Lectures Online
Making the most of lectures through UWS Lectures Online
Acknowledgements

UWS Lectures Online Project

The project has been a partnership between staff in the Information Technology Directorate (ITD) and the Teaching Development Unit (TDU), led by Professor Stuart Campbell, PVC (Learning and Teaching).

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Lectures Online publication

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Feedback

We welcome feedback on any aspect of this Guide that will help us improve future editions. Please email your comments or suggestions to contact-tdu@uws.edu.au

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Introduction

Lectures Online is one of the technologies available through the University of Western Sydney’s online learning system ‘UWS’ to support students in their learning. These guidelines are based on the results of a national study on the impact of Web-Based Lecture Technologies (WBLT), such as Lectures Online on learning and teaching. They have been developed to explore some of the issues which have emerged from the study, including:

1. Why do lecturers use the WBLT technologies?
2. How and why students use the WBLT technologies?
3. Making the most effective use of the technologies
4. Structuring an integrated learning environment
5. Optimising learning with Lectures Online
6. The lecturing process

Why do lecturers use Lectures Online?

There are numerous reasons why staff make Lectures Online available. The most common reasons are:

- to provide an additional learning resource for all students and especially to those with disabilities, learning difficulties and language differences
- to support students who may have missed a class because of illness or other unexpected difficulties

In some cases a School decision or pressure from students to provide Lectures Online has been the impetus for its use. While there may be cogent reasons for this action, the outcome is not always satisfactory. Where staff are free to make their own judgements and decisions, their experience of using the technology is usually far more positive.
About Lectures Online

Lectures Online is an automated recording system for digitally capturing face-to-face lectures for web delivery. The system records the images which are projected on the screen in the lecture theatre and records your voice through the lecture theatre microphone. You can also record hand notations using a document camera. Lectures Online is available in UWS Lecture Theatres.

You can find out more about Lectures Online, including the application process, on the PVC (Learning and Teaching) page http://www.uws.edu.au/learning_teaching/learning_and_teaching/office_of_the_pro-vice-chancellor/uws_lectures_online. The Lectures Online Scheduling Form requires you to nominate the unit code, time and location for lecture recording. If you need further assistance you can contact the E-Learning Service Desk.

The Teaching Development Unit can advise you how to lodge your application to use Lectures Online indicating the unit code, time and location for lecture recording. You may also want to have a brief training session from ITD staff before your first recorded lecture. You can arrange this when you organise your lecture recordings.

Once you have requested a Lectures Online recording for your unit, your lecture will be automatically recorded in the theatre you specified in your booking. Recordings start on the indicated hour and finish at five minutes to the hour. You should be aware that all activity is captured on the recording, including casual discussion, and activities like logging in to the lecture theatre PC and organising files, if this has not been completed before the recording starts.

There is no visible or audible indication of the recording process. You should ensure that you tell students at the start of the lecture that proceedings are being recorded, so that they do not unintentionally disclose personal information – remember that the microphone is on even during the breaks. We also recommend that your first slide contains a notice that the lecture is being recorded.

The recordings are automatically delivered through your vUWS site to the students in your class almost immediately after the lecture finishes. You can also manually release recordings if you prefer, and upload supporting files for students to use when they access their lectures online. Please refer to the PVC (Learning and Teaching) website http://www.uws.edu.au/learning_teaching/learning_and_teaching/office_of_the_pro-vice-chancellor/uws_lectures_online for reference sheets on adding Lectures Online within vUWS.
Please ensure that you adhere to UWS copyright guidelines. More information about copyright is contained later in this guide, on the vUWS staff support site and the UWS Copyright Policy is available online at http://policies.uws.edu.au/view.current.php?id=00148. If you feel you may have inadvertently infringed copyright during the course of your lecture, please contact ITD for prompt removal of files.

Support for using Lectures Online is in vUWS provided through the Teaching Development Unit. You can call the E-Learning Service Desk on 9852 5252 if you are having problems or need further information which is not contained in this user guide.
What are students’ experiences?

