

Memorandum | Pukapuka



To:	Ki:	Learning and Teaching Committee
From:	Nā:	Tori McNoe UCSA Vice-President
Date:	Rā:	25 November 2019
Subject:	Kaupapa:	ECHO360 lecture recording availability at UC
Purpose:	Aronga:	For discussion/action

Following recent discussions on the availability of ECHO360 lecture recordings across UC, please find below the UCSA position. Included are relevant student quotes (in italics) taken from the responses to the Academic Strategy student survey carried out by UC earlier this year. Please note that as these were given anonymously we are unable to attribute them to particular students.

Introduction

With the recently approved UC Strategic Framework considering how technology will play a part in UC in the future, it would seem timely for UC to support Colleges in offering uniform lecture recordings. Specifically, it challenges the university to rethink how face-to-face lectures are delivered, and proposes a shift to providing flexibility in learning.

This issue will also become more relevant as the University continues its internationalisation, including increased international recruitment, and enters into off-shore programmes which would see larger numbers of international students coming to UC. Moreover, if UC is targeting growth in its mature student cohort, then providing more flexible ways of learning becomes necessary. Particularly as mature students often manage study alongside work, family and other commitments and demand flexibility.

UCSA would like to advocate for UC to develop policy to provide for uniform lecture recordings across all Colleges.

ECHO lecture recording at UC

Many lectures at UC are recorded using the Echo360 lecture recording system. The recordings are usually available via the relevant course's Learn page. There is varying uptake on the recording of lectures across and within Colleges, with the School of Law not offering any lecture recordings at all (with the exception of Company Law and Commercial One). Discussions on the advantages and disadvantages of lecture recording have been noted at College of Engineering, College of Science and School of Law meetings, with the latter particularly resistant to offering lecture recording despite a proposal from the UCSA Law representative being an agenda item at the June 2019 meeting with subsequent School-wide debate.

"There is also a gap in support when degrees like the LLB don't offer services like Echo to support people who can't get into class for the day or have to prioritize being at work. Whilst you can build a network of friends to support you in that way, there will be those odd days where you don't even have that to rely on. It isn't fair, when other

degrees offer this option to students. We are all paying to be present, and if the justification is purely attendance, then that onus should fall on a student, it can't be that hard to track if students are watching lectures etc"

This inconsistent access to lecture recordings, when students can access lecture recordings in some courses but not others, creates both confusion and inequity. This issue of the recording of lectures being inconsistent across Colleges was raised as a particular issue for International students at SMTi last year by the UCSA International representative. However, it does not just impact on International students but has implications for domestic students too. Student feedback includes the following:

"I would spend the budget to improve the technology during lectures with ECHO facilities. Especially for students who are sick or unable to come to the lecture it is more than a useful tool. Having ECHO available for all lectures for those that have busy schedules / English may be second language / different way of learning."

There are also frustrations expressed by students as to the current use of ECHO360, with some facilities not having the appropriate technology, or it not working properly. UC students would like to see the university embracing technology as much as possible.

"I would spend the money on improving education for lecturers on how ECHO and the microphones work (and basic troubleshooting). There have been many times when lecturers do not seem to know its technicalities resulting in no microphones/audio on recordings."

"I would spend the budget for improving lecture technology on equipping lecture theatres with ECHO facilities and ensure the lecturers enable ECHO and don't later remove the footage."

"Equip more lecture theatres with Echo360 recording facilities, and make it compulsory that lecturers allow students to access those recordings. It's pointless when lecturers refuse to make the most of a helpful technology."

"As technology develops so does our community and this needs to be available to everyone so making it easier for those to watch the Echo recordings who may not have the opportunity to is important."

"Technologies do come in handy however, the methodology on how useful and how lecturers actually used the facilities really comes in handy, for instance, the usage of ECHO is a brilliant idea to be implemented however, some lecturers don't want to use the facilities to 'attract' more students to the class had been an issue for students who are not free most of the time or have clashes classes. Improvement of technology will not be beneficial if those kinds of issues are still lingering around in the university."

