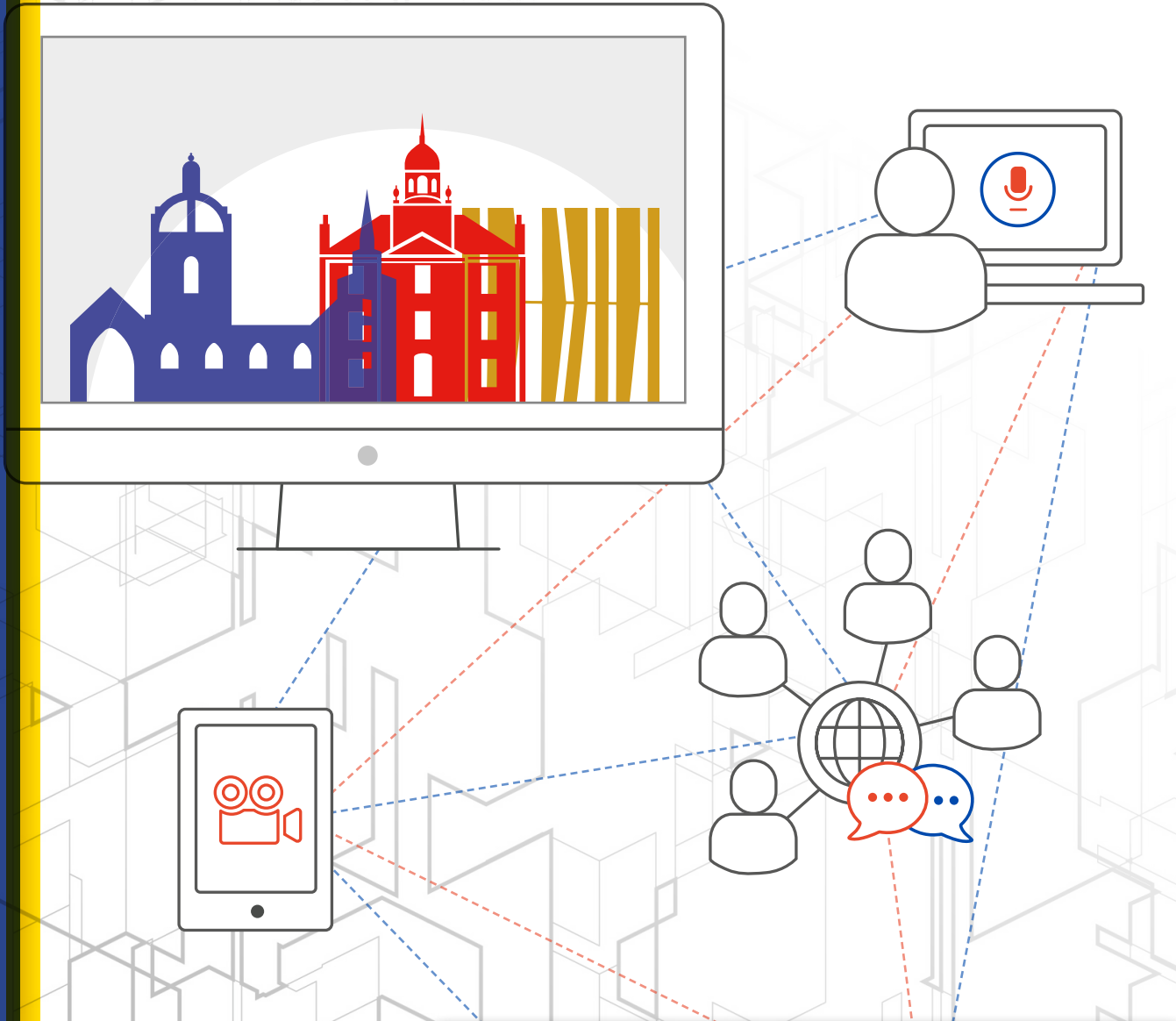


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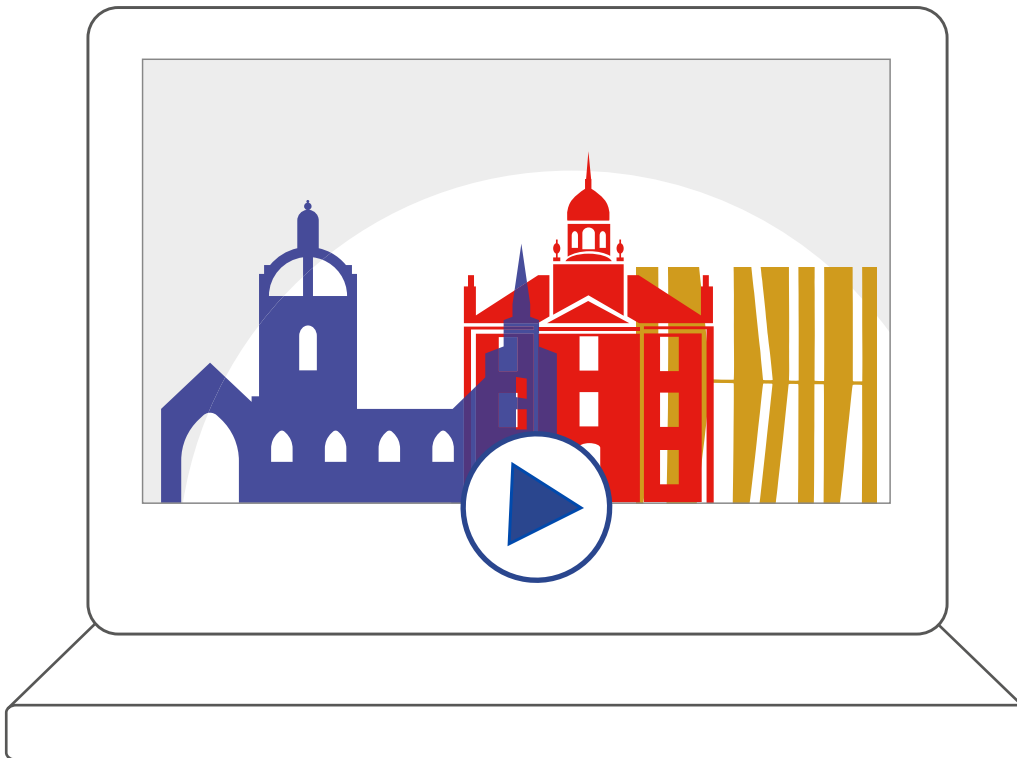
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Hosting Virtual Events Support and Guidance

September 2020



This document provides guidance for University of Aberdeen colleagues and teams looking to host virtual events, rather than physical events on campus or in community settings. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the University is currently unable to host physical events on campus. The guidance aims to ensure that the event organiser(s) considers all the aspects required in planning for a successful online event.

The Central Festival and Events team, based within the Public Affairs, Stakeholder Engagement and Events team (PASE) is also here to help and support you to plan for, organise, promote and deliver a successful event.

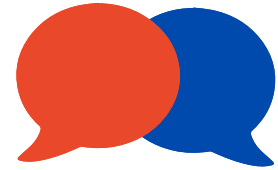
We encourage you to get in touch with one of the team early on in the planning stage. You can do this by completing our short [virtual events proposal form](#) and someone from the Central Festival and Events team will get back to you.

If you are planning to organise a virtual event please follow these steps, in accordance with this guide.

Project Proposal

In order to raise your event idea with the Events team the first step is to fill in our online Events Proposal form detailing information about the event, audience, any funding and the logistics around the format.

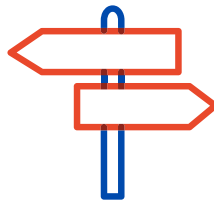
STEP 01



Consider the format & audience type

Consider your options:
What type of audience are you trying to reach?
Could this work as a podcast?
Does it need to be live?

STEP 02



Consult with Media Services

The Events team will advise you on consulting with Media Services to identify the best platform to use and to finalise the structure and event details.

STEP 03



Build your promotions plan

Consider how you will market your event including reaching out to your networks and the University social media practitioners to help promote.

STEP 04



Evaluate & Report

Ensure you have any surveys etc. designed before your event and is ready to send out shortly after the event.

