info tab** to view items linked to your blog, choose the item you wish to remove and then select the **bin** icon.

9. Sharing a blog

Any blogs that you create are entirely private and can not be viewed by anyone else unless you decide to share with someone. For example, you may wish to show your friends, family, or your tutor a blog that you have developed. Additionally, you may be asked by your tutor to share a blog with them for assessment/feedback purposes.

To share a blog, select the blog in your asset store, then go to **send to...** **person** (or **gateway** – depending on your tutor's preferences).



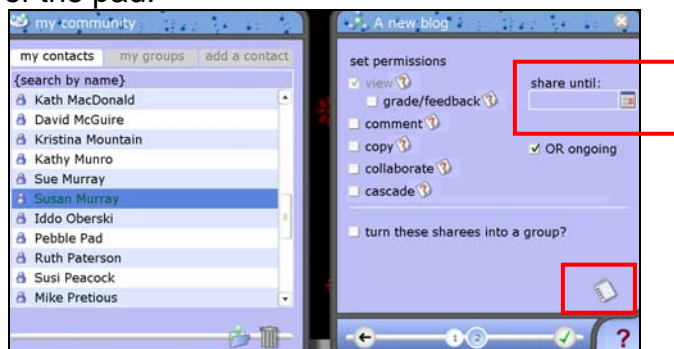
Sharing a blog

9.1 Sharing with a person

When sharing with a person you will need to add the person as a contact (see the PebblePad online help guide for details on adding contacts for sharing). When sharing in this way you will be able to grant permissions to allow those you are sharing with the ability to:

- **view** (this is the default setting);
- **grade/feedback** (this allows the recipient to view the grade for your asset);
- **comment** (allows recipient to add comments to your asset);
- **copy** (this allows the recipient to make a copy of your asset);
- **collaborate** (allows recipient to re-share your asset);
- **cascade** (gives recipient co-ownership of the asset once they edit it).

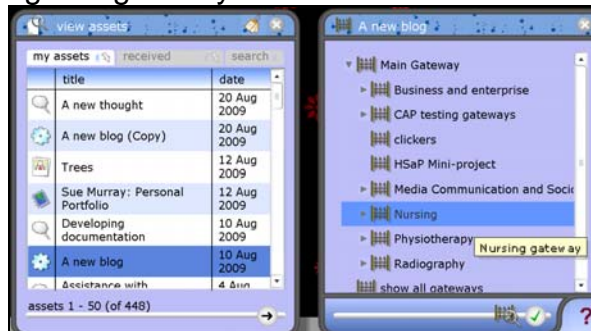
You can also choose to share indefinitely by selecting **ongoing**, or for a defined period of time by using the calendar tool beside **share until**. An email will be sent by PebblePad to the person you have shared your asset with and you can provide a short message to go with this – using the **note pad** icon at the bottom-right of the pad.



Setting share permissions

9.2 Publishing to a gateway

To share (publish) a blog to a gateway (an institutional area), select your blog, then select **send to... gateway**. Navigate to the correct gateway (your tutor will advise you of this) select the gateway, then select the green tick to **publish** to the gateway. The gateway should then open and you will see your blog in the gateway. You should also receive an email from PebblePad confirming this (if you have email selected as an option in **my settings**). Please see our **Student guide to using gateways in ePortfolio** for further details on publishing to a gateway.



Publishing to a gateway

9.3 Information about shared items

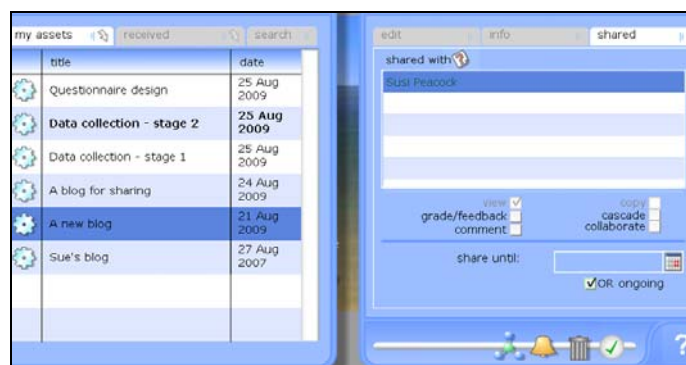
To check whether an asset is shared with a person or published to a gateway, use the **view information** icon at the top of the blog (see section 4).



The info tab page

Alternatively, select the asset and then go to the **info tab** on the pad that appears on the right-hand side.

To remove or undo a share – go to the **shared tab**, select the person you wish to unshared the asset with and then choose the **bin** icon at the bottom of the pad.



If you wish to unshared an asset previously shared with a person, go to the **shared tab**, find the person you wish to remove the share with and then select the **bin** icon.

10. Where to go for help

Further information about ePortfolios, including user guides, can be found on the ePortfolio web pages: <http://www.qmu.ac.uk/eportfolio/>

An extensive online help facility is available within PebblePad – use the ? icon at the bottom right of all right-hand pads to access step-by-step guides. Help movies and tip sheets are also available on the ePortfolio login page.

If you are experiencing problems logging into, or using QMU's ePortfolio, please email epportfolio@qmu.ac.uk stating your name and matriculation number.

If you are having problems with your password or have forgotten your password, please email LRCHelp@qmu.ac.uk stating your name and matriculation number. The helpdesk will be able to reset your password for you.

11. Frequently asked questions

When I amend an entry to a blog, the date does not change. Why?

When you edit an entry to a blog, it only shows when you created the first entry. It will not show if you have returned to the entry and changed it. In comparison, if you add a thought to a blog, it will show the date that the thought was added to the blog, not the date it was created.

I want to add a file to an entry that has already been created. How do I do this?

It is not possible to add a file to an entry in a blog that has already been created. However, you could add the file as a link. For further information, see section 5.

I have shared my blog but my tutor cannot add comments to the blog. What should I do?

When you share a blog, it is important to decide what rights you will give the recipient, for example, will the recipient be able to make comments or to copy your blog. In this case, when sharing your blog, you should have allowed the tutors to make comments by ticking the comment box, see section 9.