



UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

PEER ASSESSMENT AT SCALE

By Robert Chmielewski



PEBBLEPAD CASE STUDIES

**BRILLIANT IDEAS AND STORIES OF INNOVATION
TOLD BY THE TRAILBLAZERS AND CHAMPIONS OF
EXCEPTIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES.**



The Edinburgh Global department at the University of Edinburgh offers a Go Abroad Fund which provides financial support for students to undertake a short-term international experience linked to their studies. However, the popularity of the scheme created the challenge of how to select 200 successful applicants from around 1,100 entrants. PebblePad proved to be the only technical solution available to meet the fundamental requirements of the project.

THE CHALLENGE:

HOW TO MANAGE A LARGE SCALE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The University of Edinburgh encourages a global awareness in its students. The Edinburgh Global department offers a Go Abroad Fund which provides financial support for students to undertake a short-term international experience linked to their studies. The fund is open to all students from all colleges; of the 2017 cohort, 70% were Undergraduates, 11% Masters and 19% were PhD students. This scheme has proved very popular with their student community, which led to the problem of how to select the 200 successful applicants from around 1,100 entrants.

The selection process has been designed by Randall Reinhard from Edinburgh Global, in collaboration with Robert Chmielewski in the Information Services, Learning, Teaching and Web team. Previously, Adaptive Comparative Judgement software was used, but the department had neither the available time nor the resources to mark this initial level in the application process. Robert was tasked with finding a technical solution that, alongside an intuitive interface for uploading submissions, enabled peer marking at scale and scaffolded the peer marking experience.

Peer marking was considered a valuable method of initially ranking applications. Proposed by the academics, it provided a means of saving tutors time from the initial marking at scale, while also enabling a meaningful peer learning activity. The first level of marking identifies the stronger and the weaker submissions and allows more targeted subsequent review from tutors. But, from the beginning, the key goal was to ensure that students could easily engage with - and participate in - the process.

PebblePad offered clear advantages; it was the only technical solution available that met these fundamental requirements of such a project.



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THE SOLUTION:

PEER MARKING IN PEBBLEPAD'S ASSESSMENT SPACE, ATLAS

Once PebblePad was identified as the platform to run the application process, the user experience was considered. Whilst the University of Edinburgh has an Enterprise License, the team could not be sure that every student would have yet encountered a module or programme incorporating PebblePad. No assumptions could therefore be made about familiarity with the system.

Furthermore, after submitting their work, students would also be acting as tutors in order to mark their peers' applications. In a tutor role, the applicants would need to mark anonymous submissions to reduce bias. With the user experience at the forefront, Robert had to design a solution that would not inhibit participation from either user perspective. PebblePad's flexibility with permissions allows one member to act in different roles. Situating all activity in ATLAS both enabled students to act in both roles and also contained all activity in one workspace.

The Go Abroad team certainly didn't want the students to need to learn to navigate the ATLAS interface in order to assess their cohort. Two features of the system support the process, benefitting the project. PebblePad allows customised help text to be viewed by assessors when giving feedback, so Robert added additional instructions to provide just in time guidance for the students. Secondly, the save prompt that automatically shows in the feedback panel minimises the risks of students losing feedback. Whilst they seem small details on the surface, Robert points out that even a small percentage of students who do not follow the process can lead to an administrative headache through additional support. These features were a real bonus for the design of the Go Abroad project implementation.

The students' submissions must remain anonymised throughout process. Anonymity is one of the biggest advantages that ATLAS offers over other assessment systems; the students can never see whose work they are marking, but the staff members can. This flexibility in ATLAS enables the peer marking process to run smoothly, with tutors and administrators being able to monitor activity and the tutors continuing the assessment after completion of the first round of marking.

