Podcast Feeds in Canvas

THE McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning

Podcasting might be thought of as having two major components. The first component is the recording of episodic, topical audio programs. The second component is the distribution of those audio programs. When podcasting is used as a course assignment, it is perfectly acceptable for students podcasts to be submitted to the instructor via email or via Assignments in Canvas, but podcasting offers opportunities for students to engage with the broader community by broadcasting their stories to a wider audience. In podcasting, this is done through “feeds”. Feeds are simply computer-readable files on the web that provide information about a podcast (or a blog) and the podcast episodes so that the podcast can be more easily distributed. Podcasts that you find in online podcast repositories such as Apple Podcasts or Google Play are simply podcasts that have submitted their feeds to these services.

The Canvas Learning Management System offers a method for generating these feeds based on students text and audio submissions making it much easier to distribute your students’ work to a border audience if you wish*. The podcast feed is a feature of the Discussions tool in Canvas. Even if you choose not to distribute your students’ work outside of Canvas, the Discussions tools can still be a useful tool for student submissions of their podcasts and for sharing those podcasts among the participants of the course.

Setting up Discussions for Podcasts

In the main course menu, click Discussions to open the Discussions tool. (If the Discussions tool is not visible in the left-hand main menu, go into Settings and add it to the main menu under the navigation tab.) Within the Discussions tool, click the +Discussion button to create a new discussion thread.

Add a title for the discussion thread (this will be the title of the podcast) and a description of the podcast. Scroll down the page to the Options section and place checkmarks next to Enable podcast feed and Include student replies in podcast feed. Be sure to Save & Publish the discussion thread.

Student Podcast Submissions

Students will submit their podcasts as replies in the discussion thread. They can include text describing their podcasts and the audio of the podcast itself.
IMPORTANT: Students should embed the audio files in their discussion board posts rather than using the attachment tool. The post will only be recognized as a podcast entry (and therefore included in the podcast feed) if the audio is actually embedded in the post itself. To embed audio in the post, use the Record/embed media button in the editor toolbar.

The Podcast Feed

A link to the podcast feed can be found at the bottom of the initial post of the discussion thread when podcasts are enabled. The resulting feed is a barebones feed that can be submitted to podcast aggregation services. Some services, such as Apple Podcasts or Google Play may require some extra information be added. The McGraw Center can provide assistance on customizing your feed for the services to which you would like to submit the feed.

* Note: Students must grant permission for their work to be made available publicly. Release forms are available from the McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning.