At LaTrobe University we are educating our students to be ‘work ready’, ‘world ready’ and ‘future ready’, by drawing on rich educational technologies such as PebblePad, to increase the use of technology-enabled online learning.

LaTrobe has identified three essentials areas for preparing students to be future ready; Global Citizenship; Innovation and Entrepreneurship; and Sustainable Thinking. These essentials will foster the skills and knowledge of all undergraduate students.
LaTrobe’s four year Bachelor of Education is delivered at two regional campuses in Victoria.

The Mildura instance of the degree is delivered to approximately 135 preservice teachers across the four years who are from regional and rural locations.
For many of our current student cohort, technology is an integral part of their lives as well as a fundamental component of their degree.

All preservice teachers are expected to become competent users of a range of technological tools that will enable them to become skilled educators of 21st Century learners.

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers state what constitutes teacher quality.

The Standards ‘define the work of teachers and make explicit the elements of high-quality, effective teaching in 21st-century schools’.

For Graduate Teachers, skills in Information Communication Technologies are essential to quality teaching and learning experiences, and graduating teachers must be able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of ICT to meet these standards.
Reflective practice is a key component of effective teaching.

Like classroom teachers, Preservice Teachers are required to reflect on their professional practice against standards and principles.

Reflecting on the Principles of Learning and Teaching in addition to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers is a requirement of our degree.

Preservice teachers need to demonstrate their connections between their classroom observations and their university learning.
An assessable component of the degree is practical school based experiences.

**Practicum** is attached to a single subject each semester; in the first instance, the Introduction to Teaching Practice subject supports the practicum.

Preservice teachers are required to become **reflective practitioners** with the **practicum** being a large **part** of this **reflective process**.

Preservice teachers need to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding via **practicum documentation**.

Each year our preservice teachers are required to participate in **practicum experience in local and regional schools**.
For Mildura students, these placements may occur across three states and involve vast distances, due to our unique location.
The reflective practice expected of preservice teachers is especially evident during their practicum when they are required to **connect theory and practice**.

Until the beginning to 2013 all students were required to complete their practicum reflections via a **paper based folder** which was to be **submitted** and **assessed**, typically **twice a year**. Students were required to purchase the practicum folder when commencing their degree. Each year, new documents were added that were relevant to the corresponding year in the degree, resulting in a **substantial amount of photocopying**. Often, students chose to word process their reflective responses and include these within the folders, replacing the papers provided by academic staff.

Not only does LaTrobe’s Future Ready strategic plan push us to move to a more sustainable approach to teaching, learning and assessment, the **environmental impact** of continued paper based approaches was a concern.
Often this folder became cumbersome with preservice teachers soon housing their **reflections, resources and planning** in multiple folders.

It was not uncommon for preservice teachers to submit tubs and trolleys for assessment.

Assessment for the smaller cohort in Mildura seemed to be a realistic task until the practicum folders were presented for assessment.

The **large submission** may have resulted in a small **avalanche**!
Whilst the folder was considered a **professional document**, not all students cared for their documentation in this way.

Often it looked like it had been stored under the seat of a car.

**Organisation** of the documentation and care for the **presentation** of the folder was **inconsistent**.

Some students taking pride in the presentation of their documentation lost sight of the importance of **quality reflections** on their learning experiences.
This paper based documentation required feedback and assessment.

Feedback could only be provided to students when the documentation was physically sighted by supervising lecturers.

Typically this was after the practicum had been completed and only for final assessment.

Feedback could not be considered timely and intervention to support struggling students was difficult.

The monitoring and mentoring of students’ responses was therefore difficult.

Students on distant placements may have had little opportunity to receive formative feedback.
For the past two years we have placed our first year Bachelor of Education preservice teachers on a paired practicum.

With research supporting this decision, we believed that facilitating collaborative practice would result in a richer experience for our students.

We recognised the cost, both financial and environmental, of the paper based practicum journal and moved to replace it with a digital version.
All of our preservice teachers across the four year degree are required to **use and submit** assessment tasks via the new version of PebblePad.

PebblePlus provides users with the new tool of workbooks.

This resource allows the lecturer to **construct templates** which users can access and own.

The unique opportunity for the creator to be able to continually **add** to this template made it an appropriate selection for the purpose of **replacing** the paper based version of the practicum journal.
An ICT subject introduces first year preservice teachers to the technology requirements of their degree.

An aspect of this up skilling of students is to introduce, familiarise and develop approaches in utilising PebblePad.

Students have tasks throughout the majority of their course that require them to build, collaborate and submit via PebblePad.
As stated previously, practicum is attached to a single subject that supports the preservice teachers in all aspects of the placement, including the reflective component of the documentation.

To support the technology requirements of this task, a clear understanding of PebblePad needs to occur in parallel to learning about the practicum.

To achieve this, collaboration between the two lecturers involved had to occur and a clear understanding of the requirements of the practicum journal was needed.

As a result of this discussion, I was able to create a digital version of the practicum journal that mirrored the paper based version whilst meeting the assessment requirements of the practicum.

