

Guidelines for podcast production and use in tertiary education

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Within the framework of the New Zealand (NZ) e-Learning Guidelines Project the University of Canterbury carried out a series of activities in order to investigate 'good practice' in the design and use of podcasting and related materials. The NZ e-learning guidelines consist of a number of questions each relating to a different aspect of provision and use of e-learning resources. This research focused on the following guidelines:

- ST9: Do the technologies help students successfully meet the learning outcomes?
- ST7: Will the e-learning foster students' curiosity and creativity?
- TD1: Is the use of e-learning appropriate to the intended learning outcome?
- TO7: What ICT support is in place specifically for e-learning, and is this support reviewed regularly?
- MO1: Can staff and students easily use the learning technologies and the online resources?

Five departments from different parts of the University participated in this research over two semesters. Each department adopted their own approach to the creation and use of podcast materials. The five departments who contributed to this research project were Japanese, Computer Science, Music, Economics and Schools' Outreach. The experience of staff and students throughout the investigation was charted through the collection of qualitative data at the outset, during, and at the end of the research period. Student focus groups, individual discussion, and online questionnaires were each used to collect and triangulate responses. In terms of quantitative data reporting, for example, the Japanese course produced 15 podcasts with a mean duration of 17 minutes which generated 4,666 hits (file accesses) over one semester. Quantitative data relating to other aspects of this course and for the other courses involved in study were used in the analysis.

In respect of the first of the e-learning guidelines above, the research indicated that the production and use of podcast materials can assist students in successfully meeting their learning outcomes subject to a number of conditions. These conditions – the main findings of this research – can be stated as follows:

1: *Pedagogic design*: thinking about the learning objectives your podcasts will achieve and how the podcast resource complements your classroom teaching, the course notes, the text book, and any other materials or resource your class uses.

2: *Adaptation of teaching style*: not all subjects and teaching styles are easily adapted to podcast production. It may be difficult to successfully transfer a visual or many-media presentation style to a podcast format which engages students the same way. It may be appropriate to pick one area of the subject rather than try to teach all topics via podcast.

3: *Structure*: identify a suitable structure for your podcast. This will be related to the content but it should also exploit the goals you have for your podcast.

4: *Series consistency*: when the structure has been determined, try to keep to it and produce and distribute podcasts at consistent time intervals in order to develop user download habits.

5: *Duration*: duration is subject to content and format. For most topics between 5 and 15 minutes seems to be the ideal for most academic content.

6: *Learner preference*: recognise there are different audiences amongst the students on your course; no-matter how much work you put into producing a podcast there will always be some students who won't use it or appreciate it.

7: *Content and production level*: You should avoid designing podcast materials that meet the lowest pedagogic denominator or require over-sophisticated production skills.

8: *Student access and use*: consider the level of ability of your students in using technology and their access to resources to access and use podcast materials. This also applies to the technological capabilities of the institution (i.e. why make a podcast if your institution cannot distribute it to your students?)

9: *Identify sources of expertise*: identify someone in your organisation who has the technical knowledge to help you choose and operate audio recording equipment and to produce, edit, and distribute podcast materials. Your students may also need some support in the same procedures, so make sure you know this support is available.

Further information

Our report and findings at: <http://www.uctl.canterbury.ac.nz/podcasting-guidelines>

Other case studies from the NZ e-learning guidelines at:

http://elg.massey.ac.nz/index.php?title=Case_Study

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