Students WHO PODCAST

Using Podcasts As A Form Of Assessment In Conservation Biology

The Practice

Assessment has been transformed on ‘Conservation Biology’, a second-year optional unit in Biological Sciences. An intended learning outcome of the unit is to ‘communicate conservation issues using digital media’, which takes the form of a podcast.

Course tutors have created a practical guide to creating podcasts, including links to tutorials and suggested recording pools/equipment, practice activities, information about the formative and summative elements of the assessment and the marking criteria, ensuring all students have the information needed to create a high-quality podcast.

The assessment is done in pairs (160 students, 80 pairs), with one pair for the formative task and then switching to a new partner for the second, summative task. There is a chance for feedback between each task with students being asked to create their own marking rubric after the formative task, enabling and encouraging more active engagement with feedback. Students are only given a mark for the summative piece, and feedback for both is given in the format of things the students should ‘start’, ‘stop’ and ‘continue’ doing.

When the assessment was first run, podcasts were ten minutes long, but have been reduced down to eight. If this module was run as a 20CP across the year, Andy would consider asking the students to make a podcast mini series as a form of continuous assessment.

The Impact

Most students loved this assessment as it gave them the opportunity to learn a new skill they could use in the future. When interviewed for the BILT Assessment Zine, some students described this as their ‘favourite assessment’.

Comments Comparing Podcasts to Traditional Essays

“A podcast is a really unique way of delving into a subject! We don’t often get to do fun assessments in our course so a lot of us have found this much more enjoyable. Meeting new people was fun too.”

“It was really nice to do something more fun and less stressful as an assessment. I think it should be put into other units as well.”

Q. What Do You Feel Were The Most Valuable Aspects Of Making The Podcasts?

“Thinking about links and being able to form and present opinions.”

“I put more effort into understanding the content as it would’ve been obvious if I didn’t know what I was talking about! Whereas in an essay it’s much easier to write about things you don’t necessarily understand. I also found it really nice to work with someone that I knew, so we could discuss what the best way to do the podcast would be.”

Next Steps

Andy has created this guide to support students doing this assessment in years to come – please feel free to use it with your students!

Contact

Please contact Andy Wakefield, lecturer in the School of Biological Sciences, for more information about this assessment. Get in touch with the CREATE team for more case studies like this.