The WBLT national study showed that students who use Lectures Online tend to be positive about the experience; they perceive it supports their learning and helps them to achieve better results. Overall, their reasons for using Lectures Online largely mirror those that influence staff:

- **as a safety net** – when they can’t attend on a one-off basis
- **for learning** – it is a study tool that helps them to take comprehensive notes, to revise for exams, and to pick up things they missed in class
- **for flexibility and convenience** - with widened access and increasing cost to higher education, a large proportion of students have work and family commitments when they begin university. They require flexibility to fit study in with their busy lives and actively make choices about attendance. In some cases, the need for flexibility can also arise from the demands of the curriculum where they need to fulfill work experience requirements or participate in practicum off-campus.

However, there is one important difference between staff and students’ perception of Lectures Online. The findings from the study revealed that while a large number of students using Lectures Online perceive they learn just as well from listening to recorded lectures as they do from attending face-to-face lectures, staff do not perceive this to be the case.

**Using Lectures Online does not exclude lecture attendance.** Findings from the national study also showed that lecture attendance is still popular with many students because they:

- find lectures motivating
- value contact with lecturers and peers
- find the visual aids helpful

Staff believe that students learn better by attending lectures regularly and using Lectures Online for review and revision.

Some students attend lectures then listen to Lectures Online to supplement their learning by:

- revising for exams
- revisiting complex ideas and concepts
- working at their own pace and place of convenience
Section 2 - What are the students’ experiences?

- picking up on things that they missed in class
- going back and taking comprehensive notes after the lecture so they can concentrate on what is happening in the lecture
- checking what was said before approaching their lecturer for clarification of issues, ideas or misunderstanding

UWS students’ feedback from the pilot project included comments such as,

“Lectures Online is very helpful and great for learning. As English is my second language it helped me to understand and review the concepts”

“For me, Lectures Online was invaluable. I work and have 3 kids so I need to make my time work for me. I would listen to the lectures again while I was doing other things”

“And of course, Lectures Online was a fantastic resource for revision, though it is no replacement for lectures”

Attendance is still important

Apart from the need for flexible access there are three other broadly–based factors that will motivate students to attend your lectures:

**Educational**
- to view copyright materials, video, annotations on slides or other multimedia materials which cannot be made available on Lectures Online for Copyright reasons
- to participate in problem solving activities in small groups, discussions or other interactions that are difficult to capture on Lectures Online
- to interact and communicate with the lecturer
- to ensure they have the materials and content needed for a follow-on tutorial, practical session or similar

**Convenience**
- to establish a routine for study through the regular lecture timeslot - some students find they don’t get around to listening when they don’t have an established routine

**Social**
- to meet up with others in their unit, exchange ideas and make new friendships – generally more important for younger students
Making the most effective use of Lectures Online

Introducing any new technology into well established practice will change the dynamics of teaching and learning: the relationship between elements in the curriculum, the way you teach, the way students learn, the way you communicate and gain feedback from your students. In short, to make the most of a new technology including Lectures Online you need to take a whole of curriculum perspective.

Curriculum alignment

Each of these elements is interrelated. The organising principle to ensure effective interrelationships is ‘curriculum alignment’.

As described by John Biggs in his book ‘Teaching for Quality Learning at University’ (2003) alignment involves two systems: the teaching system, which is what the teacher constructs and the learning system which is how the student reacts. These two systems interact, they form their own system which, in turn, becomes part of the wider institutional system (Biggs, 2003). In an aligned system, there is compatibility between the learning outcomes, the learning activities and the assessment and feedback strategies around student achievement.

The reality is that we have to consider curriculum designs which cater to a diverse cultural and language mix of students with numerous other commitments. Lectures Online is a great way to reinforce learning for students at their own pace, in their own time, at their preferred location.
One size does not fit all

Making Lectures Online available to your students is not a decision that should be made lightly. Each program or unit has its own unique context arising from:

1. the nature of the discipline, the content, the experiences and learning experiences
2. student characteristics - enrolment modes, needs and expectations
3. logistical arrangements - class sizes, timetabling and room ambience

The WBLT national study found that online lectures is less appropriate for small classes where the face-to-face encounter is used for problem solving, discussions and other small group activities.

