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**Submitter** Prof. Egle Dagilyte, Mr. John Walsh, Ms. Semra Ramadan, Ms. Mahjabin Anwar

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**Authors:** **Dr Eglé Dagilytė**, ALSS Faculty Director for Learning, Teaching and Assessment; Senior Lecturer in Law at Anglia Ruskin University; **John Walsh**, ALSS Faculty Learning Technologist at Anglia Ruskin University; **Semra Ramadan**, Student Researcher at Anglia Ruskin University; **Mahjabin Anwar**, Student Researcher at Anglia Ruskin University

**Title: Recorded lectures: What impact on student attendance?**

**Abstract:**

This teaching and learning research project investigates whether there is a direct link between recorded lectures, audio and/or visual, being made available via VLE to year-two and year-three undergraduate law students and their attendance patterns in live lectures. It aims to address the academic staff concern that if recorded lecture policy is implemented institutionally, students would not attend live classes.

The authors used mixed research methodology: online student survey and analysis of student attendance data, accompanied with the actual viewings of recorded lectures data. The findings indicate that there are a variety of reasons why students do not attend (or attend less), but recorded lectures are not one of these. The reasons highlighted by students include timetabling, childcare, working lives, illness, curriculum design, student purposive learning behaviours and tutor ability to engage / tutor personality.

## Recorded lectures: What impact on student attendance?

### 1. Background

The current literature indicates that there is “little evidence that having access to recorded lectures is the main cause or incentive to miss lectures” (Karnad, 2013, p. 17) not least because “the complexity of student behaviour ... makes it difficult to link access to recorded lectures and attendance” (Karnad, 2013, p. 14). Moreover, the specific conclusion as to the link between lecture recordings and class attendance may depend not only on research methodology or pedagogy used, but also on the study discipline, “variations in sample sizes, response rates, formats of lecture recordings and the teaching practises deployed by lecturers” (Karnad, 2013, p. 14). While law, as a social science discipline of an oral nature, lends itself to being recorded (Fardon, 2003, pp. 699–708; Secker et al., 2010), we have not found studies on law students’ perceptions and use of recorded lectures. This project proposes to address this gap, at the same time alleviating Anglia Law School (ALS) academic staff concerns (Chang, 2007, pp. 135–144) about the possible reduction in live lecture attendance and general engagement, if a decision is taken to record all law lectures from September 2017.

This project built on the related work carried out at the university, including the Classroom Recording Pilot, the digital literacies project (Evangelinos and Kerrigan, 2015), and student attendance and engagement via digital content (Warnes et al., 2015). The latter study established that low attendance was not the result of the VLE content, but “a complex combination of [various] factors” (Warnes et al., 2015, p. 31), including boring lectures, timetabling, childcare, social spaces (Cambridge campus) and parking (Chelmsford campus). However, Warnes and Lilly’s research did not address a particular digital learning resource, i.e. recorded lectures, with a specific focus on their impact on undergraduate law student attendance. It also did not differentiate student participants by the subject,<sup>1</sup> making it difficult to elicit what law students’ views were, and hence did not address law academic staff concerns about the possible negative effect on attendance due to recorded lectures at ALS.

<sup>1</sup> There were total of 77 responses from Cambridge and 65 from Chelmsford; the responses from ALSS equalled 28% of the total students surveyed.

### 2. Methodology

Majority of research on recorded lectures to date rely on student survey data (Franklin et al., 2011; Warnes et al., 2015; Williams, 2006), rather than the actual attendance data (Konsky et al., 2009; Traphagan et al., 2010). This called for a mixed research methodology that this project used. Hence, the authors collected and analysed student attendance data gathered via the TAP System, SITS/ASTRA records, and Echo360 user statistics. The crucial aspect was to see whether the piloting of recorded lectures in 2015/16 and 2016/17 might have affected (and if so - to what extent) student attendance. The recording pilot was started by Eglė Dagilytė in October 2015, using Echo360 in Cambridge campus. The fully-recorded lectures were then lightly edited, resulting in the final student-facing VLE recordings of 30-50mins each.

The project focused on the year-two and year-three undergraduate law student attendance records at Cambridge and Chelmsford campuses from two academic years (2015/16 and 2016/17) on three modules on the LLB: two were core module (European Union Law, Semester 1; Legal Research: Theory and Practice, Semester 1) and one was an optional module (Law of Business Associations, Semester 2). There were a sufficient number of enrolled students in order to draw valid

conclusions: the core modules on average had 120 students in Cambridge and 50 in Chelmsford; while the optional module had smaller cohorts, but still a good potential sample size (on average 60 in Cambridge and 30 in Chelmsford).

To help with gathering qualitative student responses, the project commissioned two Student Researchers, one for each campus, who helped administer the qualitative online survey via BOS Survey platform. As of 27 June 2017, there were 46 responses received, representing 13% of the enrolled students on one of the core modules across the two years. 56.5% of those were from Cambridge (the larger campus); 35.6% were year-two students; with 73.3% being female students.

### 3. Data

According to the literature, the greatest improvements of ALS students' experiences via recorded lectures are likely to be experienced by mature students; students with work and family life responsibilities (Cooner, 2009; Phillips and Maor, 2011, pp. 997–1007); students with disabilities (Williams, 2006, pp. 881–884) and international students (Leadbeater et al., 2013; Soong, 2006, pp. 789–793). Therefore, the online participant sample aimed to cover the diversity of students in Anglia Law School. From those who responded, 6.5% had a disability, 34.8% were from non-white ethnic backgrounds, 34.8% were non-native English speakers, 26.1% were mature students (aged 26 and above), 19.6% had family/caring responsibilities, 69.8% had a full-time or part-time job while studying and 43.5% lived far away from their campus (within more than 10 miles).

### 4. Preliminary findings and implications

The research findings indicate that there is no strong direct correlation between recorded lectures that are made available via VLE and significant drop student attendance. As indicated in the literature elsewhere, students do not attend for various reasons. ALS students put forward a number of these, including timetabling, childcare, working lives, illness, curriculum design, student purposive learning behaviours and tutor ability to engage / tutor personality.

The overwhelming finding was that most law students found lectures worth their time, as they allowed interacting with peers and the lecturer, promoted inclusivity and deep learning. 23.5% used the recordings to prepare for assessment / revision, while 38.2% also used them to prepare for workshops and catch up. Differently from the findings in the literature, law students seemed to prefer full lecture recordings rather than short bite-sized videos, albeit some indicated that shorter video recordings would be extremely beneficial for understanding better the more difficult legal concepts or cases.

The students also put forward a number of proposals on how academic staff could reduce the likely drop in attendance if lectures are recorded (e.g. to release the recordings every three/four weeks instead of weekly; allow students self-record).

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