

HOW TO USE PODCASTS TO SUPPORT STUDENT LEARNING

This guide explains how to create and use simple podcasts to support student learning. It focuses on the use of Audacity (software that enables recording and editing of audio material).

A podcast is a means of broadcasting engaging audio content. In an education context this provides students with a resource that they can listen to at any time and wherever they are.

WHY USE PODCASTS?

Podcasts are a means to share information and meaning with your students. Providing audio enables you to add nuance, emphasis and colour to the information through modulating your voice or tone. Podcasts are a useful means of keeping things human even when you are unable to speak directly to your students. This approach can help your students to engage with the materials.

Podcasts are generally smaller files than video so require less storage space and take less data to download. They can be accessed on smartphone, tablet, PC / laptop and some MP3 players.

PLAN YOUR PODCAST

Before you think about making your recording, plan what you will say. Take some time to write notes or a script for yourself so that you remember everything you need to cover and what you say is well-structured.

HOW CAN I START PODCASTING?

There are two main options for recording podcasts.

OPTION 1: Podcasting software

Audacity is the university-supported software which enables you to record your voice and save it in a format (usually mp3) that can be easily played by your students using different devices.

Audacity can be downloaded from the university software centre.

If you do not have a Heriot-Watt managed computer, you may be able to install Audacity on your own computer by downloading it direct from Audacity (follow the instructions in this [step-by-step guide](#)).

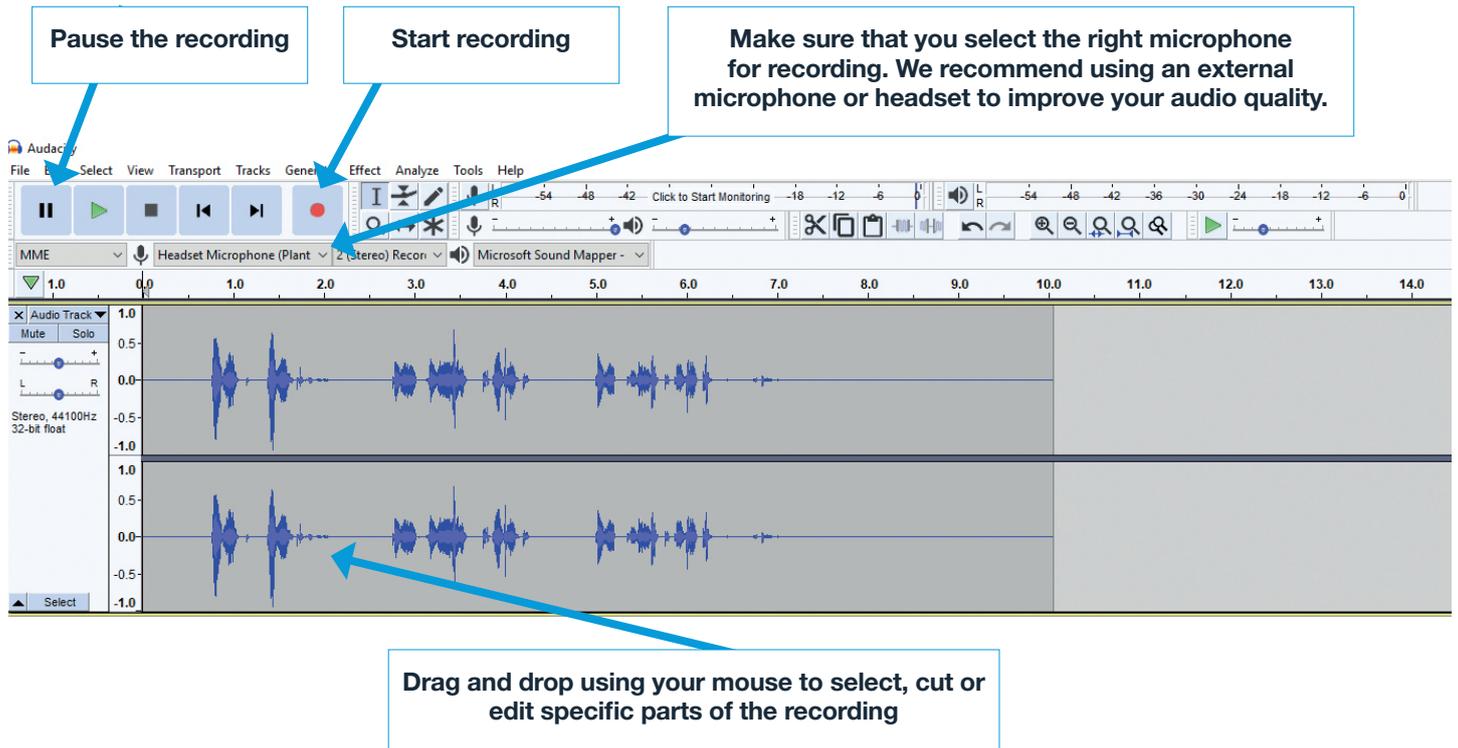
OPTION 2: Audio recording apps on mobile devices