STEP 05





When planning a virtual event, the following questions are important to consider:

PURPOSE

- Why are you holding the event - What is the aim? What do you want to achieve?
- To achieve your aim does the event need to be a one off, a series of events or a programme of events across the year?
- How will you measure success? (Consider: What does success look like for you? Number of attendees? Content to support funding requirements? Additional profile for, and awareness of, your research/school/initiative?)

AUDIENCE

- Who is the target audience for the event?
- Do you have invited / external speakers? If so, which time zones are the speakers and audiences in?
- Consider the likely audience numbers for the event and maximum numbers as this may determine the type of platform to be used
- How will you engage your audience?
- If you think your audience might include children, young people or people at risk then you must read and implement the University's [Online Events Safeguarding](#) document

FINANCIAL

- Have you considered the costs of producing your event?
- Do you have funding to produce your event, will you need to apply for funding, or will you rely on attendees' fees and / or sponsorship to finance your event?

For help developing a budget for your event please contact the Central Festival and Events team.

EVENT FORMAT/STRUCTURE

- Does the online event clash with any other similar or large-scale events/happenings/global celebrations?
- Format of the event: Number of speakers and type of event (e.g. panel session, interview style discussion or debate with live Q&A session)
- Will there be external speakers involved?
- Will there be sponsors/partners associated with the event that need to be acknowledged?
- Is there a charge for the event or is it free?
- Who will brief speakers and what information do they need?
- Have you developed a timeline that defines key dates and actions that need to be delivered for the event to be a success?
- Is the location/environment that you plan to record from appropriate for this type of event? I.e. quiet, no distracting backdrops etc.
- Will the event be streamed live or pre-recorded, or a mixture?

The Central Festival and Events team can help with all of this! Please complete our [virtual events proposal form](#) so we have the event details and can help you with the planning and delivery of the event.



TECHNICAL

- Will the event be live or pre-recorded? If live will you want to record a copy of it?
- What sort of support do you require for the event - facilitation, technical, admin?
- Do you want audience interaction e.g. Live Q&A, pre-submitted questions etc.
- Arrange tests for virtual platform with all speakers ahead of the event
- Do you need to restrict access to registered attendees only?
- Do attendees need to download anything or require information about how the platform you are using works?
- Is any of the information included in the programme likely to be of a sensitive nature? For example, personal information or topics of a controversial nature?

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

- Consider a marketing and promotional plan for the event and if you have targeted audience dissemination networks or wider partner communication networks you can utilise?
- Will you be using the University of Aberdeen social media platforms? If so, have you booked these in with Digital Marketing?
- Consider external sites for promotion e.g. add event to Aberdeen City Council what's on page and Visit Aberdeenshire. The Central Festival and Events team can help provide links to these sites and further information
- Consider any sponsors/partners associated with the event and how they can help promote it, as well as any requirements they have regarding a visual presence. e.g. logos to be added to videos or acknowledgements in social media posts etc.

If the event organiser/event contact requires help with a marketing plan, please contact the Central Festival and Events team as soon as possible in order to maximise the campaign timeline. We are happy to help!

EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK

- It is good practice to make available feedback forms to capture partner/participants/audience experiences
- How will feedback opportunities be made available?
- How will they be accessed and how will the data be gathered? Remember that the sooner you make the request for feedback, the more likely you are to get a valuable response. Plan to finalise the feedback survey / questionnaire before the event takes place / goes live and make it available immediately at the event close. How you do this will depend on the platform used
- Post event follow up - thank speaker(s)/main organiser(s)/partners and funders - and wider audience if applicable
- Marketing and promotion report of traffic, hits, views etc. You should also request engagement data from social media posts
- Collate and analyse feedback to identify areas of improvement to enhance future performance

If the event organiser/event contact requires help with evaluation, please contact the Central Festival and Events team. We have off-the-shelf evaluation/feedback templates to help gather data and key facts and can advise on bespoke templates.

Virtual Event Platforms



It is important to speak to the Central Festival and Events team about the structure and format of the event and address the questions above to inform which virtual event platform would be the most appropriate. The University of Aberdeen has multiple platforms that can be used for hosting virtual events including Teams, Teams Live and Collaborate with the appropriate licenses in place.

