How to use podcasting to enhance teaching & learning

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Contents

1. Introduction

Welcome to the 'Guide to podcasting'. This guide aims to take you through the process of getting started in podcasting, from learning what the term actually means right up to running your very own, fully functioning, podcast. This document is divided into four sections. The first outlines the pedagogical considerations of the use of podcasting in teaching and learning; the second details how to develop podcasts; the third considers good practice in the use of podcasts and the fourth emphasises the diversity of our student population and how we must consider this when using this mode of teaching.

Section 1: Why use podcasting?

1.1 What is a podcast?

'Podcast' is the term commonly used to refer to a series of digital media files (either audio or video) that are released episodically and often downloaded through web syndication (Wikipedia, 2010). The term is a play on the words 'pod' – 'playable on demand', which was later used by Apple Computer (now Apple) for its brand of portable media player iPod – and 'broadcasting'. This has lead to some confusion as it is necessary to use an iPod, or, any other form of portable media player, to use podcasts; the content of a podcast can be accessed using any computer that can play media files (Wikipedia, 2010). To avoid confusion with 'iPod', but also bringing in another unfamiliar term, 'netcast' is also used to refer to podcasts (Wikipedia, 2010).

1.2 What makes a podcast different to an audio file?

The mode of delivery differentiates podcasting from other means of accessing media files over the internet, such as direct download or streamed webcasting. The downloading process can be automated so that new files are downloaded automatically. Files are stored locally on a computer or other device (such as a mobile phone) ready for offline use, giving simple and convenient access to regular releases. The most commonly used audio file formats are MP3 (Wikipedia, 2010). All you have to do is visit the podcast hosting site and 'subscribe' to downloads (this is usually free) and it will then happen automatically. If you prefer, you can visit the site periodically and manually download specific podcasts of interest.

1.3 Why use podcasting in higher education?

So, let's have a little look at what podcasting offers in teaching and learning before starting to write our own.

Adding a new dimension?

Podcasting has been used successfully in teaching and learning in many different student groups to produce content, to capture live classroom material, and to enhance study skills, it has also been used as orientation to courses' content and structure including the touring of buildings (Salmon and Edirisingha, 2008).

O'Neill (2009) suggests that podcasting is attractive in higher education as both students and lecturers are actively engaged in the process, each bringing their own perspective. This is summarised in the table below:

Student perspective:	Teacher perspective:
• Portable audio devices are increasingly ubiquitous.	• Podcasts are straightforward to produce and distribute.
• These take the form of iPods/MP3 players and mobile phones with audio playback compatibility.	• They provide an opportunity to raise engagement levels in learning materials through a novel medium.
• Material is accessible when they want it and can be replayed infinitely if needed.	• They enable teachers to review their own materials in the process of creating podcasts.
• Audio adds a new layer of learning not traditionally associated with traditional education styles.	• Once recorded, podcasts are easy to update as new material or teaching methods are adopted, due to being stored digitally.
• Those whose first language is not English get a chance to build comprehension through repeat listening.	
• If lectures are missed, students have an opportunity to catch up by downloading recordings if available.	

(Reproduced from O'Neill, 2009)

A research paper by Fernandez, Simo and Sallan (2009) reported on an empirical study of 90 students and analysed the use of 13 podcasting episodes, to enhance distance learning students' personal study. The authors concluded that podcasting was a powerful tool to complement traditional teaching, but not as a substitute for them. One interesting finding was that in hearing the voice of the lecturer the student felt that they were in close proximity, increasing the permanent contact between student and teacher and enhancing the relationship.

It has also been noted by Forbes and Hickey (2008) that students felt that the production of podcasts meant that the lecturer was more caring about the students learning and therefore they would actively seek the lecturers that conducted podcasts as part of the course.

"If I know a professor does podcasting, I will have a better chance to understand the concepts and also it tells me that he/she cares about the students." (Forbes and Hickey, 2008, p227).

Again, this adds to the knowledge of giving the student a sense of belonging and being cared for highlighted by Levette-Jones *et al* (2009). Vogt *et al* (2009) highlighted high satisfaction with podcasting as a learning tool for undergraduate nursing students offering the option of portability and flexibility. However, a study by Evans (2008) showed that only a quarter of their students listened to the audio whilst travelling, and Lonn and Teasley (2009) reported that their students predominantly listened at designated study times from their home computers.

Fernandez, Simo and Sallan (2009) reported that podcasting allows for promotion of good practice in distance learning courses according to Chickering and Gamson's (1987) and Angelo (1993) principles of good practice.

When podcasting is used in conjunction with MP3 players and other portable devices, the potential for real, any-time, any-place learning is opened up, taking us into the realm of mobile learning (or m-learning for short).

Section 2: Getting started with podcasting: A guide to podcasting

2.1 Introduction

This section of the guide runs through a number of tasks representing stages in your podcast training, and most of this is adapted from the *Podwhating?* live course run by Colin Gray, Edinburgh Napier University (originally developed and delivered by Keith Smyth, Edinburgh Napier University). This guide will be structured in the same manner, treating each section as a stand-alone activity, and will follow the same theme, which is to say informal and fun, written much like the blog used on the course. This means that you can follow the same schedule if you like, which is roughly 30 minutes per section, completing one section every day, but, of course, it can be completed much quicker if you have the time to spend a few hours each day on the tasks.

OK, first things first, straight away you should start thinking about a subject for your own trial podcast, which could be anything you like of around 2 or 3 minutes long. For learning purposes there's no need to make this work-related, but it's entirely up to yourself: possible ideas include an introduction to a favourite hobby or pastime, explaining a topic relating to the subject you teach, a film or book review, or an update on a university project. Of course, please feel free to pick something entirely different…it's up to you!

2.2 Busting some jargon

In the last section we looked at what a podcast is – really just a series of normal audio files that are delivered via subscription. But how exactly do we get our hands on a podcast? Well, it's possible to download a podcast in a couple of different ways, but as indicated above, one of the things that makes podcasting so exciting is the possibility to subscribe to podcasts so that they come to you. Now, providing we have what we need to listen to the audio file itself (Windows Media Player or equivalent, and headphones or speakers), two other things need to be in place in order to subscribe to and start downloading podcasts.

A '**podcatcher**': sometimes called a 'podcast aggregator' (nothing like a catchy name eh?). A podcatcher is simply a piece of software that we install on our computers to allow us to download and organise the podcasts to which we are subscribed. iTunes is a piece of podcatching software, and other popular podcatching applications include Fireant and Juice.

A podcast '**feed**': a 'feed' can be thought of as the web address from which a specific provider (for example, an individual or an organisation) makes their podcasts available. A feed will let you subscribe to a specific series of podcasts from that provider, and we refer to each single podcast being supplied through a feed as an 'episode'.

2.3 Task 1: Installing a podcatcher

We'll find out much more about podcasting as we go along, busting the jargon on the way.

The task for this section though, as we won't get much further without it, is to download and set up some podcatching software. We'll then make sure we know how to use it by subscribing to a feed from the BBC, and then listening to one of their podcasts!

The podcatching software we will be using is Juice, but if you're already comfortable using iTunes or otherwise then feel free to use that. I only have experience with iTunes and Juice, however, so if you're on something else I might not be able to help you with any problems.

2.3.1 Installing Juice
1.   Go to http://juicereceiver.sourceforge.net/index.php

2.   Click on the download icon for your operating system:

or

[Note: although the basic steps should remain the same, the following instructions and screenshots relate to downloading Juice to a PC running Windows XP.]

