Creating Engaging Podcasts

Planning your Podcast

- Who do you want to listen to your podcasts? Ask yourself what they want from a podcast, what about your research is interesting to them and why podcasts are the best way to reach this audience. If you can, why not ask them directly through a focus group?
- Successful podcasts maintain a clear theme and have a consistent format. Which podcasts do you or your target audience listen to? Can you take tips from them?
- How will you promote your podcast to potential audiences? See our promotion guide for ideas and tips to promote online media. Consider what resource will you need for this, you will likely need to plan time and/or funding into your project for this.

Creating your Podcast

- Audio equipment can be as basic as your phone microphone to a high quality Dictaphone, read LSE's guide here. Always test these at the venue for quality before recording.
- You can then edit recordings for free using platforms such as Audacity, again, LSE have a guide here.
- Often your institution's AV, IT or Communications team will have equipment on site to borrow and use, always contact them first for advice.
- How will your audience find your podcast? Directories such as iTunes make them more findable, especially if featured as part of a branded collection from partners or your institutions.
- If you have access to popular websites then some directories provide 'embed codes' that can be used to place your podcast on other websites, such as the Soundcloud directory.

Editing your Podcast

- If you're creating an unscripted podcast always record more content than you need, as much can be lost in the edit.
- When looking at what to cut out of a podcast you don't need to take out every um or err, as this can make it seem less natural. However, do take our instances in which people are talking over each other and long pauses.
- Have any sound effects and theme music ready to use. They can be useful for covering speech such as swearing or making links to different segments seem more smooth.

Evaluating your Podcast

- Consider what you want your audience to take away from the podcast and how you can evidence this.
- Analysing results of evaluation can take time, so decide information you need and factor in the resource needed to analyse results.
- Could you monitor involvement through use of a comments section? Record how many users follow links to further information? Or use podcast directory's analytics to track total listens?

Designing a Podcast

Timing

- Podcast series tend to be made up of 20min – 1hr episodes, depending on the habits and preferences of your listeners. However, once decided on a length, stick to it!
- To plan your time consider the learning objectives for the overall series and then break these down into individual objectives for each podcast.
- Can your research be separated into a range of shorter topics? If not, work out how your larger subject can be broken down into coherent shorter chunks.
- Try not to pack your podcasts with information, if you are rushing to get information in consider breaking the episodes down further.

Content

- Use your learning objectives to design your content and stay on message. What are you trying to get across and how can you do this clearly in the time you have?
- How can you deliver content in a clear and engaging way? Consider your audience's interests and references that you can relate to. Consider using metaphor or specific case studies to illustrate more complex topics.
- Sound effects can break up speech and give listeners time to take in what you've said. However, any effects need to contribute to the feel of the podcast rather than detract, check that your listeners will recognise your sounds without visual cues.

Guests

- Featuring more than one speaker can break up content, provide more variety for listeners and provide new and different viewpoints to add to your research.
- Who else is relevant to your subject? Can you invite other academics, practitioners, external interest groups or those affected by your research to contribute?
- How will you involve other speakers in your content? Discussion? Scripted pieces? Guest Episodes? Personal Case Studies? The method you choose will decide how you approach guests and what is expected of them, you might need to be flexible to suit their time or preference.

Location

- Choosing a relevant location for recording can help the listener feel more part of the podcast, adding variety. However, remember they can't see the location, only hear.
- Does being on location contribute to your podcast? Will your audience know that you are somewhere different? How will you integrate this into the content?
- Visit the location first and test to make sure background noise and acoustics don't negatively affect the quality of recording