In addition to providing the skills to navigate PebblePad we felt it was necessary to further support students by providing in class time to provide technical support to students when they were completing their practicum reflections.
The workbook template has allowed teaching staff to clearly demonstrate the requirements of the task, having **supporting documents** including **videos** and **screen captures** linked directly from related pages.
The new workbook practicum journal allows students to focus on the content of their reflection, rather than the construction and presentation of the document.

Weekly requirements can be added during the semester, resulting in a refined document.

**Responding to the needs** of the cohort or academic staff, further examples or page structure can easily be modified.

The template has students focussing on the quality of their content rather than the ‘prettiness’ of their folder; in turn, the documentation is professionally presented to all audiences.
The reflective practicum journal is one component of the documentation requirements for preservice teachers.

Preservice teachers are also required to collate appropriate resources in addition to lesson planning.

Evidence fields are utilised to allow for the upload of these.
Our first year preservice teachers receive carefully structured in-class scaffolding for both their reflections and technical concerns.

Having this support in place assists in establishing competent and confident users of PebblePad.
One of the greatest benefits of using workbooks to replace the paper based practicum journal is that students are no longer concerned about the construction of their professional documentation but now spend their energy on quality reflections.

One student wrote ‘I feel it is far better to be with a partner in this first year. … the benefit of two people observing the same classroom came into play as we could discuss what we had seen with each other, either confirming opinions and observations or pointing out something the other partner had not particularly noticed. We could discuss connections to the theory we have been learning at University, highlighting to each other examples of scaffolding, PoLT principles, differentiation and behaviourist theories …’

The ability to retrieve these types of statements is used to further scaffold quality reflections for the cohort throughout the semester.
The opportunity for in class technical support also provides students with further scaffolding of their reflections.

Facilitated discussions between practicum partners, school groups and the class are enabled, resulting in rich reflections that are able to be entered directly into the workbook, with formative feedback able to follow soon after each contribution.
The workbook version of the practicum journal allows academic staff to easily monitor student reflections.

**Formative feedback** has become an *ingrained process* that continually supports students to improve their reflections.

**Various staff** may contribute to student feedback.

As a result, assessment may now be considered more consistent, with all relevant academic staff able to view and moderate student submissions.

Being able to review work and monitor student contributions allows teaching staff to better support students with their developing knowledge and skills.

The opportunity for **quick feedback** from university mentors and peer collaboration are additional advantages that continue to be explored with this user friendly digital version of the practicum journal.
The ability to view student responses during their practicum also addresses our need to provide preservice teachers on distant placements with on-going formative feedback.

Without having to physically visit schools, University mentors are able to gain insights into the reflective practice of their preservice teachers.
The practicum pairs allow for peer collaboration and problem solving.

Students are learning to be effective communicators as they work together to reflect on their practicum experiences.

As they utilise tools within PebblePad, they are also improving their technological skills helping them to prepare for 21st Century teaching and learning.
LaTrobe’s Future Ready strategic plan identified three essentials; our students are actively working toward achieving these via their practicum journal.

**Reflective practices via goal setting** begins to address Global Citizenship whilst developing personal and technical skills;
Innovation and Entrepreneurship ideas include the ability to **collaborate** and **effectively communicate** in addition to being taught how to thrive in a fast-changing world;
and going digital clearly addresses the future impact of documentation as part of Sustainable Thinking, without environments-compromising our future.
4th year education students are required to reflect on their professional practice from throughout their degree.

This includes drawing from previous practicum reflections as evidence toward their APSTs.

Locating rich reflections and documenting them in a way that is easily retrieved is often challenging, especially if documents have been housed in the shed and have been eaten by mice.

PebblePad is allowing our students to easily retrieve digital documentation and reflect on their learning from throughout the degree.
In the first instance, keeping the workbook structure simple and allowing the students to take ownership on their contributions is important. It is necessary to problem solve issues early so that students do not get caught up concerning themselves with issues that may be easily solved by academic or technical staff, allowing students the opportunity to focus on their contributions.

Whilst some of these documents will at this time need to remain paper based for us, there is a great opportunity to explore the capabilities of PebblePad for compiling some of this documentation to again reduce the cumbersome folders used at present. This may include adding evidence fields within templates. There is also the unexplored possibility of providing university mentors with the ability to utilise feedback templates which will keep all records centralised.

It is essential that the owner of a workbook clearly understands the intricacies of editing the workbook once it has been shared with their student cohort. It is also imperative that clear processes for managing new cohorts and copying workbooks are adhered to so as not to compromise the ‘live nature’ of the existing workbooks.

Knowing the structure of the task will aid in the construction of a suitable PebblePad asset; familiarising oneself with the tools of PebblePad, specifically those within a workbook will greatly aid the construction of a user friendly asset.
During 2013, an external review was conducted in the Faculty of Education at LaTrobe University.

When discussing the reflective practicum journals of the Mildura iteration, it was stated that the ability to tap into student feedback and immediately retrieve student responses was invaluable.

This feedback reinforced the value of our move from paper to a digital reflective document for the practicum.

I’m looking forward to seeing where the winds of PebblePad might take us in the future.