The Central Festival and Events team will review the information submitted in the [virtual events proposal form](#) and liaise with the Media Services team who will advise on the most appropriate virtual event platform to best suit the event needs. This will be discussed in detail with the event organiser/main event contact.

Podcasts



For events that are more suited to audio recording, a podcast is the simplest way to do this. Podcasts have become an increasingly popular and powerful tool for events. By the end of 2019, 7 million people in the UK listened to podcasts every week, an increase in 24% over the previous year and more than double over the past five years.

Podcasts are transforming the way in which people listen to audio content, just as on-demand video is changing how people watch television. As much as it can be a quick and relatively easy way to communicate to your audience, it is just as important to consider the quality and reputation of the University of Aberdeen when producing any content. See [podcasting guide](#) for more information. Contact the Central Festival and Events team to let them know about your podcasting plans and they can talk you through the guide.

Marketing & Promotion of Virtual Events



It is important to market and promote the event so people are aware the event is taking place. The Central Festival and Events team can help develop a social media and marketing plan to maximise audience numbers and interactions. We will also liaise with our colleagues in the Public Affairs, Stakeholder Engagement and Events team to advise on external sites and partners who will be able to help advertise and promote the event. Please contact the Central Festival and Events team to discuss this further.

Evaluation & Feedback



Evaluation is key in order to gather feedback from participants about what they got out of the event as well as helping organisers to assess whether they have met their aims or not. It will also identify areas for improvement for the future.

The Central Festival and Events team can provide evaluation templates that can be used for evaluating audience and organiser experience after events take place. Once audience members have submitted feedback, event analysis and key facts and figures can be collated. If the event organiser contact requires help with the evaluation process, please contact the Central Festival and Events team.



Next Steps

Please discuss your event idea in detail with the Central Festival and Events team so they can best advise on options and help lead and support you on your virtual events journey.

Please fill out a [virtual event proposal form](#) so we can gather the key event details. Once we have received your form, the Events team will contact you and help you project manage your event.

Use the Virtual Event Checklist below, to tick off tasks when these are completed or confirmed and also to make notes.

TASK	NOTES / COMMENTS / PROGRESS / FURTHER ACTION
<input type="radio"/> Event Title	
<input type="radio"/> Description	
<input type="radio"/> Event purpose / aim	
Audience	
<input type="radio"/> Target audience	
<input type="radio"/> Estimated audience numbers	
<input type="radio"/> Is the event open to the public?	
<input type="radio"/> Indicate if the event is free or chargeable?	
<input type="radio"/> Age restrictions (i.e. strong language, film screening etc.)	
Event Format / Structure	
<input type="radio"/> Type / format of event (panel discussion, interview, workshop etc.)	
<input type="radio"/> Date and time of event	
<input type="radio"/> Speakers (internal / external)	
<input type="radio"/> Which country is the speaker/s located in (consider time zones)	
<input type="radio"/> Who is/are the speakers' nominated contact person(s)? This person will brief the speaker with all information.	
<input type="radio"/> Are there any sponsors or partners that need acknowledged?	
Budget	
<input type="radio"/> Is there budget for the event or has funding been approved?	
<input type="radio"/> If there is funding, what steps need to be taken to ensure funding constraints are met?	



Next Steps

TASK	NOTES / COMMENTS / PROGRESS / FURTHER ACTION
Technical	
<input type="checkbox"/> Is the event booked in with Media Services?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Is the event live or pre-recorded?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Type of support required - facilitation, technical, admin?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Check speakers' internet connection is reliable	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure speakers, recording space is appropriate	
<input type="checkbox"/> Virtual or Hybrid Activity?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Will there be audience interaction - live Q&A etc.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Test virtual platform before main event with all speakers	
Marketing and Promotion	
<input type="checkbox"/> Do you have a marketing & social media plan?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Contact Digital team to check of availability and 'book' into their social media calendar	
<input type="checkbox"/> Do you require a press release?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Gather marketing plan from partners other orgs/speakers (e.g. logos, images, biogs etc.)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Consider internal communications (staff e-zine, school newsletters, websites etc.)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Consider external sites for promotion (Visit Aberdeenshire, ACC, AGCC etc.)	
Evaluation and Feedback	
<input type="checkbox"/> Confirm feedback form questions	
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify evaluation form / templates to be used	
<input type="checkbox"/> How will this be sent to audience members	
<input type="checkbox"/> Post event thanks and feedback to speakers and collaborative teams	
<input type="checkbox"/> Collate feedback from evaluation forms	
<input type="checkbox"/> Collate social media stats and web traffic stats	



