

Here is an example of a class podcast project.

### ***Step 1 – Setting up a podcast page (approximately 30 minutes)***

Using a free podcast site like **podOmatic** ([www.podomatic.com](http://www.podomatic.com)), the teacher sets up a podcast page for the project. This needs to be done at home or in the computer room before class. To record a podcast, the teacher needs a computer and Internet connection, and a microphone and speakers or a headset. Podcast sites are extremely easy to use and no specialist technical knowledge is needed. The podcast page provides a website for learners to post their podcasts to. The teacher can provide a short text description of the project, with photos and an example podcast, as in the screenshot below, on the podcast page:



The teacher can also add a podcast as a briefing for the class, including the information that they would like learners to have in their own podcasts.

### ***Step 2 – Creating learner podcasts (approximately 45–60 minutes)***

In pairs or individually, learners prepare and rehearse a short text about themselves. Tell them to include the following information:

- name and age.
- job or school year.
- hobbies or spare time activities.
- one unusual thing about themselves.

It is important to allow learners time to rehearse their texts several times so that they feel confident about being recorded. Although their podcasts should not be directly read out word by word, do allow learners to make notes to help them, as they will feel it is important to be as accurate as possible.

## **Course design for online learning: considerations**

In designing online learning courses, there are certain questions which the course designer or individual teacher needs to consider carefully if the courses are to be of good quality. If you are thinking of trying out elements of online learning with your own learners, or are involved in larger scale online learning projects, the list of questions below will help you to bear in mind some of the key considerations. For a course or study programme to demonstrate good practice in online learning, the following questions need to be answered satisfactorily at the design stage.

### ***Delivery mode***

- Is the course purely online, or does it include blended learning? If blended, exactly what percentage of the course takes place face-to-face, and how often do learners meet?
- What elements of the course content are delivered online, and what elements are delivered face-to-face?
- How exactly are the online components of the course delivered? By email and chat? In a VLE? Via an ad hoc collection of online tools like Skype, email and Yahoo! Groups?
- Can a CD-ROM provide a useful means of delivering digital content for elements that are difficult to download, for example video content?
- Is the method of delivery suited to the content? In other words, if an online course promises to teach and practise pronunciation, but the delivery mode is via email, it is unlikely to work!
- What elements of the course will take place synchronously, that is, in real time, and what elements asynchronously, that is, not in real time? What synchronous and asynchronous tools will be used?
- Does the course content and delivery mode reflect the learners' needs?

### ***Task design and materials***

- What materials will be used for the course content? Will they be tailor-made content and activities, or will existing resources on the Internet be used?
- What issues of copyright need to be taken into account, if you are using existing activities, graphics and websites available on the Internet?
- Is content attractively presented and varied, for example with graphics and animation? Is there a range of media used – audio, video, text – and a range of tools – forums, text/audio chat, email, voice mail?
- Are different task types provided? For example, are all the grammar exercises drag-and-drop or are various activity types available?

A podcast site such as podOmatic will allow learners to record, listen to and then re-record their podcasts until they are entirely happy with the results. Only then should learners publish their podcasts to the podcast project page. Recording and re-recording requires no special technical knowledge or software apart from Internet access to the podcast page already set up by the teacher, and a microphone and headphones for each student to record their podcast with. The recording software is incorporated into the podcast page and is very easy to use. In the single computer classroom, learners will need to take turns to record their podcasts. When learners are happy with the recordings of their individual podcasts, they publish them to the main podcast page.

### ***Step 3 – Listening to learner podcasts (approximately 45–60 minutes)***

In a subsequent class, put learners individually (or in pairs) with a computer and allow them to listen to all of their classmates' podcasts. In the single computer classroom, the podcasts can be played one by one, via speakers. Tell learners to note down what hobbies each person has, and also the unusual thing each person mentions. Once all the podcasts have been listened to, allow learners to compare notes in small groups. What have they found out about their classmates?

### ***Step 4 – Follow-up (3–4 subsequent lessons)***

Once learners have produced one short podcast, and are familiar with the podcasting site and how to use it, they can start to produce regular podcasts on the topics which are covered in class. The more learners practise preparing podcast texts, rehearsing them and recording them, the more confident they will become, and the more 'natural' their recordings will start to sound. And the quicker they will carry them out.

Below is a screenshot of podcasts produced by EFL learners (using podOmatic) to celebrate April Fools' Day, in which the learners give original excuses for not doing their homework.

The screenshot shows a web browser window with a podOmatic podcast page. The browser's address bar shows 'Apple (45)', 'Amazon', 'eBay', 'Yahoo!', and 'News (205)'. The page title is 'April Fool's Day Contest' with a timestamp of 'April 01, 2006 02:34AM'. The main text reads: 'We are celebrating April Fool's Day today! Level 4 students came up with some very creative excuses about not having done their homework. Listen to the messages and vote on the one that you think is the most original one! Thank you for your collaboration. Please don't forget to include yourself in the Frappr Map! Thanks.' Below this is a poll titled 'What's the most creative excuse for not having done homework?' with a dropdown menu showing 'Excuse # 1', 'Vote', and 'View' buttons, and a note 'Free polls from Pollhost.com'. To the right, there is a 'Subscribe to this Podcast' section with an 'RSS Feed' link and a 'Where are you in the world?' map. Below the map is a 'Program Archive' for the month of November, showing a calendar grid with dates 1 through 30. The main content area also shows a list of podcast entries, with the top one being '# 13 - I didn't do my homework because ...' dated 'April 01, 2006 02:24AM' and featuring a 'Play' button and links for 'Send to Friends', '(6) Comments', 'Download', and 'Permalink'.