

## Progress Report: Lecture Recording for Inclusive Education

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### Summary

This paper provides a midterm report on the [Lecture Recording for Inclusive Education](#) project funded by PTAS, and currently underway at the [Centre for Research in Digital Education](#). The subsequent sections will report on current progress, summarise emerging findings, and outline the next steps for the 12-month project.

### Progress

The project commenced later than expected on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March, due to a delay with contracting the research associate. The Easter break and the following revision/exam weeks inevitably further interrupted the recruitment of student and staff participants for research interviews. Interview guidelines for students and teaching staff have been developed and implemented in a semi-structured form. The questions are designed to encourage participants' reflection on issues related to inclusion (of themselves and others) and accommodate a range of views, including perceived benefits and drawbacks related to lecture recording service. We have been speaking to various stakeholders across the University, and the research associate has also been attending all available lecture recording workshops. This has provided us with good knowledge of the current development of service, as well as the opportunities and challenges involved in its implementation.

### Recruiting participants

The project aimed to interview about 20 students and 10 teaching staff. The intention was to achieve good representation across disciplines (in particular to capture the differences between 'factual' or 'discursive' teaching and learning), specific groups who might be more likely to encounter accessibility barriers (e.g. disabled students, mature students with work/family commitments, ESL students etc.), and levels of study (undergraduate or postgraduate).

Request for support was sent out to learning technologists in 20 Schools in April. Assistance has been varied, however, we have had a very good response from students (over 70) who expressed interest in sharing their views about lecture recording. EUSA have also provided useful support: We spoke to the Welfare officer and request was circulated to student group representatives, which has led to a good response. To date, we have interviewed 12 students and 3 teaching staff. Schools that have been slower to help with facilitating access will be approached again in September, with a particular focus on engaging with staff.

### Focusing on qualitative data

One of the original intentions for this project was to interrogate some of the user data collected from viewing of recorded lectures, through the Echo360 software. Due to the late start of the project, this stage has been overlooked thus far. Following interviews, we've also gained the impression, not only that user data will be inconsistent across schools, as well as fairly limited in places, but also that the interviews could provide rich qualitative accounts in response to the project aims. The strategy in the next phase of the research, therefore, is to proceed with the coding and analysis of the interview data, before deciding how much of the remaining time can be devoted to quantitative analysis. In addition, the interviews have revealed significant differences between student and staff about their rationales for using lecture recording, suggesting some limitations in the understanding of respective needs and concerns with this technology. We therefore anticipate

that a staff workshop, perhaps developed in consultation with IAD and the lecture recording group, would be a quite productive use of project time.

### **Initial findings**

This section will summarise some of the emerging findings from the project, some of which appear to reflect general responses to the wider policy consultation and the lecture recording evaluation. In general, students shared experiences of using lecture recording that seemed to contradict some of the assumptions from staff, such as the availability of lecture recording might lead to passive learning. While staff tended to be cautious about many broader issues and risks involved in lecture recording, students felt that accessibility to learning was a more important priority to address.

#### *The only way to keep up*

Students who had to miss lectures for various reasons, such as childcare, illness, mental health issues, or simply a clash of timetables, identified lecture recording as essential for them to keep on track with their studies. Lecture recording was seen as the most convenient and effective way of meeting their needs where non-standard forms of attendance were required. Without lecture recording, requesting help from busy teaching staff was perceived as unrealistic, while reading notes taken by peers was thought to be largely unhelpful. Private recording devices were sometimes suggested to provide low sound quality, especially in a large lecture hall. Furthermore, lecture recording was identified as usefully synchronised with slides, which was sometimes a difficulty with personal recordings.

#### *Benefits for all*

Lectures were sometimes described as difficult to understand, for reasons such as the complexity of the content, the speed of delivery, or the accent of the lecturer. Significantly, these responses derived from students who did not necessarily identify themselves with particular groups, or specific access or ability issues. In this way, lecture recording appeared to be understood as providing general support, rather than specifically for students perceived to have a 'special' need. In addition, for some subjects, the assessments of which were closely linked with what was taught in lectures, the recordings were found to be helpful for revision before exams.

#### *'Go to your lecture'*

The student participants consistently emphasised the importance of attending lectures in person – 'Go to your lecture' being the primary tip for peers. They valued the opportunity of studying at the University, and felt that lecture recording should be treated as a 'luxury service', not a replacement of attending lectures in person. Students, in addition, highlighted that the quality of teaching mattered to them the most, regardless of whether lectures were recorded or not.

#### *Using recordings effectively*

Students offered many useful tips to peers for using recorded lecture effectively, such as: taking reflective notes when listening to recordings; watching the recordings with peers in order to stimulate discussion; or trying to avoid spending too much time passively listening to the recordings in their entirety. Surprisingly, students had very little guidance from teaching staff about how to use the recordings effectively.

#### *'Students do not want to be recorded all the time either'*

Students generally considered it useful to have lectures recorded. However, they were hesitant about having tutorials and discussions recorded. They feared that this would stop them from speaking freely, as they would be anxious about making mistakes and having their comments reheard by other students.

*How to learn sensitive topics when being recorded*

The student participants tended to convey understanding about the issue of sensitive topics being recorded, and the concerns from other students and staff about being seen to comment and participate in such conversations. While there was a sense of acceptance around limiting the recording of sensitive topics, there was also a view that students and staff in higher education should be learning more about how to navigate challenging discussions and accommodate participants with opposing viewpoints, particularly where students felt that they were living in an era of the 'everyday possibility' of publicity.

For the benefits of lecture recording to outweigh the risks, some students and staff felt that ground rules would need to be set in advance about how recordings should be treated, and – particularly for staff - that the university should provide better legal protection to minimise the potential harm.

*Misunderstandings and miscommunications*

Students felt that teaching staff had not been communicating enough with them about lecture recording, for example, to explain why some lectures were not recorded, or to provide guidance about how such a service should be used. Interestingly, students were also less aware of the concerns expressed by teaching staff over their working conditions and the risks identified around teaching sensitive topics. Staff sometimes expressed negative assumptions about students, such as seeing them as passive learners, which could be changed if students' views were heard, or more active use of recordings were suggested. This tentative finding indicates the importance of effective communication between students and staff to facilitate mutual understandings and mediate tensions.

**What's next?**

July-August 2018

We will conduct more in-depth analysis of the interview data, and also start drafting guidelines for students and staff.

September-October 2018

We will recruit more students and staff in the College of Science and the Medical School, and seek participation from those students who worry about speaking out when sensitive topics are discussed in lectures. We would also like to engage teaching staff, who actively and creatively use lecture recording in their teaching.

November-December 2018

We will write up an initial report of the findings, complete the guidelines, and design the staff workshop. We will present the project at the Scottish Education Research Associate (SERA) annual conference at the end of November in Glasgow, under the themes of technology and inclusive education. In this period, we will also review opportunities to analysis quantitative data from Echo360.

January – March 2018

We plan to run the staff workshop and write-up 2 peer-reviewed journal publications. More engagement opportunities will also be explored to generate impact of the project.