3.   You will be taken to a page that informs you that 'Your download will begin shortly.' If nothing happens click on the direct link provided:
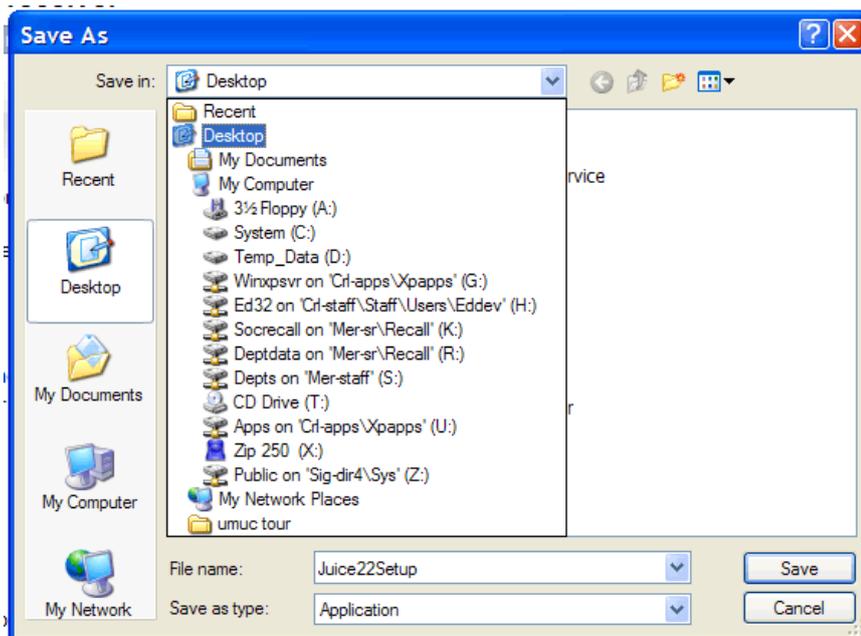

Downloading ...

Thank you for downloading Juice, cross-platform podcast receiver.

Your download should begin shortly. If you are experiencing problems with the download please use this direct link.
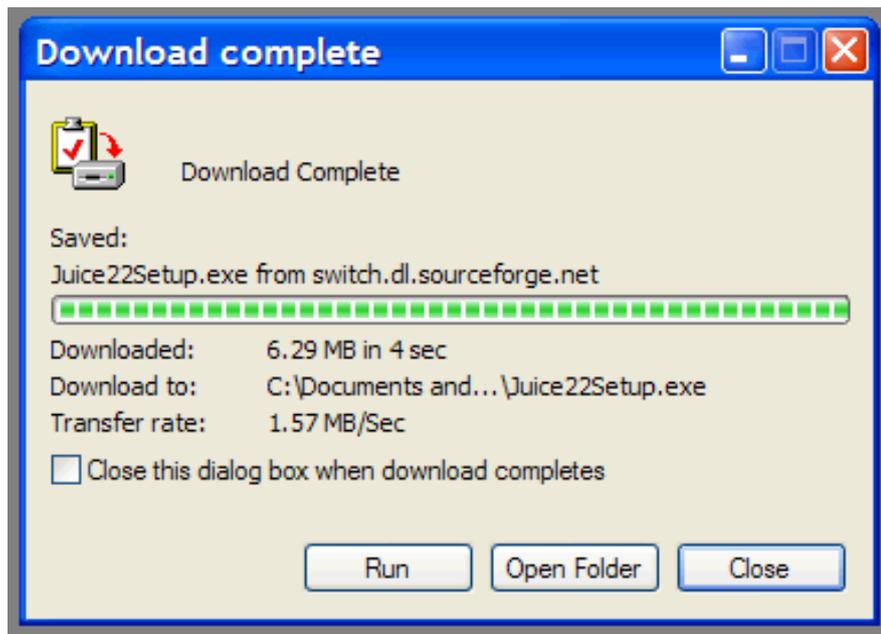
4.   When the window titled 'File Download – Security Warning' appears (shown below) simply click on the 'Save' button
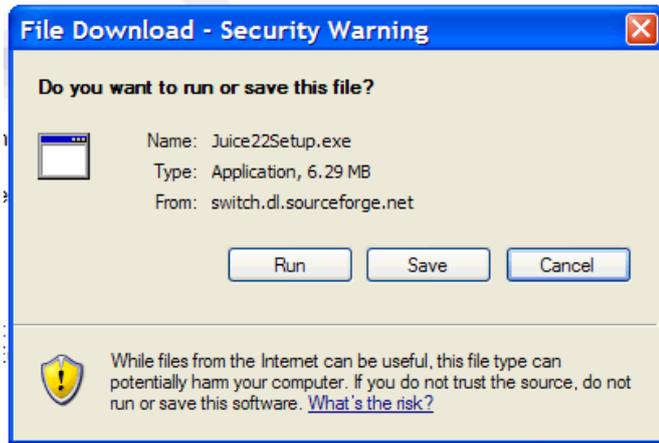
5.   In the 'Save As' box, drop down the 'Save In' list and select 'Desktop':

6.   When 'Download Complete' box appears click 'Run'

7.   If you get a message saying the publisher could not be verified, click 'Run'


8.   You should now find yourself looking at the Juice 2.2 Setup Wizard.

9.   Click 'Next' to continue.

10.   Click 'I Agree'.

11.   When prompted to choose the 'Install Location', please leave the 'Destination folder' set at C:\Program Files\Juice.

12.   Click 'Next'.

13.   On the 'Choose Components' window 'Desktop Shortcut' should already be selected. Make sure you also select 'Add to Startup Group':
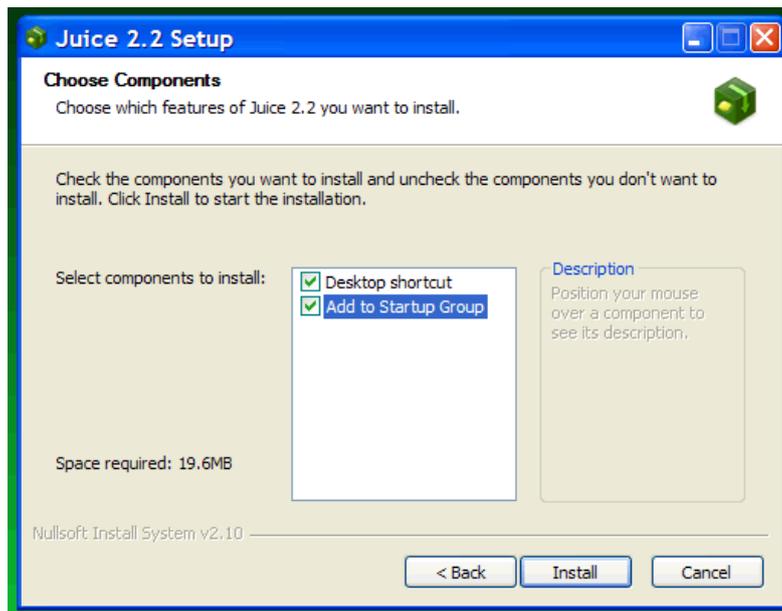
14.   Click 'Install'.

15.   Click 'Finish'.

16.   You should now have successfully installed Juice.

17.   The 'Read me' document may open up automatically, in which case save this somewhere in case you need it for future reference.

18.   Juice may also open up automatically.

19.   If Juice has not opened up automatically, double-click on the Juice icon which you should now find on your desktop. The Juice icon looks like this:

20. With Juice open, click on the Subscriptions tab to see this view:
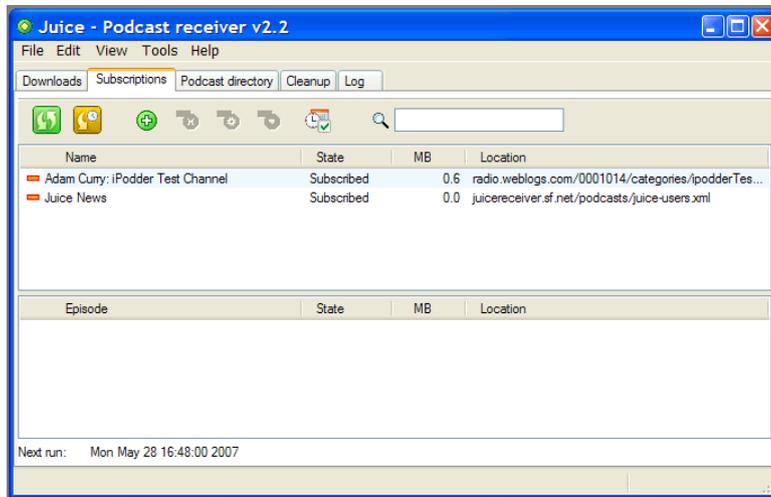
21. Now click on the Scheduler icon, which looks like this .

