



Virtual Classroom Policy

Purpose of Policy

This policy clarifies rights and responsibilities when delivering and recording teaching and learning using the Virtual Classroom service and other online communication and collaboration technologies.

Overview

The Virtual Classroom service is used in the regular delivery of fully-online programmes, and, in response to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, has also permitted online and hybrid delivery of programmes normally delivered on campus. The intention of this policy is to help manage the potential risks posed by challenges and complexities in the arrangements for virtual classes. The policy extends existing principles agreed for lecture recording to this context, amending them or making separate provision where required.

Scope: Mandatory Policy

The policy applies University-wide to all staff, students and visiting lecturers involved in running or participating in virtual classroom sessions using the [Virtual Classroom service](#) or [any other supported communication and collaboration service](#). The policy also covers online student pastoral support meetings. This policy does not cover teaching recorded or live-streamed using the Lecture Recording service, or non-teaching online events, meetings and other activities.

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Document control

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Virtual Classroom Policy

Definition

The term “virtual class” here refers to a teaching session delivered to some or all of its participants online using the [Virtual Classroom service](#) or using [any other supported communication and collaboration service](#). This policy also covers online student pastoral support meetings.

Maintaining a safe space for teaching and learning

The University intends each virtual class to remain a safe place for the exposition and discussion of potentially controversial ideas between the lecturers and students on a Course. A safe space is a prerequisite for building academic community which is in turn critical to student engagement and learning.

- 1) Virtual class participants will abide by the [Dignity and Respect Policy](#).
- 2) Access to a virtual class by default will normally be limited to the staff, students or learners on the instance of the Course(s) that the teaching relates to. The lecturer may authorise access for other relevant participants. A student or employee accessing a virtual class without authorisation may be investigated under the [Code of Student Conduct](#) or [Disciplinary Policy](#) (as applicable).
- 3) Staff and students contributing to a virtual class will normally be identified within the service by name. This is in the interests of maintaining a safe learning space, supporting academic community and student engagement, and of the effective running of the session. Where a student believes their interests in not being identified within a virtual class may outweigh these interests, they should contact their Student Adviser or the lecturer or course organiser for the Course concerned in advance to discuss whether their participation can be anonymous or pseudonymous.
- 4) While the building of online academic communities of learning is often likely to be more effective when interactions include video, each participant may nonetheless choose whether or not their video and/or still image is displayed to others within a virtual class.

Making a virtual class recording

Who can record

- 5) No recording of the virtual class may be made using the service without the lecturer’s authorisation.
- 6) The person who initiates and stops the recording must make all participants aware that recording is about to commence, and that recording is stopped. Participants should be made aware whether other virtual class elements such as text chat or the participant list will be recorded.
- 7) Students may, under the [Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy](#), make their own audio recording of any of their teaching on their own device for the sole purpose of their own personal study.

What can be recorded

- 8) A recording may include all or part of a virtual class.



Virtual Classroom Policy

- 9) Where the virtual class contains a lecture, and unless they have a good reason not to, the lecturer should record the lecture to allow students on the Course to review it. 'Good reason' is as defined in paragraph 2.2 of the [Lecture Recording Policy](#).
- 10) There is no expectation on the lecturer to record other, more interactive virtual classes such as seminars, tutorials or laboratories. Lecturers who intend to record such sessions should check for any objections from participants before commencing recording¹.
- 11) The University will provide guidance on what elements of the virtual class can be recorded. The lecturer may consider which elements of the virtual class (e.g. video, audio, slides, file uploads, text chat) will be most useful for student revision.
- 12) A student is required to be recorded if the recording is a mandatory part of their assessment. If a student otherwise wishes to make a contribution within a virtual class without it being recorded, they may request that recording is paused or stopped for their contribution or may nominate a proxy within the class to contribute for them.
 - a) The University will only delete a student's contribution from a virtual class recording if the student's interests in deleting their recorded contribution clearly outweigh the University's interests in keeping it. The student should contact the lecturer in the first instance to request deletion of all or part of their contribution. Where necessary, the School will decide whether the student's contribution shall be cut from the recording or whether the whole recording shall be deleted.

Uses of virtual class recordings

- 13) Virtual class recordings may be used for the following purposes:
 - a) The University will provide access to recordings, where available, to students and relevant staff on the instance of the Course to which the virtual class relates.
 - b) A student may only use the recording for the purposes of their own personal study. The student must destroy any copy of the recording they hold once this purpose has been met. This will be on completion of the final assessment to which the Course relates or when the student leaves the University, whichever is sooner.
 - c) Students will access recordings by streaming them, and will not be permitted to download local copies except:
 - i) where the School provides a download of a recording to a disabled student on the Course when this has been specified as a reasonable adjustment.
 - ii) that the lecturer at their discretion may provide download access to all students on the Course where, in the lecturer's opinion, this is appropriate.
 - d) The lecturer may publish the recording as an open educational resource, with appropriate modifications and safeguards, including an appropriate attribution, licence and having obtained any permissions required from other participants or third parties whose intellectual property resides within the recording. Guidance on this is contained within the [Open Educational Resources Policy](#) and [Website Accessibility Policy](#).

