



# Engaging the online learner:

Student reactions to the use of audio podcasts  
in off campus courses

Maria Spies  
Australian College of Applied Psychology

# Organisational Context

- Small private college (~4000 students)
- Disciplines – counselling, psychology, coaching
- Vocational and Higher Education
- Approximately 60% of students study by ‘flexible delivery’
- Adjunct teacher base (practitioner & academic)

# Student Profile

- Ave age – mid 30's
- Approx. 75% female
- Study part-time & working
- Geographically dispersed
- Career change / upgrade
- Long time since last formal education



# Teaching & Learning Context

- History of on-campus and distance education
- Flexible delivery now combines DE & Online
- Online classrooms using Moodle LMS
- Still heavily text based
- Higher drop out rates than on campus
- Concerns about student experience
- Various initiatives underway



# Audio Podcast pilot



Why audio  
podcasts?

About the  
project

Student  
Feedback

Educator training,  
resources and support

Educator Fe  
edback

## Why audio podcasts?

- Ease of use - to make and to listen
- Widespread access to technology
  - free to download Audacity
- Suitability for asynchronous delivery
- A 'new' media
- Use of educator 'voice' missing in text environment
  - personalisation & connection
- Benefits of mobility were less important



- Peer-led model
- Initial pilot with 9 volunteer educators
  - Teaching across 35 classes (620 students)
  - Identified champions
- ‘High touch’ support, training and resources for volunteer group
- Volunteer presentations
  - Seminars and webinars
- Audio podcasts used as an adjunct to existing content and practice

Educator training,  
resources and support

- Sandbox site for educators
  - How to... , real examples, peer support & feedback
  - Personalisation and connection
  - Including resources developed by educators
  - Assign Peer mentor
- Working closely with volunteer group
- Webinars
  - Co-facilitated by EdTech staff and educators
- Workshops



**People**

**Participants**

**My Classes**

**My Classes**

- 2010
- 2009
- Resources
- Other

Click [+] to expand modules.

**Administration**

**Grades**

**Reports**

**Profile**

**How to... Guides**

Getting started with my.acap **PDF Video**

Contacting your educator **PDF Video**

Submitting a written assignment **PDF Video**

Submitting a video assignment **PDF Video**

**More How to... Guides**

**Search Forums**

[Go](#)

**Advanced search** ?

**Course categories**

- Psychology
- VET
- Counselling
- 2011
- 2010
- 2009
- 2008

## Topic outline

### Podcasting Sandbox

This class space has been designed to guide educators in the creation of Podcasts to use as a tool when teaching in the online class space.


- Why Podcasting?
- Discussion Forum
- Announcements
- Video - Using Audio Podcasts as a Teaching Tool
- Tech Talks Webinar - How to create a podcast for your class
- Tech Talks Webinar - Next Steps in Podcasting
- Term 1 Feedback

✓ 176 educators 'enrolled'

✓ 120 contributions made to discussion forum

✓ 1282 views to discussion forum


**1 Getting Started with Podcasting**



The first step in podcasting is to ensure that you have the equipment and software that you need. The document below will guide you through this with step by step instructions and video tutorials.

- Equipment
  - Getting Started - Downloading Audacity
  - Getting Started - Using Garage Band (MAC Users)
  - Technical Support
  - Downloading Audacity - Video


**2 Creating your First Podcast**



Wondering what to make your podcast about, and how to make it interesting. In this section you will find tips and guidelines on creating a podcast, based on research.

- What to Podcast?
- Tips for making your podcast interesting and accessible

**3 Presenting your Podcast to the Class**



**Calendar**

**December 2011**

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

**Events Key**

- Global
- Course
- User

**Latest News**

**Add a new topic...**

8 Apr, 16:51  
Kathy Ward

Please let me know where you have used Podcats **more...**

**Older topics ...**

**Recent Activity**

Activity since Thursday, 1 December 2011, 10:00 AM

**Full report of recent activity...**

Nothing new since your last login

# Student feedback

- Online survey to 620 students
  - 73 responses (12%)
- Questions focused on
  - Podcast frequency and type
  - Learning processes (Task & Social orientations)
  - Motivational factors



# Podcast frequency and types

Generally, how often are audio podcasts used in your class?	Response Count	Response %
Once or twice in the term so far	39	54%
Weekly	31	43%
Several times a week	2	3%

	To announce weekly requirements	To explain complex concepts	To provide guidance about assessment	To add information related to the content	Response Count
<b>How has your educator used audio podcasts?</b>	34 (48%)	32 (45%)	56 (79%)	41 (58%)	71
<b>What did you find most useful?</b>	24 (38%)	30 (48%)	51 (81%)	32 (51%)	63
<b>How would like podcasts to be used in the future?</b>	40 (62%)	52 (80%)	54 (83%)	53 (82%)	65

# Orientation and motivation

## Audio Medium



I like to learn via listening (95%)

I enjoy listening as an additional way of learning (96%)

## Personal



I feel more connected to my educator through the podcasts (93%)

Podcasts make the learning experience more personal (96%)

## Motivation



Podcasts make my learning more varied and help keep my attention (94%)

The podcasts reassure me that I'm on the right track (92%)

Podcasts make the topic more interesting (88%)

## Use in learning processes



The podcasts help me to focus on what is important (93%)

Podcasts add depth to my learning (87%)

Podcasts help me to better understand some of the concepts in my course (91%)



“Fantastic innovation...it gives us an opportunity to feel closeness, and relate to our educator” (Student feedback, 2011).

# Educator Feedback

- Sandbox
- Focus group

"Give it a go, students love it and its a great way to interact" (ACAP Educator, 2011).

Students were comforted by educators voice

Just be natural and yourself

Let  
'pod  
speak

Time :

Powerful impact  
on students



# Main conclusions





# Main conclusions

- Podcasts have the potential to improve engagement for students studying at a distance
- Podcasts could have a positive effect on student motivation
- Audio can provide an effective addition to text-based communication and content
- Responses more positive with increased frequency of podcasts
- Technology doesn't seem to be a barrier





# Further research

- Analyse audio podcast uptake and use across the college
  - Further analysis of type and frequency
- More detailed feedback from educators and students about use



# Questions and discussion