Next Steps

TASK	NOTES / COMMENTS / PROGRESS / FURTHER ACTION
Final Event Report	
<input type="radio"/> Is a final event report required?	
<input type="radio"/> Create and gather report content	
<input type="radio"/> Receiver list for sending report	
<input type="radio"/> Finalise and send	

Key Contacts



Events Team	events@abdn.ac.uk
Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement	publicaffairs@abdn.ac.uk
Media Services	mediaservices@abdn.ac.uk
Digital Marketing	digitalmarketing@abdn.ac.uk
CPD Services	cpdservices@abdn.ac.uk

We look forward to hearing from you.

Thank You!

The Central Festival and Events Team.



Podcasting Guidelines

May 2020



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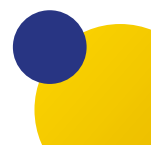
Introduction

By the end of 2019, 7 million people in the UK listened to podcasts every week, an increase in 24% over the previous year and more than double over the past five years. Podcasts are transforming the way in which people listen to audio content, just as on-demand video is changing how people watch television.

As much as it can be a quick and relatively easy way to communicate to your audience, it is just as important to consider the quality and reputation of the University when producing any content.

This document is intended as a guide for those creating podcasts for or on behalf of the University of Aberdeen. The content is a guide only to ensure that the podcast producer is mindful of the quality and brand elements and it is understood that there may be other techniques or tools that can be used to achieve the same output.

If any further advice is required, or there are any queries, please contact the digital marketing team at events@abdn.ac.uk



Planning

Planning a podcast isn't too dissimilar to planning any other type of digital media. You first need to start with your idea and consider your audience. This will help guide you with how long you want the podcast to be, and the general feel you are trying to achieve.

Audience

The first question is 'who is your listener?' The audience type will influence the format and structure of the podcast and it's important to note that a podcast developed with 'everyone' in mind, will likely lack a bit of personality so it's worth tailoring it for a specific demographic. For example, if the podcast is aimed at a younger audience you may wish for the talking sections to be shorter with more frequent intervals and ensure it's a topic that will keep their interest.

Format

At the planning stage you will need to consider the general structure of your podcast. Some suggested formats:

- Solo monologue – a presenter discussing a topic
- Interview – fairly formal conversation/question and answer pattern
- Conversation – similar to interview but more information & fast-flowing
- Panel – Three or more people discussing a topic
- Ramble – unstructured, improvised and informal

When planning out the structure, decide on how long you want each section to be and how you will introduce yourself and the speaker, if relevant.

It is useful at this stage to break the podcast into chunks, a broad example could be as follows:

- branded introduction (music or audio sting)
- formal spoken introduction
- speaker/interview
- break (sponsor or promotion or brand announcement)
- speaker/interview
- spoken outro
- end audio sting

Planning this general structure will not only help guide you when recording but will help in post-production when piecing all the elements together.

Participants

It may also be useful to meet with any planned participants beforehand to discuss key conversation topics or questions. This will help them prepare and enable them to give more fluent answers or responses.



Equipment

Before recording you will need to set-up your equipment, and make sure any participants are also prepared. The following are recommendations for the best sound quality:

Microphones

- Headset or headphone microphone – if you plan on recording straight into your laptop make sure you have a decent quality headset or headphone microphone. You can test the quality of these using in-built recording software to make sure the quality is acceptable. Avoid using in-built laptop microphones. Additionally, when recording make sure you have headphones plugged in, to stop any echoing.
- USB microphone – same as above can plug directly into your computer via the USB port.
- Smartphone – most smartphones have decent in-built microphones and recording software on them ready to go. It is worth becoming familiar with the audio recording software on your phone and setting this up next to your laptop facing you. It is also worth for some way to ensure your phone is at mouth level - stacking a few books up next to your laptop and placing the phone on top of those could be an option.
- External microphones – these can come in many forms but external audio recorders generally record on to SD cards. They can be set up in a similar way to smartphones, as long as they are facing you, they will pick up decent audio.