Following are some insights into some of these issues that have been drawn from the experiences of staff and students who have used Lectures Online.

*The philosophy and outcomes of the unit* – where learning experiences and outcomes are best achieved through a physical presence for communication, networking, socialisation and collaboration, then Lectures Online may not be appropriate.

*Content* – Lectures Online may not be appropriate if lecture material contains:
- confidential or sensitive content that should not be heard by anyone who is not enrolled in the unit
- confronting or disturbing content that should be discussed in an environment where students reactions can be monitored and responded to on the fly
- copyrighted elements that cannot be broadcast through the Internet
- video and other multimedia content that Lectures Online is not able to capture

*Student characteristics* – Lectures Online is beneficial when students:
- cannot attend due to sickness
- are seeking flexibility due to work, family and other lifestyle commitments
- come from non-English speaking backgrounds
- have special learning needs which make understanding and comprehending real-time lectures difficult
Structuring an integrated learning environment

The traditional face-to-face lecture has been an enduring feature of university life around which staff workloads, curriculum designs and student experiences are constructed. With changing student profiles and attendance patterns, new technologies and new ways of communicating and accessing information there is the opportunity to review the role of lectures and restructure the learning environment to provide a more integrated experience for students.

What is clear from the ALTC-funded project on Web-Based Lecture Technologies (WBLT) is that while many staff recognise the limitations of such technologies and are concerned about the impact these technologies have on learning, they have been addressing these issues by attempting to maintain the status quo, by re-emphasising the importance of lectures and the need for students to attend them, rather than restructuring the curriculum to best achieve desired learning outcomes in the context of the reality of most students’ lives.

Why lecture?

A typical response to this question will include some or all of the following – to:

- impart information related to the subject – facts, principles ideas etc
- build conceptual frameworks with students
- provide a structured experience of the unit content
- illustrate and explain concepts using visual aids, video, or other props
- inspire and motivate students
- communicate and establish a connection between the lecturer and students
- make announcements to keep students up to date with events and unit administration.

For many, lectures have a multifaceted role, incorporating many of the objectives on the list. Reflecting this, the lecture is often the main point of contact between staff and students for formal communication about issues and problems encountered, changes to the program and important events.

With the introduction of Lectures Online, the lecture may no longer be a reliable focal point for managing the unit and students’ learning experiences, particularly if students delay listening to the recordings or do not listen on a regular basis. New communication strategies may need to be developed. Lectures Online will work best if it is seen by students to be integral to their learning and well connected to the activities and experiences that make up the learning environment, rather than as an add-on extra.
Following are some examples of how units have been restructured to integrate Lectures Online in an holistic way.

**Treat the unit vUWS site as the learning hub.** Announcements and important messages that you provide in lectures should also be posted in the vUWS site to ensure all students are kept informed.

**Identify components of your unit where face-to-face lecture is essential.** Reserve these for face-to-face sessions and ensure your students are aware of compulsory attendance.

**Think about alternatives to lectures.** If your lectures are primarily for imparting information there may be more strategic ways of doing this to accommodate your students’ circumstances and meet their learning needs. You may even be able to substitute some of your lectures with pre-recorded sessions; introduce more small group tutorials to explore issues in detail; confine your lectures to coincide with the introduction of new topics; or limit lectures to strategic times throughout the semester – beginning, middle and end or prior to exams.

**Integrate Lectures Online into a wider suite of online communication tools.** Link the lecture to a discussion forum or blog in your vUWS site to gain feedback from students. Invite students, whether present or using Lectures Online, to identify points of confusion or areas of difficulty for addressing at the beginning of the next lecture. This will allow you to keep in touch, monitor progress and identify problems. In addition it will help students to keep in touch with each other.

**Link the lecture to follow-up activities or assignments** that require students to reflect on the lecture material or use it in some way. For example problem solving tasks, quizzes, themes or issues for discussion on online forums, group or paired activities that can be posted within your vUWS site.

**Maintain continuity between lectures and other activities.** Where lecture content is a prerequisite for follow-on tutorials or practical sessions then review timetabling arrangements to ensure that students have time to listen to recordings beforehand. If this is not possible then try to devise other ways of providing students with tutorial stimulus material – e.g. podcast, readings, problems.