22. On the Scheduler window, select 'Check at regular intervals', and set to 'repeat every 8 hours' as shown on the image below:
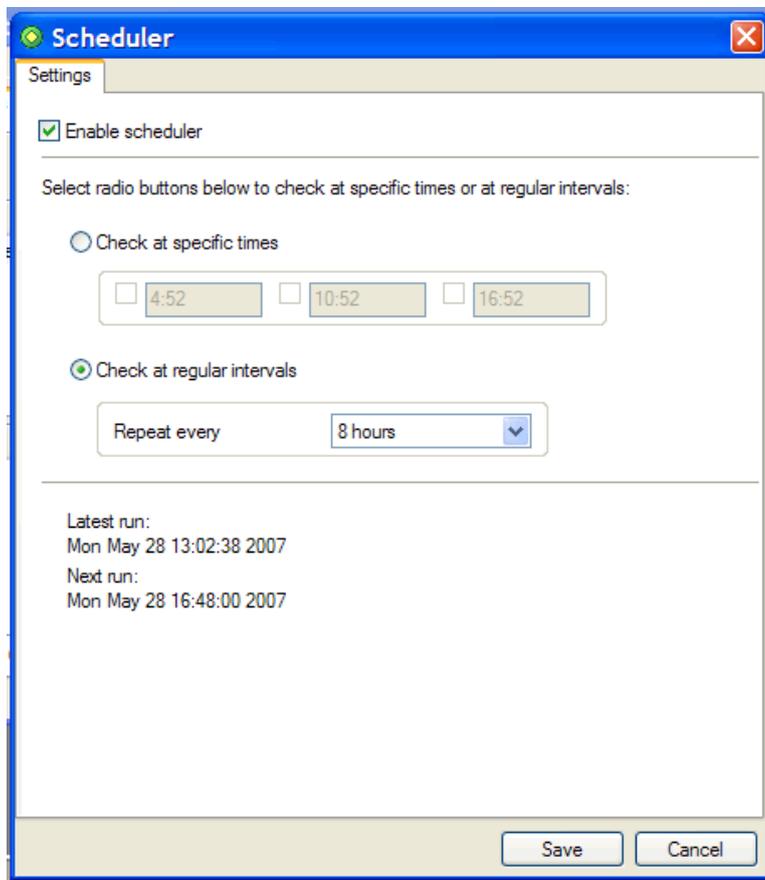

23. Now click 'Save'.

Well done! You are now ready to subscribe to what is called a podcast feed, which allows you to receive podcasts from a chosen provider.

Finding out how to subscribe to a podcast fee will be our next task.

Important: If you want to you can set Juice to run in the background, constantly updating your podcasts and checking for new episodes. If you would like Juice to do this just make sure that any time you close Juice, you always opt to keep Juice running in the background by selecting 'Yes' followed by 'OK' on the window shown here.
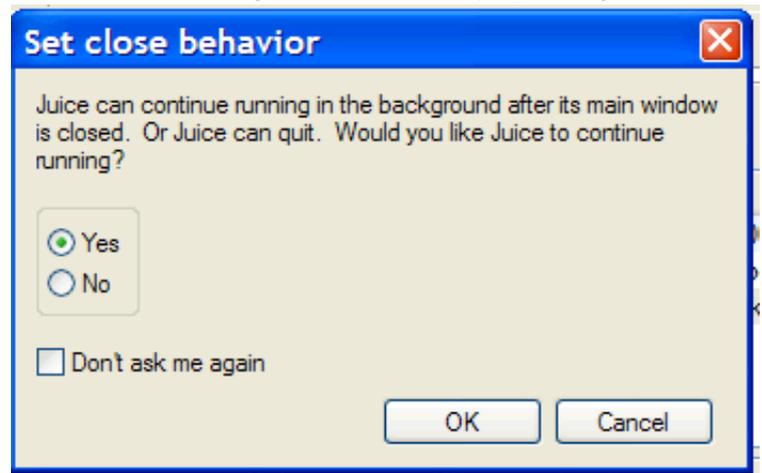
(If after selecting 'Yes' you also select 'Don't ask me again' before clicking OK, then you'll only see this window once and Juice will always keep running.)

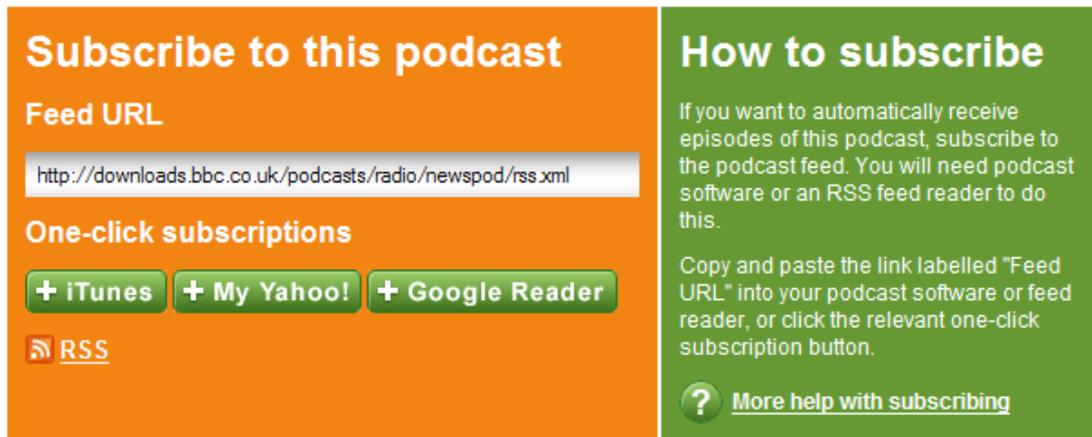## 2.4 Task 2: Instructions for subscribing to a podcast feed

We are now going to use Juice to subscribe to a podcasting feed from the BBC's news podcasting service, and listen to the latest 'episode'. However, once you have followed these steps, you will know how to use Juice to subscribe to any podcast feed of your choice.

Let's get started then by following the steps below.

1. First off, go to the page on the BBC's website from where we can access their News podcasts at http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio/newspod

    Clicking on this link will open this page in a new browser window. If you are following a paper print out of these instructions, please open a new browser window to view this page (for example, by going to your desktop and clicking on the icon for Internet Explorer or your preferred browser, and then typing in the above address to then access the page).

2. When you get to this page, you will see the subscribe box in the middle of the page (illustrated below):

In order to subscribe to the feed you need to copy the 'Feed URL' shown above (http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/radio/newspod/rss.xml).

You can do this by first selecting and highlighting the entire address by clicking and dragging over it, and then either going to the browser's 'Edit' menu and then 'Copy', or by using you keyboard to simultaneously hold down the Ctrl + C keys, or by right-clicking your mouse over the highlighted text and selecting 'Copy' from the pop-up menu.

3. With this done you should move to the Juice window. You should already have Juice running.

If the main window is closed but Juice is still running in the background, simply double-click on the small lemon icon next to the clock at the bottom right of your screen. If you cannot see this icon, open Juice by double-clicking on the Juice lemon icon on your desktop area.