Most mobile devices such as smartphones or tablets support audio recording apps. You can record your voice on your device and use Audacity to edit and process the audio file.

If you use this option, once you have made the recording share or send it to a place where you will be able to access it from your Heriot-Watt device e.g. email it to your Heriot-Watt email or upload to OneDrive.

USING AUDACITY TO CREATE OR EDIT PODCASTS

This is what the Audacity screen looks like:



HOW TO CREATE AND EDIT A NEW RECORDING

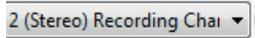
STEP 1: Make sure that your external microphone or headset is turned on and that the device toolbar of Audacity displays the correct recording and playback devices:



If Audacity does not display your recording device, close the application, reconnect your device to your computer/laptop and open Audacity again. If doing so does not solve the problem, follow advice provided on the [toolbar troubleshooting](#) section of the Audacity manual.

STEP 2: Leave the default setting 'MME' in the **Audio Host** box. This is the interface between Audacity and the sound device.

STEP 3: For an optimal sound quality, make sure that you are recording in stereo:



If your microphone does not support stereo, you can use mono recording, but the quality will not be as good.

STEP 4: To start recording click on the **Record** button:

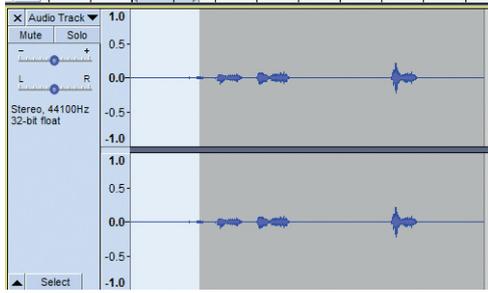


You can pause your recording at any time by clicking on the **Pause** button.

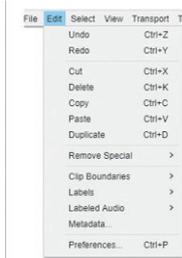
To finish your recording click on the **Stop** button.

You can listen to your recording by pressing the **Play** button. You can skip to the start and to end of the recording.

STEP 5: To edit your recording, select the areas of the audio recording that you want to edit by dragging and dropping your mouse. The selected area will be highlighted in a light blue:



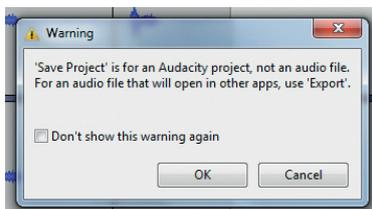
You can delete, cut, copy, paste and duplicate any selected area by clicking on the **Edit** menu:



More advanced editing features are explained in the [Audacity online manual](#)

STEP 6: When you have finished editing your recording, save the file as an Audacity project in case you need to access and edit the original recording.

From Files select **Save project as**; the following warning will appear:



WARNING

Remember that the default Audacity format (.aup) is NOT an audio file. You need to export your audio file in a different format so that your students can play and listen to it.

