

Promoting the Equity of the Student Learning Experience

Case Study 4: Student Perception of Recorded Lectures During Emergency Online Learning

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What was the issue?

In March 2020, the University of St Andrews made the decision to move to emergency online learning. Many students travelled home during the first lockdown, and were unable to return as the pandemic continued – this meant that many students found themselves in different time zones from their lecturers. For the first time, recorded lectures were a part of almost every class; this continued for the duration of the pandemic.

The Disabled Students Network performed a survey on disabled students' experiences with emergency online learning. This survey uncovered that a vast majority of disabled students benefited from lecture recordings, citing a multitude of reasons – students with physical disabilities being able to avoid the rush to walk between two lectures across town, students with dyslexia benefiting from lecture captioning and pausing, and students with mental health disabilities appreciating the ability to go back to lectures when they could concentrate better.

How was it solved?

Based on these preliminary results, we, the student interns at the Enhancement Theme Team, conducted a study on the impact of emergency online learning on student life, with a focus primarily on what positive aspects students would like to see stay. As part of this, a focus group was conducted.

The results of this focus group showed overwhelming support for the continuation of recorded lectures.



Some quotes from the interviewed students:

“ I’m a commuting student so... it made my life so much easier to have all of the lectures be recorded...just to have everything online that I could watch at my own pace. ”

“ I’m dyslexic, so for me being able to pause a lecture or pause someone talking was actually a benefit of online learning... because [when] you’re in an actual lecture there and you lose your way... then basically the rest of the lecture’s gone and worthless. And you know you then have to go back to the recording if there is one. Whereas in this environment it was easier, like if they sent the pre-recorded lectures out in advance you could just take it in in your own time, which I did think was helpful. ”

A questionnaire was also conducted, and student participants were asked what their ideal learning environment would include. The most prevalent response to this was in-person teaching with recorded lectures.

From this data, it was apparent that students, especially disabled students, benefited from lecture recording. This was presented to key decision-makers in the University, and recorded lectures have been maintained as part of the transition back to in-person teaching.



What comes next?

However, recorded lectures may lead to lower engagement and poor time management if students do not watch them close to scheduled times. The next step for higher institutions in the post-pandemic world is to not only take the positive resources from emergency online learning, such as recorded lectures, but to work to implement them in a way that promotes healthy learning habits.



University of
St Andrews

Find out more

This case study is one of nine published as part of the 2021-22 Student-led Project from the Resilient Learning Communities Enhancement Theme.

The project in year 2 explored equity and inclusivity in the context of a more blended learning environment and how we can best develop representative systems and student/class representative skills to effectively support all the students they serve.

You can find further case studies and resources on the [Enhancement Themes website](#).

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