4.   When Juice is open, click on the Subscriptions tab.
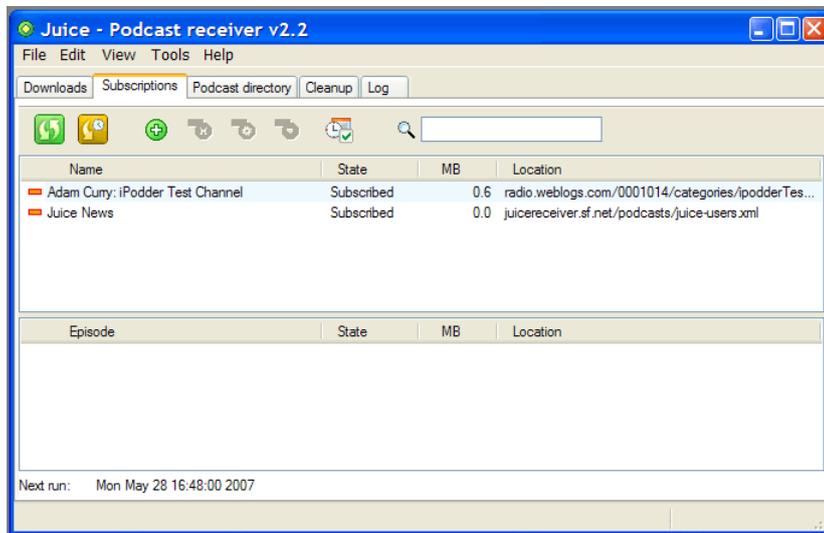
5.   Now click on the subscriptions icon, which looks like this .

6.   The 'Add a Feed' box should now pop up.
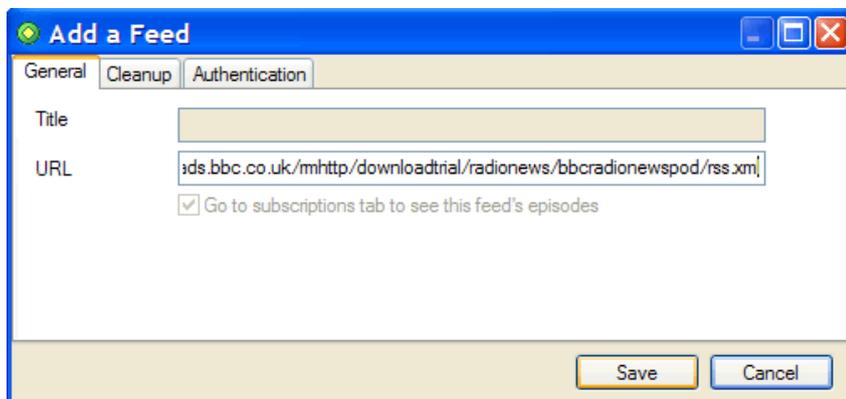
7.   Paste the address you just copied from the BBC's feed page into the URL field of the 'Add a Feed' box. To do this place the mouse cursor in the field, and click the right-hand mouse button then 'Paste', or use your keyboard to simultaneously hold down the CTRL + V keys.

8.   Once you have pasted in the address, click 'Save'.

9. Now click on the name of the feed (BBC Radio NewsPod) to then see a list of all the available podcast episodes, as illustrated below.
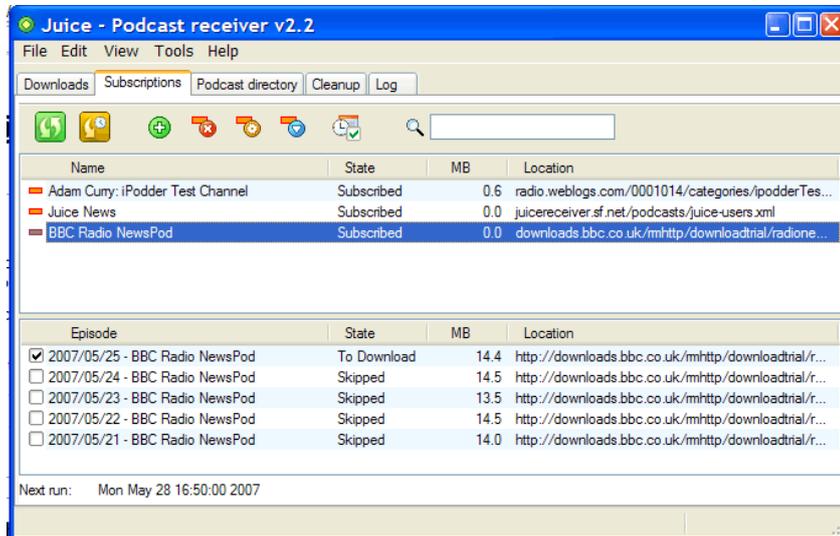
[Note: you should find that by default only the latest episode is ticked. This is fine, as we only want to download the latest one for this activity. If you find other episodes are ticked, untick them so only the latest is selected.]

10. We will now download the latest episode by clicking on the 'Check/download Selected Feed' icon, which looks like this .

11. Wait for the episode to download. Once it has, you will be taken to the 'Downloads' tab in Juice, where you will find the episode listed.
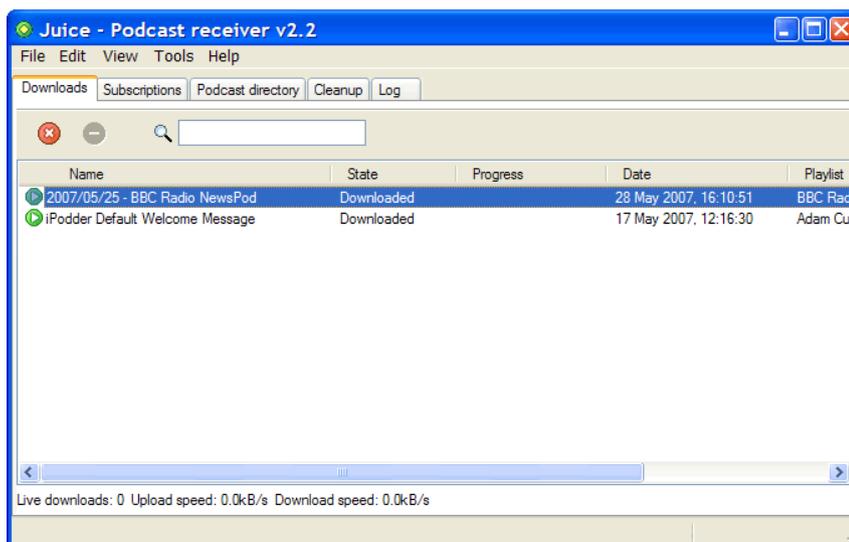
12. Plug in and put on your headphones, or turn on your speakers.

13. Click the green 'play' icon next to the name of the episode.

14. You should now be listening to your first podcast from the BBC Radio NewsPod feed! Some of you may even be listening to your first podcast from the first podcast feed you have ever subscribed to, so well done!

    [Note: because of the way we have set up Juice, Juice will automatically check for new episodes from all the feeds you have subscribed to every 8 hours.]

    This means you will now find yourself receiving new episodes from the BBC Radio NewsPod feed, and any other feeds you subscribe to as they become available, for as long as you stay subscribed to the feed. The podcast provider and Juice do all the work, and you simply listen to the new episodes provided as and when you want to.

That's it for this section. Next, we'll start looking in more detail at what's happening in podcasting in areas you're particularly interested in.

Although we've now seen that some podcast episodes can really be quite lengthy (some podcasts really are online radio shows), podcasting also offers the opportunity for manageable 'just-in-time' learning. A great example of this is a person I know who has got into downloading recipe podcasts. She then listens to them while baking instead of working from a recipe book.

This is a real example, and I know from experience that I can learn a lot from podcasts having used them in my web design days to keep up with new technologies and techniques. Finally, there is the ability of podcasting to 'push' important information out to those who need it, as it becomes available. There is no need for the user to keep coming back to an information source – as long as they're subscribed to a podcast then the information is sent to them.

