Podcast Scripts

You will need to produce a script for your video podcast. There are different ways of developing and writing a script. Some of the differences depend on what, exactly, the script is being developed for. If you already have some experience with scripting, excellent; feel free to complete your script in the manner that you are already familiar with. However, if you do not have any background in theatre, radio, etc., here are some suggestions for how you might go about developing and finalizing your script. Keep in mind that these are only suggestions and that because of the enormous possibilities in how the podcast can be produced some of these points may not readily apply to what you end up doing.

Step 1. Brainstorm. Come up with lots of ideas for what you want to happen in the podcast. You've submitted the proposal already, but go back and try to focus in even more about what the premise and purpose of the podcast is. For example, what do you want your audience to learn from the podcast? Make a list of these points.

Step 2. Create an outline or treatment of the podcast. Before you actually start writing the dialogue, actions, effects, etc. it can help to have a "roadmap" of what is going to happen in the podcast. Even in point form, sketch a general plan of how the points you've identified in step 1 will unfold. If you think you might be including video, interviews, etc. (e.g., file footage of video, stock photography, interviews with the researchers whose work you're dealing with, etc.) you need to start to seriously consider how to get this content, how to use it, and issues of copyright. You should also think about whether or not you're going to need permission to film in a location (for example, the University does not permit filming and photography in its libraries; coffee shops may not want you disrupting their clientele to film a podcast); when in doubt, inquire first (and early on in this process).

Step 3. While the podcast format is quite short, people will want to watch it and will pay more attention if it is interesting and innovative. Give some thought to ways that you can work to engage your viewers.

Step 4. Narrow down your ideas of what, exactly is going to happen in the podcast. Is it going to be one person presenting the material, directly addressing the camera? Are you going to use a "skit" or "play" technique where, perhaps, you act as if the camera wasn't there? Will you utilize a voice-over of images and video? Depending on what you're planning you'll need to start thinking about things like settings for your podcast, backgrounds, props, etc.

Step 5. Write a draft script of your podcast. Indicate who is saying what. This can either be by a person's actual name (if you know at this point) or by designators (e.g., "ME", "STUDENT 1", "WOMAN", "INTERVIEWER", etc.). To make it easier to read through the script, skip a line between different speakers. The important aspect of this script is going to be what is actually said and anything else that is specifically involved in conveying the relevant information in the podcast. That said, wherever possible, include some simple details of direction, including setting, actions, props, etc. For example, the setting might be something like, "a quiet residential street," "a coffee shop," or "an office." Actions might be things like "STUDENT walks along the street speaking" or "TOM picks up model of brain and points to the frontal lobe." Props might already

be included in actions, as in the last example, but it may be worth specifically thinking about what props, if any, you might want. Even something as simple as whether or not the person is wearing a hat might be worth considering (e.g., is it relevant for the content of the podcast, or could it just end up shadowing the actor's face or get blown off during shooting?). Don't worry about issues like camera angles, lighting, or the like at this point (technically, that's what would go into what is called a "Shooting Script" or a "Production Script"); that will come later.

Step 6. Go through the first draft of your script. Actually sit down and read it through. Get a sense for how long it takes, how the spoken parts flow, how well any scene breaks will work, etc.. Edit the script! Then edit it some more.

Step 7. Now comes the shooting script. By now you should have a pretty good idea of what you're going to say and how you're going to say it. The next thing to do is get a handle on just exactly how you're going to film it. Depending on what you're doing with your particular podcast, this may be relatively straight-forward or it may be somewhat more complicated. Remember, the point here is to convey the science, not to demonstrate to the world that you're the next Hitchcock or Kubrick. Consider what you're physically doing. How do you want to show this? We've got some small cameras available from the Psychology Department, but remember that we're not equipped to wire actors up for individual audio recording and, unless you're especially media savvy, you'll just be using the audio recording equipment built into the camera itself. (If you are a savvy multi-media guru yes, you might be doing "post-production" modifications, but this isn't expected for the project.) Go back through your script and put in some simple and understandable directions for filming. Again, the particulars are going to depend on just exactly what you have planned for your podcast, but consider issues of lighting (is it bright enough to see your actors, props, visuals, etc.), background noise levels (will traffic noise, gusting wind, other patrons in a coffee shop, etc. drown you out?), and the like. In particular, make sure that what you want to film is actually feasible and safe; if, for example, you want to shoot in an outside location, ensure that somebody can keep an eye on whoever is working the camera to ensure that they don't step out in front of a car or fall down some steps, or the like! Get together with your group members who are helping you with the filming and get some feedback from them on these issues. Also, do remember that you'll be using handheld cameras; we don't have access to steadycams, so small movements of the camera operator can cause the image to jiggle around. Some modern cameras have motion compensators; I don't know at this point what exactly we'll have access to via the department, but just keep this in mind as something to be aware of.

Step 8. Back to editing. Go through the shooting script. Make any adjustments and corrections. Go through it again. When you're finally satisfied, there you go, you have your finished script for your podcast.

Step 9. Print out your final script and turn it in by 3 March.