

Subscribe Now: Podcast Technology and the Study of Law

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Abstract

Podcasts allow students to subscribe to content (audio, audio with graphics or video) and this is automatically downloaded to their computer when they are online, for viewing when convenient, either on their computer or a portable media device. This combination of technologies offers some exciting educational opportunities for a new Law School attracting many non-traditional law students.

Law and Information Technology is a subject taught as optional papers at both the fourth year and Masters level. These papers were ideally suited to explore some of the opportunities that podcasting offers as they were already using a blended learning approach. For the last two semesters these papers have used podcasts and vodcasts to enhance the digital learning environment. The podcast technology was used both to deliver lecturer created content and student generated content – enabling the students to move beyond just content consumers to be content generators.

We experimented with different forms of lecturer generated content from the quick and easy recorded lecture to edited highlights and extra material. Video, enhanced and audio formats were used, and by directing the material through the University Portal allowed the a range of targeting of content from broadcasting to the whole class right down to extreme narrowcast of one to one video feedback on research assignments.

The study of law requires students to be able to take novel situations and apply and adapt existing knowledge, and then present this legal analysis to others (judges, senior partners, their clients or in our case their peers). Podcasts allowed some students to add another presentation mode to their cache of tools to deliver their analysis. The relatively more enduring quality of the podcasts presentations compared with the face to face presentations encouraged a more considered and professional presentation which in turn resulted in deeper learning for the student.

One student enrolled in the paper and continued to actively participate in the paper while on a University exchange in Belgium using a combination of video skype and podcast technologies.

This paper will focus on the development of the Law and IT paper, focusing on the introduction of the use of podcasts, the technology behind the implementation, the pedagogic underpinnings and the student's reaction to those methodologies.