2.5 Task 3: Planning your first podcast

There are two parts to this activity. The first will hopefully give you a further insight into the potential of podcasting in education generally, and in your own teaching or professional roles. The second is moving towards achieving this potential for yourself.

1.   For the first part of this task read a short newspaper article by Bill Ashraf, a Senior Lecturer in Microbiology at Bradford University, titled *Lecturer adds value with iTunes*. Here, Bill Ashraf describes his experience of using podcasting in his own teaching, and why he thinks it is an important development. Read the article here: http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2006/dec/12/elearning.technology30

2.   You're going to get to the stage of creating a podcast to help you with your work, but first you'll create a nice simple and fun podcast on a subject of your own interest. Now's the time to write a quick little script on any subject you choose, just two or three minutes of talking. You can either write it as you'll speak it, word for word, or you can just write some notes and trust to your natural oratory skills to carry you through. It's up to yourself and you'll find the method you prefer.

Good luck with the scripts!

2.6 Recording your first podcast

Now it's time to start being a real podcaster!

Hopefully in the last task you succeeded in getting a podcatcher set up and subscribing to at least one podcast. Now we're going to be installing Audacity (an audio recording program) and using it to record your own podcast.

Without any further ado, let's get straight down to it. Got your script finished? OK, then let's begin recording!

If your MP3 player, dictaphone or mobile phone has a record feature and you can use that, no problem. I won't be able to provide instructions on recording and transferring files using a device like that but hopefully, you'll have the hang of that already. It should produce an MP3 audio file which you would simply transfer to your PC, ready for the next stage.

Otherwise we're going to work with the simple but effective Audacity. If you're an Edinburgh Napier member of staff and working on the University network, you can find Audacity by going to your Start menu, selecting All Programs, and selecting Core. If you don't have access to Audacity, you can download and install a copy, so no worries there.

With this in mind, the steps involved in this activity are:

1.   Install Audacity if you don't have access to it already, by following the instructions that follow in Section 2.7.

2.   With your script in hand, turn off your phone, turn on your mic, and follow the instructions in Section 2.8

If everything with the above goes well (and it will, right?) you should have made your first audio podcast, ready to actually be a podcast. We'll look at the actual casting bit soon though, don't worry.

2.7 Task 4: Installing Audacity

If you opt to use Audacity for recording the MP3 file for your own podcast, but are unable to or chose not to access Audacity on the University network, then please follow these instructions for downloading and installing your own copy.

1.   Go to http://audacity.sourceforge.net/download/windows

2.   Click the option for 'Audacity 1.2.6 Installer' as shown by the circle labelled 1 in the previous image.

3.   You will now be taken to a page informing you that 'Your download should begin shortly.' If nothing happens click on the direct link provided.

4.   When the 'File Download' window pops up, click 'Save'.

5.   When the 'Save As' window pops up, drop down the 'Save in' list and select 'Desktop'. Once you have done this click on the 'Save' button.

6.   When informed that the download is complete, click on 'Run'.

7.   When you receive a warning message that 'The publisher could not be verified', don't worry about this. Click 'Run'.

8.   You should now be looking at the Audacity Setup Wizard.

9.   Click 'Run'.

10.   Check the 'I accept the agreement option' and click 'Next'.

11.   On the Information window, click 'Next'.

12.   On the Select Destination Location window, click 'Next'.

13.   On the Select Additional Tasks window, click 'Next'.

14.   On the Ready to Install window, click 'Install'.

15.   When informed the set-up is complete, click 'Finish'. Audacity is now ready for use.

16.   In order to create MP3s you also need to download the LAME MP3 Encoder by going to http://audacity.sourceforge.net/download/windows and clicking the link labelled 2 in the first screenshot above. This is an add-on for Audacity.

17.   Next click 'Go to the LAME download page'.

18.   Next click the link libmp3lame-win-3.97.zip under 'For Audacity on Windows.' This will allow you to save the LAME zip file to your computer.

19.   Now extract the file from the zip file and save them to the same place as your Audacity folder.

20.   The first time you use the 'Export as MP3' command, Audacity will ask you where lame_enc.dll is saved. Simply navigate to the lame_enc.dll file and select it. Now you should be able to export MP3s with no problems.

21.   If you are using Audacity to record the MP3 file for your podcast, please now see the document Podwhating_Audacity_Recording_Instructions.

2.8 Task 5: Recording with Audacity

If you have chosen to use Audacity for recording the MP3 file for your own podcast, then these instructions are for you. This will guide you through the full process of recording an audio file using the Audacity software and saving it as an MP3 file.

1.   Check your mic is plugged in and switched on (if you are using a mic on a web cam or a headset, then please make sure this is connected and ready to go).

2.   If you have Audacity installed but it is not already on, double-click on the Audacity icon on your desktop. The icon looks like this:

3.   Audacity will now open. The Audacity menu and toolbar is shown below:
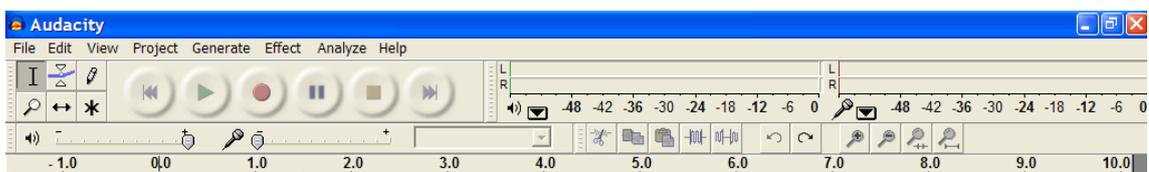
4.   When you are ready to record, click the red 'Record' button and start talking into your microphone.

5.   If at any point you want to pause, simply click the blue 'Pause' button . Click on the 'Pause' button again when you are ready to continue.

6. When you have finished recording, click the yellow 'Stop' button [image]. If at any point you want to stop and start from scratch, first click 'Stop'.

7. Now go to 'Edit', select 'Undo Record' and go back to step 4 above.

8. To save and create your MP3 recording, select the File menu, and then select the option 'Export as MP3…" as shown below:
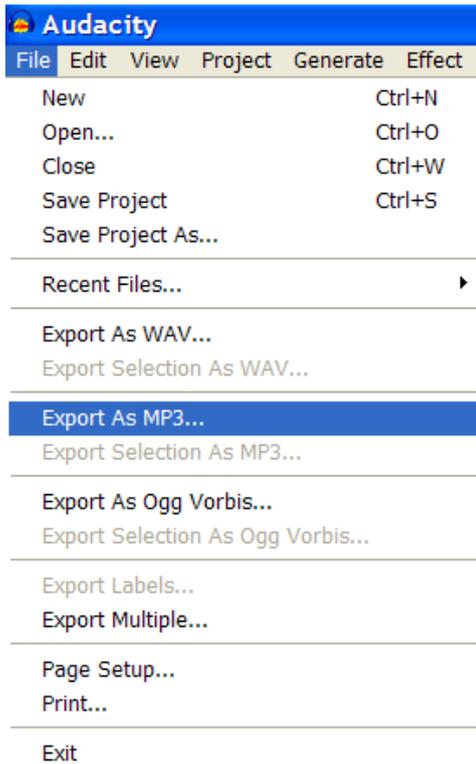
9. In the 'Save MP3 File As:' window, first enter a name for your file into the 'File name:' box. Now drop down the 'Save in:' list a select 'Desktop'.

