



Appendix D – Lecture recordings

In this appendix we wish to focus on a specific “reasonable adjustment” which many disabled students need – having access to lecture recordings.

Many disabled students’ attendance is reduced relative to their peers due to fatigue, pain and mobility issues. Other disabled students may absorb less information during a lecture compared to able students due to not being able to concentrate under certain conditions. Many of these students can keep up with their studies, and often do better, by studying from home using lecture recordings. At UCL this is done through a system called Lecturecast.

Lecture recordings enable disabled students to access education on more equal terms. Students with cognitive differences often find that recordings provide better scope for comprehension and absorbing information due to the options to slow-down the lecture, rewind it or increase the volume. Other students are enabled by recordings to stay in an environment that is better for their health. By providing the option to live stream lectures UCL can make sure that students are not at a time-based disadvantage relative to their peers.

Unfortunately Lecturecast is provided inconsistently across UCL, and where it is underprovided, disabled students’ academic outcomes are disproportionately affected (see testimonies). Despite lecture recordings being standard at other universities there has been significant resistance to this at UCL. Some concerns are repeatedly raised by staff and lecturers who oppose the recording of lectures. We wish to address these objections here.

Firstly, some academics state that students will perform worse academically when lecture recordings are provided. However there are multiple views on this: some studies have found negligible difference in higher order skills depending on whether recordings were used, but a marked improvement in exam scores and time spent on instruction.¹ While lecture recordings do cause face-to-face lecture attendance to decrease, this is not necessarily a negative outcome as different students learn in different ways.

Secondly, some argue that UCL is not a distance-learning institution and thus should not be providing distance learning. However, many institutions which do not offer distance learning do offer lecture recordings of all of their lectures. Many other forms of teachings such as tutorials and labs still require in-person attendance. What matters is whether providing lecture recording significantly helps disabled students, and there is evidence to show that it does. Studies evaluating this accommodation for students with specific learning disabilities (SpLDs) like dyslexia find that lecture recordings are important for

¹ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/bjet.12300>



developing inclusive curricula by compensating for the difficulties students with SpLDs have experience with lectures.² Importantly, this does not mean that lectures should only be recorded when a student with an SpLD asks for it: providing accessible adjustments is an anticipatory duty and should be built into the mainstream teaching itself rather than added only for disabled student. There are also many students who are undiagnosed and would benefit from this support despite lacking a SoRA.

Please see this detailed review of the literature, for a more thoroughly evidenced argument in favour of lecture recordings, produced for LSE.³

Another concern often presented regards workers' rights. Some academics worry that if their lectures were to be recorded then in future years during a strike their employers could use their old lectures, thus reducing the effectiveness of the strike. Furthermore, students would be able to share the recordings in a way that is not in keeping with their intellectual property rights. However, addressing these concerns is relatively straightforward: UCL should use lecture recordings in line with UCU policy and ask students to sign a document in the beginning of their degree agreeing to not share lecture recordings.

Already SSW have agreed to add to SoRAs that in order to reject a disabled student's request for lecture recordings the lecturer must provide equivalently effective material to the student, for instance writing extensive lecture notes. In our recommendations we ask UCL to make all lecturers aware of this change. Within 6 months however we also ask that UCL switch to an opt out rather than an opt in system for lecturecast. This will speed up the transition of going from using lecture recordings only for those who have disclosed a disability to using lecture recordings to make all teaching accessible.

We believe that lecture streaming is a reasonable adjustment that in a few years will be implemented for all lectures. At that point any initial discomfort from lecturers and students will be forgotten. However, as things stand, we recognize that our recommendation of switching to an opt-out rather than an opt-in system is not simply asking UCL to implement the minimum requirements of the law but rather asking for UCL to follow the example of for instance the university of Huddersfield⁴ and be a leader in accessibility. This will require conversations with many lecturers about disability, the social model, inclusive design and why accessibility matters. We offer to take part in these discussions along with external accessibility consultants. We know that UCL has many academic staff members who care deeply about disabled students' access to education and we believe that once the importance of this accommodation has been widely established, staff will be excited to take up this new challenge.

² <https://bit.ly/36QOCps>

³ http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/50929/1/Karnad_Student_use_recorded_2013_author.pdf

⁴ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/1a263fd6-b20a-4ac7-b268-obbbaoc153a2/beyond-the-bare-minimum-are-universities-and-colleges-doing-enough-for-disabled-students.pdf>