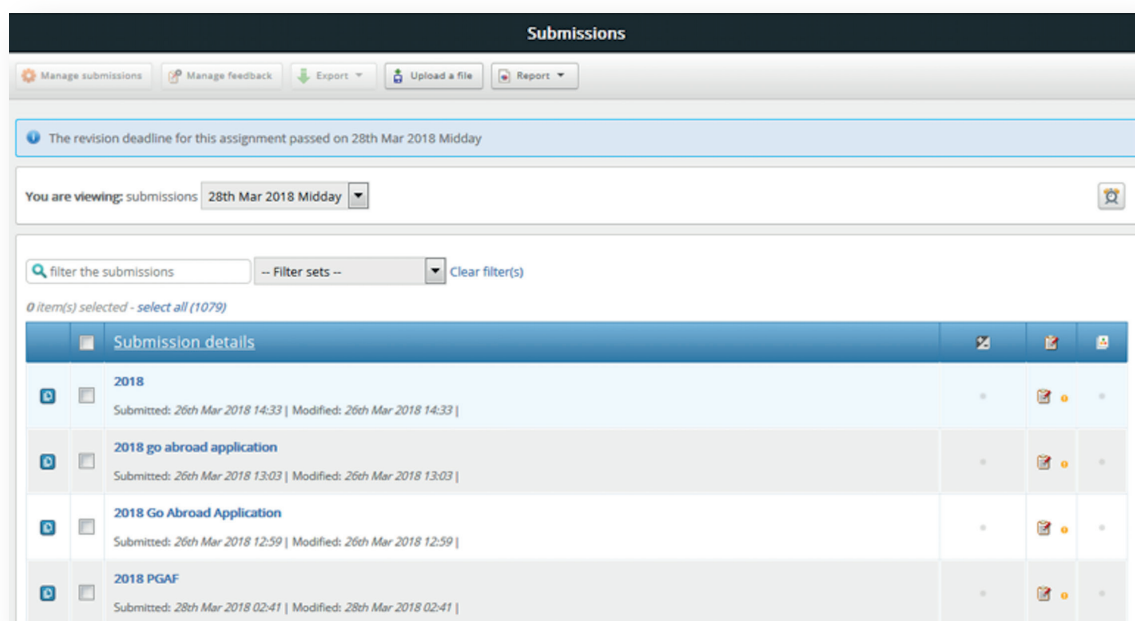


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THE SOLUTION IN PRACTICE:

THE PEBBLEPAD WORKFLOW

Students sign up to be eligible for the fund. When the call opens, a public link to the submission form is available through University of Edinburgh's communication channels. A new workspace is created for the year's applications; 2018 saw 1,079 successful applicants participate. The students submit their application to the workspace by following a direct 'submit to ATLAS' link that allows them to submit their application without having to familiarise themselves with the system, a user-friendly feature of PebblePad. Designing an equivalent system in a VLE would require the student to log in, navigate to their course, seek the specific topic or quiz and then work with the relevant information. Removing a couple of interaction steps is extremely helpful in terms of reducing barriers to engagement.



Workflow Example 1 shows the application submissions in the PebblePad Assessment Space, ATLAS.

Behind the scenes, the applications are confirmed as successful and the whole cohort is split into multiple groups of six. This is achieved by an automated, randomised set generation within ATLAS, with manual adjustment for additional numbers that cannot be evenly split. The students are then given tutor membership to the workspace, as managers/tutors with limited permissions. They are then sent their second direct link to ATLAS, which directs them to the workspace submission page. At this point, the students will see the five anonymous submissions in their randomly generated cohort.

A bespoke Feedback Template is added to the workspace, presenting standardised Likert-style questions the student-tutor is required to answer for each submission. This scaffolded approach to peer assessment reduces burdens on the student in engaging with a professional level of assessment and instead focusses on their ability as a member of the university to identify value in the submission.

Save as...

Go Abroad Fund Peermarking

How would you rate the overall value of the proposed activity?

Weak Strong

How would you rate the potential benefit of the proposed activity to the applicant?

Weak Strong

How would you rate the applicant's ability to represent the University of Edinburgh while abroad?

Weak Strong

Create

Workflow Example 2 shows the standardised feedback template made available to 'peer reviewers'.