Software

There are several options for recording your audio that come free with most computers and phones. Everyone will need to record their own audio but, if there's a podcast host, they should also ensure the call itself is being recorded if possible (e.g. using the record feature on Microsoft Teams during the call).

- Windows Voice Recorder – pre-installed on all windows PC. AS simple as opening the program and pressing the record button.
- Mac Voice Memo app or GarageBand – Both are simple to use with the former being the easiest to use. Bandcamp give you more control over your recording
- Audacity – available for both systems. A free audio recorder allowing you to watch the waveform as you record and give more control over recording than previously mentioned programs.
- Phones – most phones have a built-in audio recorder.
- Microsoft Teams – the 'host' of each call can record meetings in Microsoft teams. You may want to ensure that individuals have their cameras switched off to stabilise the connection.

Make sure you test your recording software before you start and check the levels. You can do this by recording yourself talking for a couple of seconds and listening back to the audio. When recording make sure you know where the file is being saved to. If recording on a phone, then make sure you can send the file directly from the phone or upload it to a computer to send. Files can be sent via WeTransfer.



Recording

Once you have set up your equipment and software ready to record you will need to ensure you are recording in a suitable environment. A few basic tips are as follows:

- Avoid large echoey rooms – this will reduce feedback and improve audio quality
- Avoid hard surfaces – these can increase echoes and reverb
- Avoid using the surface you are recording on – for example if you are drinking water throughout make sure the glass is on a separate surface to avoid audio interference and noise.
- Keep microphones close to your mouth, but not too close – you'll want to try and get your microphone about a hand or two away from your mouth. Too close and it will cause too much noise and too far away and you may be too quiet or not picked up at all.

During the recording do not be afraid to re-do sections or re-ask questions if you want a better take. If recording an interview style, the host's job is to not only ask questions but to oversee directing the podcast and making sure all the content you want out of the recording is attained. If you want specific answers with your interviewee talk to them informally about this and make sure they can relay it back comfortably and naturally.

Keep track of time

It is useful to make notes throughout the recording, with specific timestamps, that you can use in the edit. This may be for marking where in a conversation a question is asked, or to make an awkward pause/section that will need edited out.

Keep an eye on the time to make sure no section goes longer than it needs to, as per your original plan. For instance, you may want each question and answer session to last no more than 15 minutes, so you will need to make sure you or the guest isn't rambling too much. If the guest is running long but you don't want to interrupt their cadence, then make sure you are noting down good soundbites that could be used to help shorten the piece.



Post-production

This is where your planning will come in most handy. You should have a decent idea of the general structure of your podcast at this stage – taking into consideration how the recording went and checking your notes. You'll need to decide the best software to edit on, here are a couple options:

- Audacity – it's free and you may have already used it to record. It's pretty user friendly and perhaps the easiest to jump into
- Adobe Audition – paid software, part of the Adobe creative cloud. More comprehensive but trickier to get into and learn.

In your editing software of choice, you will need to pull in all your audio, from both the podcast recording itself and any branded stings/intro you have. Using your storyboard, you can then start to construct your podcast

Whilst editing keep an eye on the levels for your audio to make sure it isn't too quiet or too loud. It's also important to ensure consistency between different sections of recording so make sure that each clip's volume is peaking around the same level.

Once you have constructed your podcast you can export it as a .wav or .mp3. Make sure you send the podcast to anyone involved for sign-off. It's also useful to send the podcast round for feedback at this stage.



Podcast Branding and Style Guide

The brand of a podcast is defined by the listeners overall perception of the series, therefore we have to carefully consider our style and approach to all podcasts.

A University of Aberdeen podcast should reflect our brand and be:

- Personable, approachable and inclusive
- Informative and knowledgeable
- Considered, respectable and confident

As a University we speak with a common voice which reflects our brand, outlined above, however a tone of voice should be flexible and will differ based on the audience of each individual podcast series. Communication is always best received when the listener feels they are being spoken to directly, therefore in some cases a more informal tone is required and in others a more formal stance may be taken.

