



10 myths about lecture capture

Opinion about the recording of lectures is divided. UCU is not opposed to all recordings but we want adequate safeguards put in place to ensure that it is used properly to benefit staff and students.

Here are some common misconceptions:

1. It benefits the students.

This is unclear and very controversial. There has been no research on the impact at the University of Greenwich. Research elsewhere shows very mixed results. Many students like the idea although they do not always make use of recordings when they are there. Some case studies show declining attendance, surface learning, and problems for weaker students.

2. It helps disabled students.

A few individuals might benefit (and it is not an automatic panacea) from audio recordings; in this case recordings can be made for them as has been the case for years but this does not explain the introduction of compulsory recordings for all. Interestingly, disabled *staff* will get no consideration.

3. There are no issues of academic freedom.

In fact, forcing academics to employ pedagogical methods with which they disagree is very much an issue of academic freedom. The UNESCO Declaration – to which the UK is a signatory – includes this in its definition.

4. There are no privacy issues.

The University's apparent justification for holding data on this scale does not make sense according to the universities' own legal advice. This problem would not arise if the University asked individuals to decide whether they wanted to be recorded or not but management – for whatever reason – prefers to use coercion rather than persuasion.

5. Recording lectures brings no risks.

Recording lectures exposes lecturers to the risk of prosecution for breaches of copyright legislation if anything created by another person is used without written permission. Lecturers also run a risk (much lower but there nonetheless) of libel claims if they say something that others do not like. This too is a threat to academic freedom. Academics cannot prevent their recorded materials leaking out into the internet where it might be edited or be used to ridicule them.

6. There are no implications for intellectual property rights.

The University's policy breaches lecturers' moral rights, performance rights and their contract of employment in that it alienates lecturers' intellectual property for the University to use as it sees fit, including selling recordings or using them out of context.

7. It is necessary to keep recordings for two years for the sake of the students.

There is no need to keep recordings beyond the end of the academic year in which students take the module. Indeed, since modules and lectures are regularly updated, there is a risk of out of date recordings circulating if they are kept for longer. This year several universities used old recordings this year in an attempt to break the USS strike.

8. Recordings will not be used for performance management.

Possibly not (although this is very loosely worded) but they could be used for disciplinary purposes, for student complaints, for capability and probation purposes. They could be used to replace lecturers who have been made redundant, used in 'partner' institutions or franchises to avoid employing staff, sold for a profit or edited for use in promotional material.

9. Automatic recording creates no work

Lecturers will be obliged to check the copyright implications for every insertion in their lectures; if in doubt, it would be better to cut it out even if that makes lectures boring. Many will want to second-guess whether any party might object to what they say and worry about complaints. Rewriting lectures in this way and editing them to remove private conversations with students or to remove copyright material will be time-consuming. None of this will figure in academic workloads; it will provide yet another example of work that is required but carried out on top of a lecturer's current workload.

10. The University has consulted UCU.

Management is keen to claim this but in fact they have gone out of their way to avoid and *exclude* UCU from all discussions. The only two meetings held with us took place weeks after the policy had been approved by Academic Council and management has refused to consider making any changes. Management are currently refusing to accept that we are in Dispute as outlined in Collective Disputes Procedure in the Trade Union Recognition Agreement.

What a good policy should look like:

1. Leave it to individuals to decide how to use lecture capture and whether it is best for their students.
2. Any recordings made should remain entirely under the control of the performer, the academic concerned.
3. Take down all material at the end of the academic year in which it was created.
4. Build in safeguards to prevent the circulation of material and to make it harder for students to misuse recordings, e.g. allow online viewing and restrict downloading.
5. Indemnify staff for accidental copyright problems and support academic freedom by backing them if there are any complaints or legal threats. Pay any legal fees required.
6. Provide help to obtain copyright permission and pay the associated fees.