



#### Engaging the online learner: Student reactions to the use of audio podcasts in off campus courses



Maria Spies Australian College of Applied Psychology

C TemplatesWise.com

## **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





- 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



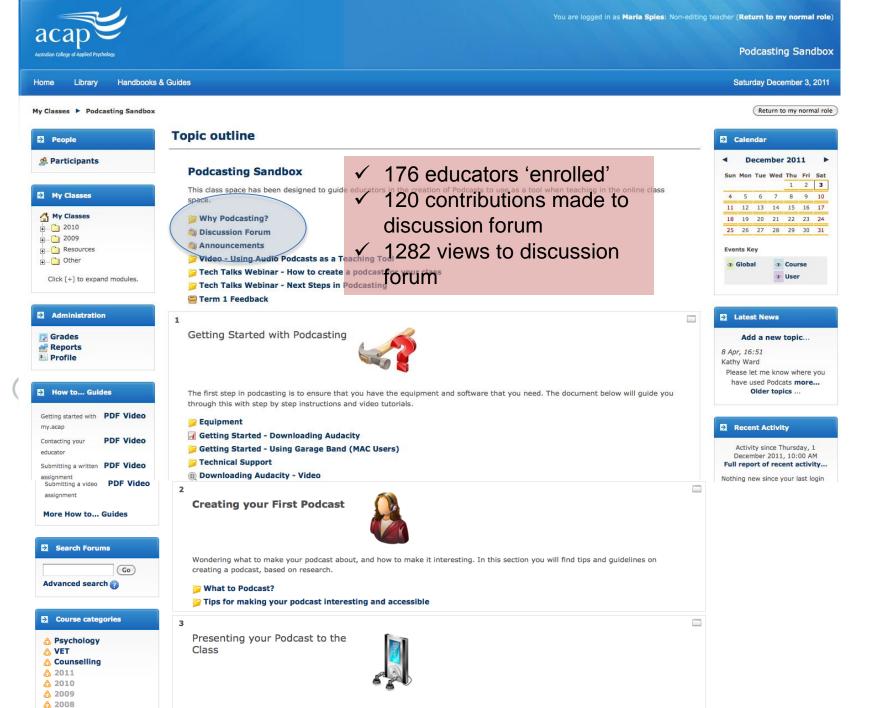
- Peer-led model
- Initial pilot with 9 volunteer educators
  - Teaching across 35 classes (620 students)
  - Identified champions
- 'High touch' support, training and resources for volunteer group
- Volunteer presentations
  - Seminars and webinars
- Audio podcasts used as an adjunct to existing content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

#### 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

Educator training, resources and support

- Co-facilitated by EdTech staff and educators
- Workshops



## 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	Response	Response %
podcasts used in your class?	Count	
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
How has your educator used audio podcasts?	34 (48%)	32 (45%)	56 (79%)	41 (58%)	71
What did you find most useful?	24 (38%)	30 (48%)	51 (81%)	32 (51%)	63
How would like podcasts to be used in the future?	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

Use in learning processes 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%)

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

yourself

- Sandbox
- Focus group

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

00

Students were comforted by educators voic Just be natural and

Let

'pod

speal

Powerful impact on students

Time

#### 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 textbased 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**