10. Once you have done both of these things, click 'Save'.
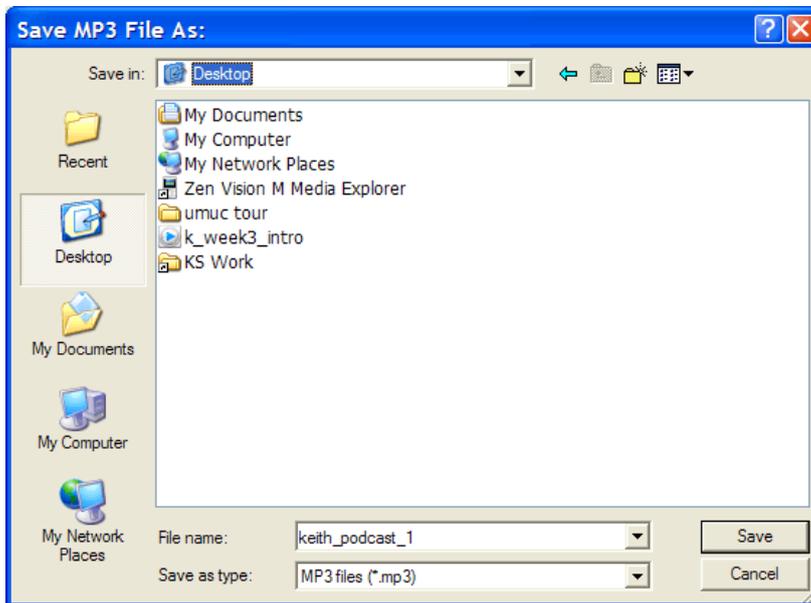
11. In the 'Edit the ID3 tags…' window, enter a title for the MP3 file (in the example below the file name has been re-used) and then click 'OK'.
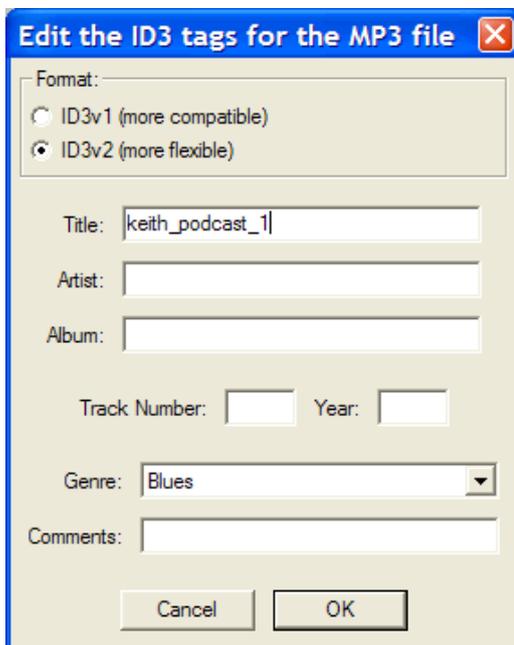
12. Your MP3 file has now been created, and is saved to your desktop. From your desktop, double-click on the file to listen to it on your computer.

Happy with what you've got? Don't fret if it's not perfect – podcasts can even appear more personal and engaging if it includes a few mistakes. It shows it has a real human on the other end!

2.9 Feeding your podcast to the masses

OK, so you've written and recorded a fabulous series of podcasts which are going to revolutionise learning in your Faculty. Students will go crazy for them and the days of retention problems and bad marks will be but a distant memory. But how do you get them out there and delivered to the students so that you can kick start this academic utopia?

Well, the key is setting up your own podcast feed. This will give you a feed address to which your students can subscribe, thus allowing you to push your content directly to them as and when needed.

The wonder of Podbean

We looked at feeds briefly in Section 2.2, but let's look a little closer. In actually fact, it's not really necessary to know this in order to produce a podcast, but it's useful to have a little context. Feeds are written in a language called XML (Xtensible Markup Language). This looks very similar to HTML, the language that web pages are created in. Essentially, a feed provides a list of the individual podcasts in a series, organised and written in XML language so that your feed reader knows where to find them. It also provides your feed reader with a little extra detail, such as names, length and description, so that you can have a little look in advance and decide whether you want to listen or not.

Don't worry! We don't need to write the code ourselves as there are plenty of services that can do that for us. An example of this, and the one we will use here, is Podbean. Podbean lets you sign up for an account and create your own podcasting site from which anyone can subscribe to your podcast, or listen to your episodes right there on the site. With Podbean you can:

- post text-only entries in the style of a blog

- create static pages such as Course Help and Podcasts for Fun resources

- upload audio files to the site so that they're included in your very own, automatically generated, feed which others can subscribe to.

So, you see, all of the hard work is done for you.

2.10 Task 6: Set up a Podbean site

Task 6 is to set up a Podbean site, customise it a little and upload your first podcast. Before you start, have a think about how you're going to use this podcast with your work. Let's try and set up the site in a manner that you could use with your work immediately, whether you're planning to use it on a course or to deliver information to your colleagues. You can always change settings and titles later, but this will give you a good basis to move on with after completing this training.

Once you've chosen your target audience, move on to the next section where you'll find out how to sign up for your own Podbean site.

2.11 Creating your own Podbean site

OK, time to sign up for Podbean. It's mostly quite self explanatory but if you follow these steps it should pose no problems.

1.   First navigate to http://www.podbean.com

2.   On the first page, click the 'Sign up' link on the top-right of the screen.

3.   On the second page, select the Free Account option. This is done by clicking the 'Sign Up' button on the bottom left as circled below.
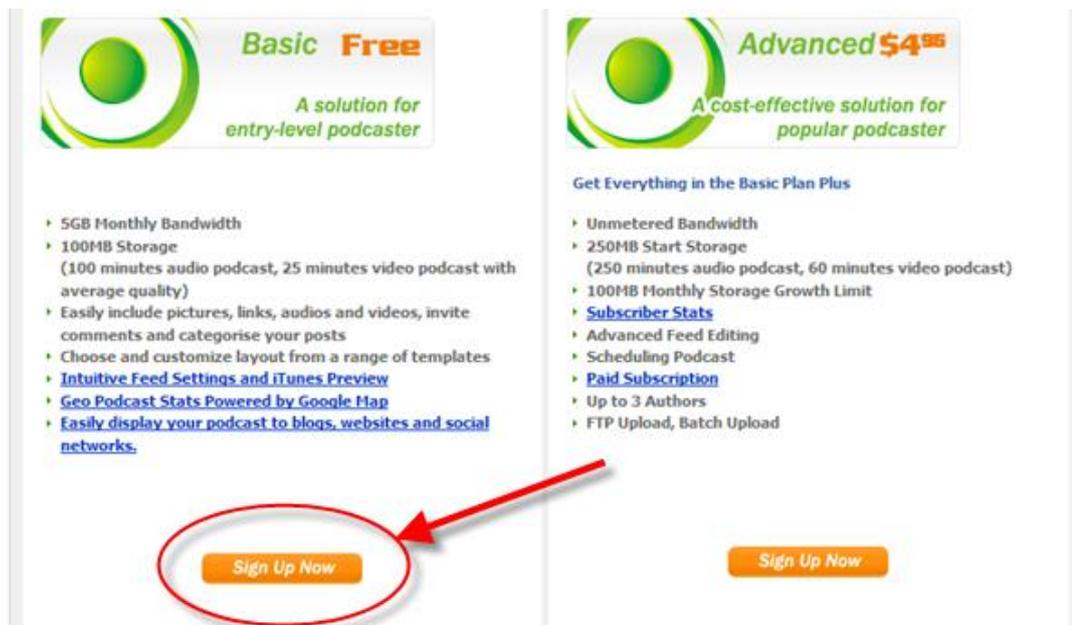
4. Scroll down on the next page until you reach the Podbean Basic section which begins with Member Name. This name is included in your Podbean site address so you might want to use your course name rather than your own name, but that's entirely up to yourself and how you'll be using the podcast. For example, if you choose the name advancedstatistics your Podbean address will be http://advancedstatistics.podbean.com.

5. Once you've chosen your member name fill in the rest of the details and click 'Sign up Now' at the bottom.

6. Next, the Podbean service will send a password to your email and you can use this along with the aforementioned Member Name to log in.