"There are also lecture theatres/ classrooms that do not support ECHO recordings whatsoever (e.g West701). It would be cool to know that students have recordings for every lecture. No matter what the reason is for missing class; whether it is being too lazy to attend class, having clashes, or just re-watching lectures for revision, I think that we need to have a system that can cater for those needs."

There is an increased demand from students for blended-learning approaches and less of a reliance on face-to-face lectures. Students appreciate the flexibility lecture recording gives in terms of when, where and how many times they can view recorded material.

“Some ways that these can be applied, would be improving lecture technology introducing Echo recording to all lecturers for flexibility, revisions of learn and app material so this is more easy to use and information is fluid between systems.”

Although the UCSA intends to run an informal Facebook poll, this won't now occur until 2020 and given International students don't tend to be big users of Facebook, it won't fully capture the student support on this issue either. The UCSA therefore suggests that in order to formally gauge the student body position, UC coordinates a student survey to determine support for consistent lecture recordings across all Colleges.

Lecture recording at other NZ Universities

Recently, the Victoria University Student Association (VUWSA) ran a campaign called 'Check the Rec' advocating for consistent lecture recording across Victoria University. This gathered over 1550 respondents and a 98.6% support for university-wide lecture recordings. The feedback received as part of this consultation is consistent with the informal and anecdotal feedback the UCSA receives on this same issue. VUWSA continues to progress this.

The University of Auckland already has lecture recordings in place, facilitated through a "Lecture Capture and Release Policy", which can be found here: <https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/about/the-university/how-university-works/policy-and-administration/teaching-and-learning/lecture-capture-and-release/lecture-capture-and-release-policy-and-procedures.html>. This policy could be useful for UC to consider.

SOULS (Society of Otago University Law School) prepared a paper for the UC LAWSOC President earlier this year explaining the situation at Otago University. Essentially, not all law lectures are recorded in Otago, but the default position seems to be to record (i.e. more lectures are recorded than not). However, the OUSA continue to advocate for more widespread use.

After networking at a recent Student Voice Summit, and the NZUSA conference, the UCSA are continuing conversations around lecture capture with their counterparts at other universities to ensure that information is shared, and support available as this issue is addressed nationwide.

Benefits of Lecture Recording

Feedback given to the UCSA and examples of times when students benefit from being able to access a lecture recording are outlined below. These cover both usage as a replacement tool as well as use as an active reinforcement and revision tool.

Language

- When International students who have English as their second language are struggling with understanding some of their lectures, the ability to use a lecture recording to review the lecture material is hugely beneficial. The UCSA knows of students using Google Translate during lectures to fully comprehend what is being taught, and understandably this decreases their ability to comprehensively listen and note-take. Being able to review at their own pace with sufficient language comprehension assists in overcoming language barriers and ensure students are genuinely able to learn content.
- If the lecturer also has English as a Second Language, the above situation can be compounded. With a significant proportion of UC staff being international, this situation is more common than thought.

- UCount2018: ECHO360 Lecture Recording Usage backs up the UCSA assertion that International Students with ESL use lecture recordings for confirmation and understanding, rather than as a replacement for attending lectures.

"I would love to have subtitles linked to these if possible both for international and myself as sometimes it can be hard understanding fast talking lecturers or lectures with a strong accent. It would also be great if the audio was consistent. Sometimes it does not work or it cuts out in certain areas."

Revision

- Students, and in particular International students, who want to watch a lecture again and/or slow the lecture down to ensure that information is synthesised correctly benefit from lecture recordings. This is particularly the case when revising for assessments and highlights ECHO360 as a tool for clarification, reinforcement, and revision.

"I love what's happening with Echo and I find it to be the most effective form of study. You can pause the lecture so you can get your notes sorted before the lecturer moves on and to ensure you understand everything."

