

Pre- and Post-lecture Podcasts

UWL Impact Case Studies 2012/2013

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Description

Jack was awarded a Technology-enhanced Learning (TEL) Championship in June 2012. As part of his award, he used more rich media in the materials posted on his Blackboard module site (Policing and Police Powers) in order to enhance both teaching and learning. As well as linking to and embedding externally hosted videos, Jack provides short, 5 minute audio recordings (podcasts) for his students prior to and following lectures. The pre-lecture podcast highlights the topic which is the focus of the coming lecture and links the topic to previous lectures. The post-lecture podcast gives a summary of the key points of the lecture and draws out the relationships between them and current news issues.

Approach

Podcasts are regularly-produced, small audio files which students can download from or listen to via Blackboard. Podcasts are thus named as they usually provide users with the opportunity of subscribing to an RSS feed which will automatically update users' devices with the most recent podcast edition. Unfortunately this option does not currently exist for audio uploaded to Blackboard.



Source: The Audacity Team (2007) Logo of the free digital audio editor Audacity; Wikipedia Commons. Free Software Foundation.

The audio files are recorded using a microphone attached to a computer and with the open source audio recording/editing software, Audacity. Once the audio has been recorded, it is also edited within Audacity. This is then exported in MP3 format and uploaded to the relevant module site on Blackboard. Students visiting the module site can either listen to the audio or download it to their own devices.

One audio file is made available prior to the weekly lecture. This outlines the relationship of the forthcoming lecture with preceding ones. It also suggests how students should prepare for the lecture. A second podcast is made available following the week's lecture. This provides a summary of the topic and highlights key points. Both audio files make reference to topical issues which are of relevance to the subject.

Podcasting is a recognised enhancement to the teaching and learning experience in UK higher education institutions. A case study from the University of Leeds, Engaging students beyond the classroom: the experience of a Podcasting project, is available on the Higher Education Academy website <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/subjects/csap/eliss/1-3-Lightfoot>.

Furthermore, Simon Heilesen from Roskilde University has written a paper reviewing some of the literature on podcasting. His paper, What is the academic efficacy of podcasting? is available at <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0360131510001247>.

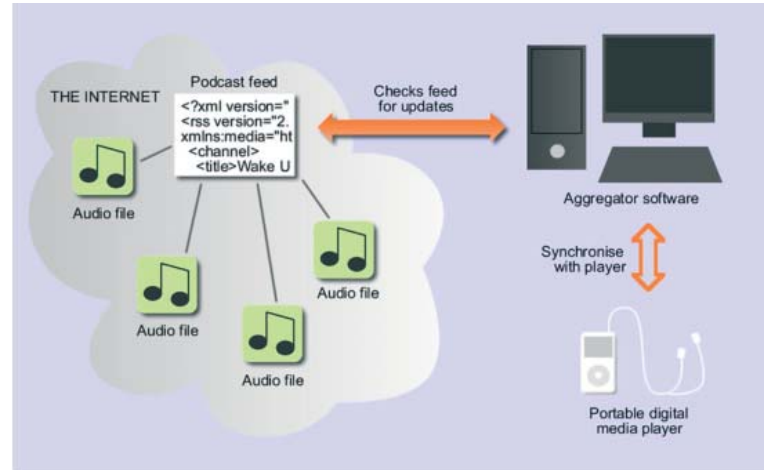
Outcomes

There was an overwhelmingly positive response to the podcasts. One student sent an e-mail to express her gratitude. She wrote "Loving the podcast !!! What a great idea Jack". The extra medium of audio not only enhances the teaching and learning experience but it also appeals to auditory learners who can replay the podcast as many times as they wish.

The podcasts may also be re-used for future iterations of the module.

Impact

It is difficult to assess both the extent to which the podcasts have made a difference to student preparation for the lecture and the impact on academic grades. However, students have reported that the podcasts have enhanced the richness of the module so the impact on the student experience has been positive. Statistics for the first podcast show that 99% of the 87 students on the module accessed it. The most popular day for listening was a Wednesday, but students clicked on the podcast link on all days of the week and at all hours of the day.



Source: Staff and Departmental Development Unit, University of Leeds;
http://www.sddu.leeds.ac.uk/online_resources/podcasting/how_it_works.html

Lessons learned

Do:

- Include topical issues in your podcasts.
- Use the podcast as a trigger to make students think critically about a topic
- Keep the podcast fairly short, around 5 minutes is ideal.
- Record the podcast in 'one take'
- Remove 'ums' and 'ers'

Don't:

- Start recording before you have planned exactly what you wish to say.

Where next?

It is hoped to undertake a qualitative and quantitative survey shortly to gauge the students' experiences of the podcasts.

In the medium term, there is the opportunity of incorporating the podcasts in a learning object using the open source, learning object creation tool, Xerte. In Xerte the podcasts could be accompanied by visuals, and followed by interactive activities which could enhance and check understanding of the material covered in the podcast.

Further in the future, it may be possible for students to produce their own podcasts to check understanding and foster peer learning.