7. The first thing Podbean asks you to do once you log in is to upload a logo, but we don't need to bother about this for now. Simply click the 'Skip for now' option.

8. Now you should be on your Podbean feed dashboard. This is where you can do anything to do with your feed, from uploading audio files to changing how your page looks. Feel free to have a play with any of the settings, you'll find it hard to break!

9. The first thing to do though is to post your first podcast. The first step of this is uploading your audio file. Click the 'Upload' link on the menu bar near the top of the screen. You'll see the screen shown below.

Click the Upload button in the centre to go to the upload tool as shown below.
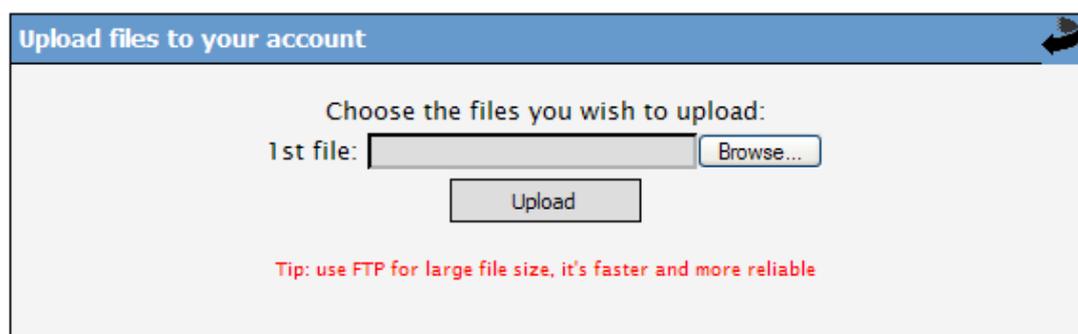
Now, click the browse button to find the first podcast audio file you created earlier in this course. Select that and select OK. Its path should appear in the box to the left of 'Browse'. Now click Upload and you'll see a screen showing that the file is uploading. It may take a few minutes to complete the upload. You'll know it's finished when you see the name of your podcast appear in the list of the Media Manager pictured two images above.

10. Next, you need to attach this audio file to a post. Click the 'Publish' link at the top of the screen as shown below.
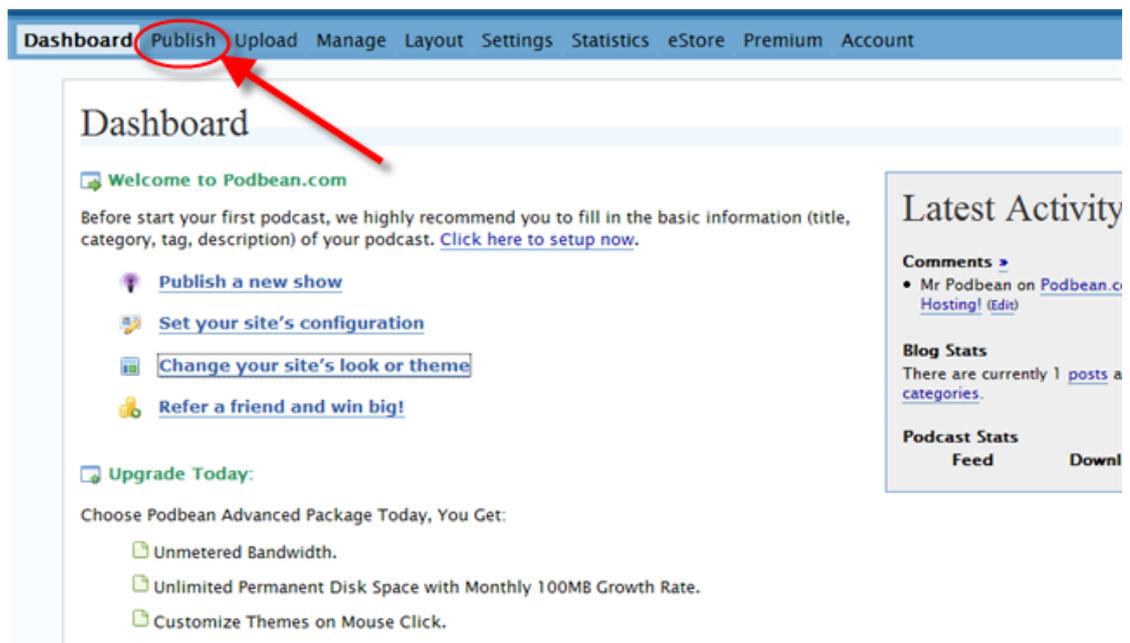
11.   You should then be faced with the screen shown below:
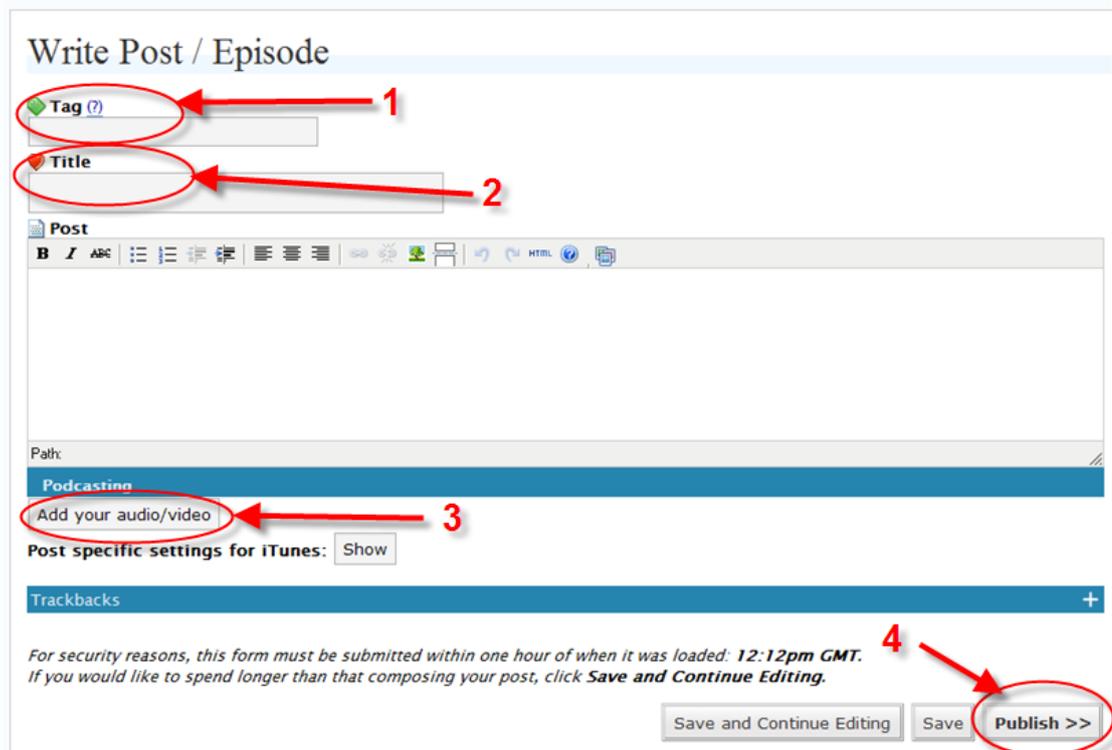
Here, follow the subsequent steps, numbered to correlate with the screenshot:

1.   Type in a tag – this is a one or two word tag that describes what your podcast is about. So if you're talking about when you last went skiing in France then you might type 'Skiing' in here.

2.   This is the title for the post. Just type your post header in here and it will appear at the head of the text. Then type the actual text for the post in the text editor right below, headed 'Post'.

3.   The 'Add your audio/video' button is where you choose which audio file to attach to this post. Click that button and then choose the audio file you uploaded earlier from the drop-down menu.