Timetable Clashes

- The recent UCount2019 survey noted 37% of students use ECHO recording to manage a timetable clash. This statistic only looks to increase as more diverse combinations and interdisciplinary degrees begin to form.
- As UC's Course Timetabling Principles and Guidelines policy notes, *"Students can expect that all compulsory courses in a degree programme can be attended free of clashes. Students can also expect that a range of optional courses will be timetabled so that they also are free from clashes with required courses."* However, depending on an individual student's course of study it is not always possible to avoid timetable clashes. Moreover, as the University moves to offer more cross-disciplinary degrees and further opportunities for students to choose minors from other degree programmes, the potential for timetable clashes increases and the option for students to use lecture recordings as a tool to keep on top of course content is particularly important.

"I would spend some of the budget on supporting students who have clashes in their timetables."

"More ECHO recorded classes, too many classes not recorded trying to juggle which classes have ECHO recording is a nightmare with clashes."

"I would improve technology with allowing all lecture theatres to have Echo facilities for recording lectures to help students when they have clashes or are unwell."

Extracurricular Commitments

Involvement in extracurricular commitments is becoming a necessity in order to enter industry in the 21st century. The UCSA recognises this can sometimes clash with class time, yet is expected to be prioritised below class attendance which is no longer plausible. The following are a few examples of such:

- When students have another commitment that necessitates them missing a lecture, the ability to catch up on the material is important. e.g. a UCSA Executive member who is required for their UCSA role to attend a UC/College meeting.
- Clubs at UC are an integral part of the vibrant student culture, and sometimes commitments mean that lectures are missed. Being able to access the content via lecture recordings would mitigate the impact of missing lectures.
- This also includes work. Many students work part-time to fund their study, and this can sometimes unavoidably mean missing a lecture. This is backed up by the UCount2018: ECHO360 Lecture Recording Usage findings that part-time students appear to rely more heavily on ECHO360.

"Echo facilities across classes, for some workloads and those who have to work it is almost impossible to go to all of your classes. This crosses over the idea of blended delivery of courses, allowing for more flexible timetabling and interactive distance learning."

Family

- UCount2018 reports higher ECHO360 usage in respondents aged 30+ which indicates that those who are more likely to have dependents, be distance or part-time students rely more heavily on lecture recordings. Flexible delivery provides options when students who are parents/caregivers have sick dependents meaning they are unable to attend lectures, and likewise for those who live further afield, or are juggling study with work. These lifestyle/study arrangements are often indicative of the mature student cohort and given this is a potential area of growth for UC, it follows that the university provides the flexibility that this cohort requires.

"I feel like the echo recordings are very important especially since I live an hour drive away so I tend to rely on these working to their full potential."

Mental Health and Wellbeing

- UCSA also believes that providing lecture recordings across all courses would support students' mental health and wellbeing. Not having to ask friends or classmates for lecture notes would reduce stress. Additionally, knowing that there is a back-up not only provides flexibility but also reassurance which in turns supports mental health and wellbeing.
- Students have provided feedback that in addition to attending lectures, they come to campus to study with friends, and attend club events and extra-curricular meetings and committees. They believe that even if there was the option of their lectures being available online, they would still come onto campus and enjoy the student community as part of a holistic student experience.
- A 2019 VUWSA wananga on students' mental health at Victoria University identified that having lectures recorded and available online was a massive stress reliever for students.

"Having ECHO more available for students who have clashes or emergencies would also help wellbeing."

"Primarily mental health and wellbeing of students and staff should be important. Increased support and awareness around these. Technology to aid in off campus study (improving Echo and Learn) supported by all staff, with courses that reflect this may ease workload for a lot of students (or at least make it smoother)."

Illness and injury

- Illness can mean students miss lectures unavoidably, or else attempt to attend when they are not up to it, which also exposes their classmates to illness.
- Injury is another factor causing some students to miss lectures.

"Improving learning technologies (e.g. ECHO & interactive learning experiences) in class room is a must in my eyes as Echo recording are great however increasing the amount of room that have this capability would be good as sickness / ill health is not always a choice."