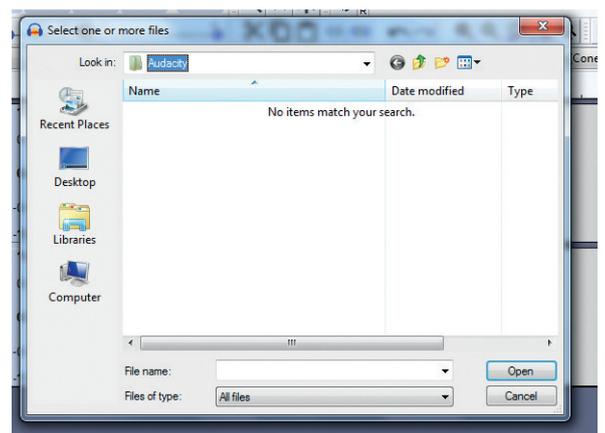
STEP 7: To export your file in a compatible audio format, select **Files** and then **Export**. We recommend selecting 'mp3' format from the list of audio formats that will be displayed. MP3 is the most popular file format type for playing audio online.

HOW TO IMPORT AUDIO FILES TO AUDACITY

STEP 1: You can import audio files recorded on other mobile apps to Audacity by selecting **Files** and then **Import**. Audacity supports a variety of audio files formats (e.g. .mp3, .wav, .ogg etc.)

STEP 2: Make sure that you store a copy of your audio file in your computer/laptop so that Audacity can find the file:

STEP 3: You can now edit the audio file as outlined in the instructions in step 5 of '*How to create and edit a new recording*' (above).



UPLOADING A PODCAST TO VISION

Rather than emailing the podcast file to students, you can upload the podcast to Vision. You can do this in the same way that you upload other files (see the 'Uploading materials onto Vision' guide for details on how to do this), or you can use the podcast tool in Vision to build a learning activity around the podcast.

STEP 1: To use the podcast tool, in the content area of your course in Vision go to:



STEP 2: select the content type **Audio** file

SELECT AUDIO FILE

* Name

Colour of Name

* Find File

Selected File

File Name	podcast.mp3
File Type	MP3

STEP 3: Name and upload your file, leave the other options as default.

STEP 4: Click **Submit** to save.

TOP TIPS

- Use external microphones or a headset (rather than built-in microphones) to have better quality audio.
- Plan what you want to say before you start recording.
- Don't worry if you pause, forget something or say 'umm' or 'err' this is natural, and totally fine.
- It's OK if something goes wrong and you do need to re-record, just delete the recording and start again.
- Ensure that your recording will be accessible to all students. For example, provide a transcript of what say. (See the Supporting Accessible Learning Online guide for more details).

FURTHER RESOURCES

Audacity online manual

<https://www.audacityteam.org/help/documentation>

Audacity troubleshooting guide

https://manual.audacityteam.org/man/faq_recording_troubleshooting.html

Audacity FAQs <https://www.audacityteam.org/help/faq>

TROUBLESHOOTING

WINDOWS

You may receive 'Error while opening sound device' when you try to record. This typically happens when you first use Audacity for recording and have no audio input devices (or only the built-in microphone) showing in Device Toolbar.

Make sure that you select the correct audio device/speaker.

Use a headset rather than in-built mic / speakers.

MAC

Some Mac users may experience problems trying to record in Audacity due to Apple changing the Privacy settings for recording devices (making it more conservative, 'safer'). Note that, although macOS refers to this setting as Microphone, it applies to all recording devices, including external USB / Thunderbolt interfaces.

To fix this problem:

1. On your Mac, choose '**Apple menu**' then '**System Preferences**' then click '**Security & Privacy**' in the left-hand menu and the click the '**Privacy**' tab.
2. Click '**Microphone**' in the left-hand menu.
3. Select the checkbox next to an application (Audacity) to allow it to access the microphone.



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