

Using ePortfolio Blogs for X1004 Study and IT Skills
Subject area - Media, Communication and Sociology & Psychology Level 1
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Study and IT Skills is a 10-credit, assessed core module, which is taken by all the Level 1 undergraduate Media, Communication and Sociology and Psychology students at Queen Margaret University. There are approximately 220 Students in this combined cohort.

The module is delivered entirely online in Semester One with a drop-in workshop available weekly for anyone who needs additional assistance. Access to the module is continued in Semester 2 so that student can continue to access the material to support their further studies

The online content consists of learning modules organised into “blocks” covering Study Skills and IT Skills:

Study Skills Blocks	IT Skills Blocks
Literature Searching	How to use WebCT
Essay Writing	Communicating with Email
Reading and Note Taking	Word-processing with MS Word
Coping with Exams	Browsing the Web
How to Reference	Using MS Powerpoint in Presentations
Avoiding Plagiarism	Calculations and Graphs with MS Excel
Using the TurnitinUK Service	

This year an additional study skills block on ePortfolio has been added where the students are introduced to the PebblePad ePortfolio tool and are expected to use it to blog about their early experiences in the module and at QMU in general. The block explains the reflective purpose of ePortfolios and provides links to:

- The QMU introductory student guide to using PebblePad:
<http://www.qmu.ac.uk/eportfolio/StudentGuideBasicv4.pdf>
- A module specific guide ‘How to blog in PebblePad’
- The QMU full student guide to PebblePad:
<http://www.qmu.ac.uk/eportfolio/eportfoliov78.pdf>

By introducing the blog tool in the ePortfolio, it is hoped that these first-year learners will:

- Begin to develop reflective skills;
- View reflection through ePortfolio as a beneficial and integral part of their programme rather than as an add on;
- Embark on their first steps of using the ePortfolio system and all its tools. For example, webfolios or CVs;
- Extend their IT skills in preparation for the use of ePortfolio in other modules during their time at QMU.

The module is mainly assessed through discussion board postings and an online exam on plagiarism but in order to encourage the students to adopt the concepts of reflection through PebblePad, the blog is also assessed as part of the module assessment regime.

This is done by providing a password protected PebblePad “gateway” for the students where they can publish their blog for the tutors to assess. While the students can allow other students to see their blog, by default it is normally only the student and the tutors, via the gateway, who can view it.

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