"I would spend the budget for improving the Echo facilities because I believe this is a really useful resource for students and when these fail to work, it can have a detrimental effect, especially on students who are sick or cannot make it to class."

"In terms of supporting student success and wellbeing, I would make it compulsory for all lectures to be recorded on Echo so that sick students do not feel like they have to go to class."

Learning Disabilities

- Students with learning disabilities can be disadvantaged in lectures due to an inability to keep up with note-taking or difficulty in following the lecture. While they may receive notes or assistance, there is nothing else that allows them to replicate a class environment.

"As someone with learning difficulties, I have seen how effective ECHO tech has been, additional ECHO facilities would benefit many."

"For all lectures that can be recorded, they should automatically be recorded and put on ECHO for increased learning. As certain people learn in certain ways and this would accommodate for more ways of learning."

Disadvantages of Lecture Recording

The UCSA notes the recently circulated King's Business School study shows that lecture absence increases significantly following the introduction of lecture recording, and that as lecture attendance is a key indicator of student engagement, then the introduction of lecture recording therefore reduces engagement. This was also included in the UCount2018 summary, which noted that there exists a relationship between attendance and a student's GPA grade band, though also points out that this implies an association not a causation.

However, the UCSA notes that the students who are likely to stop attending lectures as a result of their classes being recorded, and rely solely on ECHO recordings, are often the students who were less engaged in lectures anyway ('surface approach learners'). Those who have a high level of engagement ('deep approach learners') will continue to attend class and may use ECHO as a supplementary resource.

Rather than using the King's Business School study, or similar studies, as a reason not to make lecture recordings more widely available to students, the UCSA views this study as an education tool, as an opportunity to give Colleges and lecturers a greater understanding of who might use lecture recordings. It also highlights how lecturers can provide incentive for students to attend through engaging them in their teaching and learning and gives excellent suggestions to mitigate a drop in attendance.

The UCSA acknowledges it is important that students are aware that if they miss a lecture they may have to put more effort in to catch up later, they may struggle to keep up with the content of the course material, and not having face-to-face contact with lecturers will mean they can't ask questions/clarify points at the time. Moreover, as lectures are often when information about assessment is transferred, not being there can mean some students approach assessments with less awareness of what is expected of them.

UCSA echoes the recommendation made in the UCount2018 survey that emphasis should be placed on how to best use ECHO360 as an active learning engagement tool, and where possible as a complementary, 'active study' tool rather than a substitute 'back-up', much as the way that International students with ESL currently use it. However, as outlined in the section above, there are many occasions where it contributes to a student's academic success through being a 'back-up'.

"I think there is a discrepancy between engagement and information here and the use of ECHO should be an encouraging tool for lecture to ensure they are using class to engage with students not just throwing information."

Recommendations

The UCSA therefore recommends:

That UC policy be developed to provide for uniform lecture recordings across all Colleges.

UCSA acknowledges that if lecture recordings are to become uniform, the following actions would be important:

- A formal student survey to gauge support
- Professional development to support academic staff on how to maximise the technology and on ways to make attendance of lectures hold value beyond their recorded substitute. This could be offered utilising those current lecturers who utilise ECHO as well as maintaining lecture attendance by students.
- Clear communications to students on ways to use lecture recordings as an 'active learning tool' balanced with outlining the disadvantages of over-reliance on using lecture recordings and the potential impact that low lecture attendance can have on their attainment.

Conclusion

UCSA strongly supports uniform lecture recordings as a tool for academic success through providing options where there are the following factors: language barriers, revision purposes, timetable clashes, extra-curricular and family commitments, illness, injury, learning disabilities and for mental health and wellbeing.

UCSA appreciates the scope of change to introduce university-wide lecture recording. A proposal has already been put to the School of Law, but alongside this bottom-up approach, UCSA would like to work collaboratively with UC to promote a corresponding top-down focus consistent across all Colleges.