The unit outline is a key instrument in managing the integration of Lectures Online into your learning and teaching context. It is in this document that you can articulate the relationship between Lectures Online and other elements of the curriculum, communication and feedback strategies and your expectations of students.

“Lectures Online are a life saver. Not only great for when you miss a lecture, but when you need to revise the material. Being able to not only listen to the lecture but follow it along with the slides helped me absorb the information” ~ student feedback
Managing lecture attendance

With the introduction of Lectures Online, some staff have expressed concern about falling lecture attendance and concerns about students not engaging with their coursework, delaying listening to lecture recordings and reducing their opportunities for social learning in class. Restructuring the teaching and learning activities to integrate Lectures Online in a holistic way will alleviate this problem to some extent.

Nevertheless, if attendance is falling, the reasons are usually multifaceted and may not necessarily be due to Lectures Online. Bear in mind that lecture attendance typically falls over the semester whether Lectures Online is available or not. Other reasons could include:

- timing of lectures in inconvenient time slots
- timetable clashes
- students can’t come because of illness or other unexpected events
- students choose not to come
- a belief by students that they can learn just as well from Lectures Online.

Not all lecturers experience falling attendance; many have similar attendance patterns with or without Lectures Online. Students are more likely to come if they see it benefits their learning for example:

- they may need to participate in live discussions to achieve specific learning outcomes
- they may need to be present to see the visual materials or see how a process unfolds in a demonstration
- the content is sensitive and not appropriate to be listened to without the guidance of the lecturer
- they find the lecturer and lectures motivating.

Students choose to use Lectures Online for a variety of reasons. Let students know that lecture attendance is necessary. By informing students of your expectations and the benefits that can be gained from attendance then students will be able to make informed decisions.

This may not be sufficient to guarantee attendance and you may need to introduce other strategies. Focusing on attendance and developing compliance oriented strategies is one response, but it does not address the fundamental issue of why should students come to lectures if they perceive they learn as well from listening to the recording.
A more enduring approach is to focus on strategies that will motivate students and support their learning, for example:

- provide more than a monologue where you read from prepared notes - acknowledge your audience, make eye contact, smile, pause for questions, let your personality and enthusiasm for your subject shine through
- make lectures interesting, introducing current examples or topical elements that can be used to generate discussion
- encourage students to socialise and communicate with each other before, during or after the lecture
- introduce interactive elements – paired or group discussions, Q and A sessions, student presentations, problem solving
- use the Lectures Online recording as a feedback mechanism to refine your lecturing style

When listening to Lectures Online students adopt a range of strategies covering listening on a regular basis, listening to several lecture recordings at a time, skimming lectures to pick up on salient points. Your particular context will determine which of these strategies is the most effective. Inform your students of preferred approaches in the learning guide.

If regular and systematic listening is important for learning then introducing other activities like multiple-choice quizzes, online discussions and tutorial exercises that relate to lecture content can be useful for helping to keep them up to date.

“Lectures Online has been one of the most helpful aspects of this unit to me and I really enjoyed it. It was great for me to understand and review the concepts of the subject” — student feedback

“I mainly used it to revise so it is definitely beneficial for students and much needed” — student feedback
Optimising learning with Lectures Online

The lecturing process

Not only will the design of your curriculum change as you explore the most effective ways of integrating Lectures Online, so too will the actual delivery of the lecture as you devise new ways of accommodating all students. The suggestions below are arranged around four areas of focus: the structure and content of the lecture; the lecturing process; managing the technical aspects of Lectures Online and incorporating Lectures Online into your vUWS site. You will see that many of the suggestions relate to basic requirements for good teaching, whether in face-to-face or web-based contexts.