4.   Lastly, click 'Publish' and you're done! If you look at the front page of your podcast by clicking the 'View Site' link at the top of the Dashboard page, beside the title you should see your new post there at the top, with a tool allowing you to listen to the podcast.

12. That's all that's needed to post basic podcasts. Now all you need to do is tell people about your site and show them where to find it! You will have two important addresses, one for your Podbean site so that people can see your posts and listen to the podcasts on the web, and another for your podcast feed which is the one that people can subscribe to in their podcatchers. The site address is found by adding your member name to the front of **podbean.com**. For example:

    MemberName.podbean.com

    and your feed address can be found by adding /feed to the end of that, for example:

    MemberName.podbean.com/feed/

13. Congratulations, you're now a fully functioning podcaster!

Section 3: Good practice tips for podcasting

Before you start, here are a few things you might want to consider:

Audience focus

- Know your audience – who are they? Is it a class, a year group, a subject group or potentially the world? Depending on your audience you might need to adapt the style, content and duration of the podcast.

- What does your audience expect the content to be, and in what order do they expect to hear it? Think about what they will be asking and structure your podcast around their questions – as you would in a conversation.

- What is your audience doing? Are they sitting intently listening to you? That's unlikely given podcasts are popular because they can be absorbed by people doing other activities. In which case, keep your ideas straightforward, and repeat things that are important.

Interviewing skills

- If you are interviewing someone, make sure you spend five minutes 'warming them up'. Don't launch straight into an interview – take time to put people at ease, and reassure them that they can make a mistake, as you can edit it later.

- Think about the style of your interview – is it serious, light-hearted or maybe adversarial? Let this influence the way you approach the interviewee and the questions.

- Remind yourself why you are talking to this person – what colour, content, character do you hope they will provide?

- Never provide people with a list of questions – they will automatically start rehearsing in their mind and as a result they will sound wooden and probably stumble. Have areas you will talk about, but never set questions.

- Listen to their answers and follow it up with a suitable question – don't stick to your original ideas. Make sure the interview is as conversational as possible.

- Be quiet – don't 'um' and 'ah' in agreement as they speak. They might find it reassuring but you will find it annoying when you come to edit it.

- Listen out for that perfect sound bite – and if it is a bit wordy or clumsy ask them to talk about that point again.

- To know the perfect structure you need to have planned the podcasts structure – where will their comment go, what do you need them to say, what do they bring to your story? But also remain flexible and open to new ideas.

- At the end, ask if they have anything else to add – this can sometimes provide the perfect sound bite or a comment you hadn't known to ask for.

- Listen to the background noise carefully – even in a 'quiet' room people manage to jingle keys, tap table legs, and make the chair squeak.

Writing tips

- You are writing for the ear *not* the eye. No-one will read your script, podcasting is about writing to be heard – so conventional rules do not apply.

- Have a clear structure – you need to identify a beginning, middle and end.

- Signpost your listener to what's coming up. Surprises aren't good, they confuse the listener.

- Remember the KISS rule for all your sentences – Keep It Simple Stupid.

- Break sentences up by starting sentences with connectives ('and', 'but' etc).

- Be conversational. This isn't 'dumbing down' the content; it is making it effectively understood by the 'ear'.

- Talk in the present tense. Podcasts are popular because they are fresh and immediate. (Therefore you may also need to regularly refresh/update your podcasts).

- Occasionally use transition words to start new paragraphs ('Well', 'So' etc). This helps bridge sections together naturally.

- Take care with numbers – they are very tricky on the ear. If you can, round them up or down so that 1.89 million becomes nearly 2 million.

Voice delivery

- If you have concentrated on your audience and been careful with your writing then voice delivery becomes much easier.

- Long sentences make you turn blue and run out of breath, so keep them short (and keep breathing).

- Being conversational in your writing helps you develop an appropriate tone.

- Most importantly, think about who you are talking to – and think of one person, not the entire group. Podcasting is personal. Don't make it a recorded 'lecture' – talk to one person.

- Stumbles, pauses, 'ums' and' 'ahs' are all good. They are easy on the ear, make things seem chattier and allow listeners a little space to reflect and keep up with you.

- Talk through the kit – do not talk at the microphone. When you are on the phone do you think 'Yikes, that's a phone at my ear'? No, instead you concentrate on your audience at the other end, what they want to hear and the message you want to give. The phone is irrelevant – as is the microphone – talk through it, not at it.

- Accept you probably won't like the sound of your own voice – few people do as it never 'sounds like them'. It is the content of the podcast that matters – if you feel confident and comfortable with the topic and talk naturally to just one person your delivery will be just fine.

- Never practice your voice delivery whilst recording – you must focus on the story you are telling, concentrating on anything else (even your voice) will make you sound distracted.

A few hints and tips for producing good podcasts

Talk in the present tense. For example, not 'he/she said', but 'he/she says'.

Keep sentences short. Try to adapt a conversational style. Spoken word is not the same as written. Look at the BBC's Radio 4. There are plenty of audio examples at http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4.

Avoid technical language and jargon. Unless you're sure the audience will understand (in which case, oddly, sometimes a little jargon serves to unite the audience – we all like to feel special!).

Summarise the podcast quickly. Try to give the listener an idea of where they're going in two–three sentences. If you cannot engage with an audience fast, they will switch off. This is the audio equivalent of a banner headline.

Use facts and figures at the beginning (if appropriate). If possible, get an 'expert' to say them.

Vary the audio feeds to maintain listener interest: different voices, different atmospheres, maybe a bit of music in places?

Radio is descriptive. Use metaphor, for example, if describing a large building, don't say 'It's x metres tall', try 'It's as tall as three Eiffel Towers'. Make every effort to paint pictures in the mind. The best communicators (and indeed the best teachers) instinctively know how to use language to inspire. These people are also natural podcasters.

Use case studies. If one exists, see if you can use it to back up the theme of your podcast. Again, third party endorsements represent better journalism.

Consider using analogies, for example, terms like 'Survival of the fittest', or 'It's a jungle out there' rather than 'The financial centre had a tough day today'.

Use the central character: If the story is about someone, investigate the possibility of having them tell it in their own words. Edit according to your own style.

Themes and styles. Try telling a story from several perspectives over a period of days. You can make existing content work harder for you this way!

Sourcing sound bites. Possibilities include: universities, think tanks, regulatory bodies, associations, local government, and online media. Build your contact database!

Reuse and recycle! Podcasting materials are re-usable! Put them back into courseware, or onto your website, or re-edit for promotional purposes. Be sure to see your efforts not just as podcasting, but as the creation of digital assets.

(Reproduced from O'Neill, 2009)

Section 4: Considering our students

The University's *Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy* emphasises the diversity of our students (Edinburgh Napier University, 2010) which requires us to ensure our activities cater for students with different learning and support needs.

When considering the use of podcasting you must also consider the needs of students who may have hearing impairment. One way of overcoming this barrier is to have the audio file transcribed. This may be a costly and time-consuming job, but one which is necessary to ensure equality and accessibility.

Questions to ask are:

- Do I need to have all the files transcribed and available?

- Can I use a fast turnaround transcription service which offers the transcription of files within a 24 hour period so that files only require to be transcribed upon request?

Section 5: Further help and support

This recording lark is the most technical we're going to get in this guide, and there may be a few minor problems along the way. The important thing to remember if you have any difficulty is that the professional development team are around to help. Contact Colin Gray, (c.gray@napier.ac.uk) in the first instance or any of the rest of the team should you have any queries.

Academic Development regularly run a series of workshops on podcasting so you might find it useful to visit the professional development programme for further details http://www2.napier.ac.uk/ed/profdev/

Tailored development sessions can also be run. Contact Colin Gray or your Faculty Academic Development Adviser for further details or visit http://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/academicdevelopment/professionaldevelopment/Pages/tailored.aspx

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