¹ Guidance: where a Course includes regular recording of interactive virtual classes, it is recommended that the Course Organiser discusses recording with the students at the start of the Course, prior to any recording taking place. This might include the reasons for recording, how the recordings will be used and ways to opt out of being recorded.



Virtual Classroom Policy

- e) A lecturer may use recordings of their own virtual classes within their own performance review; to facilitate peer observation of their teaching; or if they are investigated under the [Disciplinary Policy](#).
 - f) The University may use a virtual class recording within the scope of an investigation under the [Code of Student Conduct](#).
 - g) A School may use a virtual class recording in exceptional situations to provide continuity, as specified within business continuity plans relevant to the School. Examples of exceptional situations might include significant disruption from a pandemic or other natural event or the unforeseen loss of part of the University estate. The School will, where reasonably possible, inform the lecturer beforehand that their recording is to be used and for what purpose, and the lecturer will retain the right not to permit this use. If the lecturer, acting reasonably, objects to use for this purpose, the School will not be permitted to use the recording.
 - h) The relevant Service Owner² may audit recordings in the context of service operation and management, and may where necessary delete an inappropriate recording sooner than the end of the normal retention period.
- 14) Any other use of a recording will require further, separate agreement between the University and other parties with rights in the recording. In particular:
- a) The recordings and any associated metadata will not be used by the University for staff performance review or disciplinary processes without the lecturer's permission, except in the case of alleged gross misconduct.
 - b) Recordings may not be used as a replacement for intended staff presence in a lecture room or virtual class unless the lecturer permits this.
 - c) Recordings will not be used to cover University staff exercising their legal right to take industrial action without the lecturer's consent.
 - d) Staff and students may otherwise only use, modify, publish or share restricted-access virtual class recordings or excerpts with the permission of the School that provides the Course and of the lecturer and of any other participants in the recording. It shall be a disciplinary offence to use, modify or distribute recordings without permission, including but not limited to: copying the recording, issuing copies of it to the public, renting or lending copies of it to the public, playing it in public or broadcasting it. An employee or student using, modifying or distributing a recording without permission may be investigated under the [Disciplinary Policy](#) or [Code of Student Conduct](#) (as applicable).

Participant and University rights

- 15) In contributing to a virtual class that they have been notified is being recorded, participants agree to the University recording them and agree to give the University the licences necessary to use any recordings for the purposes in this policy.

² The senior owner of the service within Information Services, ultimately accountable for ensuring that the service meets current and future needs and expectations.



Virtual Classroom Policy

- 16) The policies on [commercialisation of intellectual property](#) and [student intellectual property rights](#) cover the status of intellectual property generated by the University's employees and students. Where the University and an employee have agreed that the employee retains some or all of the intellectual property rights to material used within a recording, the employee agrees to grant the University a non-exclusive licence to use the material for the purposes in this policy.
- 17) Performer rights reside with the lecturer and other virtual class participants, who by using the services agree to the recording and agree that the University may use their performance for the purposes in this policy. Participants wishing to assert their right to be identified as author or performer should do so as part of the recording, for example on an introductory slide.
- 18) Where a student holds some or all of the intellectual property rights to material used within a recording, the student grants the University a non-exclusive licence to use the material for the purposes in this policy.
- 19) External visiting lecturers (or their employer as appropriate) retain copyright in work and any other intellectual property rights they generate and, by accepting the terms of the external visiting lecturer agreement, agree to grant the University a non-exclusive licence to use the recording for the purposes in this policy.

Data protection, security and retention

- 20) The privacy statement for each service will detail how the University will use, share and retain data in relation to that service.
- 21) Recording of sensitive personal data shall not take place without the explicit written consent of the person(s) to whom the data relate.
- 22) The University or its software partners will securely host media captured within a virtual class. Data are hosted within the United Kingdom or European Economic Area and the data protection and data security arrangements must satisfy the University's Data Protection Officer and Chief Information Security Officer respectively.
- 23) If a lecturer wishes to retain a recording for longer than the normal retention period then they should transfer the recording to the University's [Media Asset Management Platform](#). The University cannot be held responsible for any recordings deleted after the retention period.
- 24) Learning Analytics relating to virtual classes may be used in accordance with the [Learning Analytics Principles and Purposes, Policy and Governance](#) arrangements.

Accessibility

- 25) Recordings must not breach equality legislation and must comply with the [Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy](#). The University will provide clear, accessible guidance on how to access virtual class recordings.

Copyright and licensing

- 26) Anyone presenting material within a virtual class must ensure that they do not infringe third-party intellectual property rights, including copyright. Presenters must cite copyright material appropriately on slides and for recordings used within virtual classes and must ensure that



Virtual Classroom Policy

materials do not contain any restricted information in actionable breach of confidence or in breach of data protection law, nor constitute a breach of publishing or collaboration or other agreement that governs their research or work at the University or elsewhere.

- 27) If a licence for material used within a recording constrains the University to retain that material for less than the recording retention period then the lecturer must arrange for deletion of the material at the end of the time specified by the licence.

Student support meetings

- 28) Access to online student pastoral support meetings will be limited to those agreed to beforehand. Meetings will not be recorded using the service except in exceptional circumstances and with written agreement from all participants.

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