Feedback for Go Abroad Application

Add feedback

In order to leave your peer feedback, please click on the 'Use feedback template' button. Once you create your feedback response, please click on [Save & close] below.

The feedback will be anonymous when released

Comment:

B *I* U ~~Ix~~ [Link](#) [Unlink](#)

-

-

Use feedback template Add attachment Add asset

Release options:

☐ Release feedback comment now

☒ Hold for later release

Workflow Example 3 shows how the customised text in the **Add Feedback** panel identifies clearly what the students need to do. The students are prompted to save each template and move on to the next submission until their full set of applications has been peer assessed.

Once students have reviewed their submissions, the administrative task of compiling reports is then able to start. With almost 1,100 submissions, this means reporting on well over 5,000 assessment templates. The reporting functionality in ATLAS automates this beautifully, and the CSV report can be generated within just a couple of minutes.

Submission title	Publisher Name	Publisher Username	Assessor Name	Assessor Username	Response date	How would you rate the...	How would you rate the...	How would you rate the...
Personal Statement	2nd Apr 2018 11:08	7	8	7
Personal Statement 2	1st Apr 2018 20:01	8	8	7
Personal Statement 3	31st Mar 2018 02:13	6	8	3
Personal Statement 4	28th Mar 2018 13:32	10	10	10
Personal Statement 5	28th Mar 2018 13:30	7	7	5
Personal Statement 6	2nd Apr 2018 13:25	9	10	9
Personal Statement 7	30th Mar 2018 19:25	6	7	9
Personal Statement 8	28th Mar 2018 17:56	7	7	5
Personal Statement 9	28th Mar 2018 15:07	6	6	6
Personal Statement 10	3rd Apr 2018 18:48	4	5	6
Personal Statement 11	3rd Apr 2018 10:54	3	5	2
Personal Statement 12	1st Apr 2018 10:48	3	4	8
Personal Statement 13	29th Mar 2018 15:14	7	8	4
Personal Statement 14	28th Mar 2018 13:45	7	8	8
Personal Statement 15	4th Apr 2018 11:26	6	8	8
Personal Statement 16	1st Apr 2018 15:51	7	7	4
Personal Statement 17	1st Apr 2018 13:37	8	9	9
Personal Statement 18	1st Apr 2018 00:24	7	5	7
Personal Statement 19	28th Mar 2018 14:00	10	5	3
Personal Statement 20	4th Apr 2018 01:32	8	7	8
Personal Statement 21	3rd Apr 2018 18:56	10	7	3
Personal Statement 22	30th Mar 2018 19:22	8	8	8
Personal Statement 23	29th Mar 2018 19:56	8	9	10
Personal Statement 24				

Workflow Example 4 shows the exported submission data

After this phase in the project, the academic tutors pick up the rest of the process. The peer marked submissions give an instant view of the stronger and weaker cases. Any unusual data, for example very low marks all round given by one participant to their cohort, will be revealed and can be investigated. But the tutor input to this point has been massively reduced thanks to Robert's design and implementation in ATLAS.

This peer assessment process and subsequent reporting took place all within one week, leaving very little room for error. Happily, Robert's knowledge of the PebblePad system and assured design has enabled the Go Abroad Fund project to work effectively over repeated iterations for the 1,100 strong group of student applicants and staff overseeing the project.

References

Go Abroad Fund (2018, October 8)

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/global/go-abroad/go-abroad-fund/ideas>



AN EXPERT TEAM

YOU CAN DEPEND ON

GET IN TOUCH

There are an awful lot of things that make PebblePad unique. Not least the fact that it's a platform designed by educators for educators. Indeed, the PebblePad team is bursting to the seams with innovators and practitioners, all of whom learnt their craft in teaching roles. If you want to talk to a team who really understands your world, get in touch.

PebblePad HQ (UK)

01952 288 300

PebblePad North America

(864) 650-5406

PebblePad Australasia

0400 899 820

✉ hello@pebblepad.com

🐦 <https://twitter.com/PebblePad>

in <https://www.linkedin.com/company/pebblepad>