Postgraduate podcasting: An innovative approach to assessment

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Overview of presentation

• What is innovative assessment?
• Rationale for project
• Research methods
• Findings
• Reflections on using technology-based assessments
• Conclusions and implications for practice
Innovative assessment

Aims to produce students who are:

• Highly motivated and committed
• Enterprising
• Equipped with a range of transferable skills
• Capable of self-criticism and evaluation
• Active and reactive participants in the learning process

*Source: Mowl (1996:5)*
The quest for innovative assessment

• Podcasts offer the following advantages:
  – Respond to students’ expectations that we will utilise the latest technology
  – Provides a range of transferable skills
    • Technical skills
    • Organisational skills
    • Working as a team
    • Interpreting research to create scripts
  – Moves beyond ‘Death by PowerPoint’
  – *the ability to add clarity and meaning, motivation, emotion…*”  (Gribbins, 2007:1)
Research methods

- Working with part-time students on MA HRM&D
  - Content analysis of reflective statements submitted as other half of the summative assessment
  - Self-completion questionnaires completed online by students
Key findings

Five themes were identified from the reflective statements:

1. Prior attitudes about the use of podcasting
2. Developing podcasting skills
3. Benefits of podcasting
4. Transferable skills
5. Future use of podcasting
Key findings

Prior attitudes

• Many of the students were anxious due to a lack of understanding of what podcasts were (fear of the unknown)

Developing podcasting skills

• The opportunity to develop these skills was identified by a number of students.
Key findings

Benefits of podcasting

• Combining technology with studies in a meaningful way
• Forced all members of the group to really learn the subject area (so they could speak authoritatively)
• Learning how to facilitate formal group discussions
• Broadened the experience gained from the programme
Key findings

Benefits (continued)

• Learning technical skills
• A quick and effective way of summarising information
• Learning how to write scripts
• Focus on being ‘engaging’ presenters
• Different from all of the other assessment methods used on the programme
Key findings

Development of transferable skills

• Enhanced team work and communication skills
• Knowledge about the topic chosen as the subject of the podcast
• Using finished podcasts as a means of sharing information in organisations
• Creative thinking
• Listening
Development of transferable skills

• Negotiating
• Time management
• Discovering better ways to find information on the internet
• Losing fear of technology – exploring it first before becoming daunted
• The ability to present ideas clearly and succinctly
Key findings

Future use of podcasting

• Whilst only a few could give examples of how it could be used in their current role, several considered how it could be used in the future:
  – Deliver elements of Corporate Induction
  – As part of the diversity strategy to communicate with hard to reach groups
  – To provide consistency in training delivery
Challenges of technology-based assessments

- Student apprehension
- Gaining the buy-in of teaching team
- Time implications for part-time students
- Writing clear assessment briefs
- Equipment availability
- Students’ lack of technical skills (or perceived skills)
- Carefully defining assessment criteria
- Something different....
Conclusions

• There are clear advantages of using podcasts for students – both in the present and the future

• A wide range of transferable skills can be gained

• Successful podcast assessment requires:
  – A very clear assessment brief
  – Clear marking criteria
  – Technical support
  – Examples for students to listen to
Implications for teaching practice

• Discuss perceived problems (and subsequent reflections) with future students
• Check progress on an ongoing basis
• Share examples of podcasts from past cohorts with students to reduce anxiety
• Encourage self reflections
• Consider when podcasting is (and is not appropriate)
• Request student feedback on the process