

Evaluating podcasts for teaching and learning

1. Criteria for evaluating the quality of a podcast

Some aspects to consider for evaluating the quality of podcasts as a teaching and learning resource.

a) A podcast could be judged as high quality where:

- The topic is presented in an interesting and imaginative way
 - The content is well structured and organised
 - Sources for further information (websites and email) are included
 - Effective use is made of the presenter, discussions and interviews
 - Vocals are clear without background noise or popping
 - Presenters are clearly heard above background music and effects
 - Any audio effects are used to enhance the content and presentation
 - Smooth edits are evident in transitions between segments
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b) A podcast could be judged as satisfactory quality where:

- The topic is presented in an appropriate and relevant way
 - The content is suitably structured and organised
 - Further information (websites and email) is referred to
 - Effective use is made of the presenter, discussions and interviews
 - Vocals are audible and without distortion
 - Presenters can be heard above background music and effects
 - Audio editing means smooth transitions between segments
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c) A podcast could be judged as poor quality where:

- The topic is presented in a tedious and uninteresting way
 - The content is unstructured and disorganised
 - No sources for further information (websites and email) are included
 - Ineffective use is made of the presenter, discussions and interviews
 - Vocals are inaudible or distorted
 - Presenters cannot be heard above background music and effects
 - Any audio effects detract from the content and presentation
 - Rough audio edits are evident in transitions between segments
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2. Criteria for evaluating the suitability of enhanced podcasts

Using an enhanced podcast rather than audio podcast for a learning resource is likely to be considered:

a) Very valuable where:

- high quality graphical images enrich the topic and convey stimulating visual material
- the timings of image transitions are well matched to the audio content
- hyperlinks are clearly displayed and relates to the topic's content and material
- linked website pages provide good quality material and information for learners
- chapters are clear, concise and closely match the topic's structure and presentation

b) Appropriate where:

- graphical images are of satisfactory quality and match the topic's content
- image transitions are timed to complement the audio
- hyperlinks are relevant to the topic's content and material
- linked websites provide additional information and topic material for learners
- chapter titles are meaningful, matching the topic's structure and presentation

c) Inappropriate where:

- the quality of graphical images is inadequate and unrelated to the topic's content
- timings of image transitions occur in a haphazard way, unrelated to the audio
- hyperlinks are irrelevant to the topic's material
- linked websites do not provide any additional material for learners
- chapter titles are misleading and unrelated to the topic's structure and presentation

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3. Prompts for considering podcasts for personalised learning

Aspects to consider when considering whether to use a podcast as a resource to support personalise learning.

a) Pedagogical questions include:

- Will the podcast make a positive contribution to the learning objectives for the subject/topic?
 - Would using a podcast match the learning styles of identified individuals or groups of learners and promote independent learning?
 - To what extent would using a podcast help learners acquire relevant knowledge, skills and understanding?
 - Should the resource be seen as essential for an optional activity for all children and young people?
 - How far would the podcast be useful as a supplementary, support or extension activity for different groups of learners?
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b) e-Learning questions include:

- To what extent would the use of a podcast aggravate or combat the increasing digital divide amongst learners?
 - Would access to online sources for the podcast mean that the e-safety of learners needs to be carefully considered?
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 - How confident will learners be in applying their ICT knowledge, skills and experience in using podcasts?
 - Do learners have access to appropriate guidance and support within the educational setting they are expected to operate?
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c) Technical questions include:

- Is there good access to broadband for using podcasts online?
 - Does the configuration of a school/college/university network allow for online use/downloading podcasts?
 - Do computers have the appropriate software and "plug-ins" to download and "play" podcasts?
 - Is there appropriate hardware installed to support efficient playback of audio-visual (AV) material, including podcasts?
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