“Lectures Online made it feel like I was in the classroom, I even raised my hand when the lecturer asked a question to the actual lecture room”
~ student feedback

1. The structure and content of the lecture

- Provide an outline of the content to be covered and major topics to be addressed
- Summarise key points
- Plan for the time allowed to avoid important points being 'cut-off' when the recording finishes – be conscious of the start and end time of scheduled recording
- Include announcements – it is particularly important to warn students that the lectures are being recorded so that they don’t unintentionally disclose information of a personal nature

2. The lecturing process

- Explain references to visuals and ensure they are available for listeners
- Indicate slide changes when moving through Microsoft PowerPoint slides
- Describe what the attendees are doing
- Speak clearly and vary your tone to convey your enthusiasm for the topics
- Plan to use the microphone proficiently, such as minimising movement if it interferes with the sound quality
• Repeat questions from students clearly so that they are audible for your online audience. If another student answers the question, repeat the answer too

• Avoid long pauses if possible

• Provide timely access to supplementary materials for students to use while listening

“I do not repeat myself quite as much because I know they can rewind. I now think more carefully about my marginally-acceptable jokes, sarcastic asides, and other provocative comments I make to keep the students attentive!!” ~ staff feedback

3. Managing the technical aspects of Lectures Online

• Practise using the technology before the lecture and use it consistently

• Plan how you will manage activities such as playing copyrighted materials or facilitating group discussions. Examples include providing commentary for listeners or suggesting they post a reflection online

4. Incorporating Lectures Online into your vUWS site

Plan how you will release your lecture recordings to students in vUWS: either automatically or manually. Think about how you can enhance communication with your students. Some ideas include:

**Utilising discussion forums** - a lecturer who used to stop in their lectures to pose questions and give the students time to consider their answers has created a discussion forum for students and has found that the forum (although not anonymous) gives students the time to compose ‘good’ questions which they can answer either online or in the next lecture. They also find they have more time in lectures to devote to exploring the content more thoroughly.

**Revisiting the lecture** – students reported using Lectures Online to listen to the content again, reflect and refine their questions before asking the lecturer through discussion forums or email. This was more effective for all when compared to the practice of asking impromptu questions in lectures.
Providing feedback – a lecturer gathered feedback from students at the end of the lecture by way of a short survey or a one minute paper to identify issues and concepts not well understood. Students were then directed to the sections of the lecture recordings where these issues were dealt with.

“So much thought was put into the Self Directed Learning Activities (SDLAS), the quiz prep for the tutorials, the reader workbook, including the readings, the online tutor, who was always helpful and available, the FAQs, referencing tips, sample essays and online lectures. All of it was fantastic and made learning of an in-depth topic such as psychology easier. Thank you for your time and efforts through this unit.” ~ student feedback
Lectures Online and Copyright

Lectures Online captures the whole lecture including any third party copyright material used for the purposes of educational instruction presented during the lecture.

Capturing of lectures exercises the copyright rights of reproduction, communication and the right of performance.

Material that can be captured in Lectures Online

- Material in which UWS holds copyright
- Material which is out of copyright
- Material where written permission has been given to reproduce and communicate via Lectures Online by the copyright holder
- Material where the terms and conditions of use explicitly state that material can be reproduced and communicated without permission or payment

Using third party copyright material in Lectures Online

Broadcasts of radio, television, cable and satellite programs, or downloaded podcasts of broadcast material placed online by the broadcaster can be captured via Lectures Online in reliance on the Part VA statutory licence. The electronic copyright notice below must be displayed before the material is captured:

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Welcome to Lectures Online at UWS. Lectures Online automatically records audio and visuals (like PowerPoint presentations) from lecture theatres and makes them available on your unit’s vUWS site. Not all units offer Lectures Online – check with your lecturer to see if recordings have been scheduled for your unit/s.

The University of Western Sydney (UWS) recognises that students lead busy lifestyles. The provision of flexible learning options is one way of helping you to achieve a high quality learning experience.

Even though your lecturers may have made Lectures Online available, they usually expect you to be physically present at lectures. There are sound educational reasons for this, for example:

- The lecture contains copyright materials, video, annotations on slides or other multimedia materials which cannot be made available on Lectures Online

- The lecture incorporates problem solving in small groups, discussions or other interactions that are difficult to capture on Lectures Online

- The content of the lecture is needed for a follow-on tutorial, practical session or similar

- The lecture is used to get to know you, gauge your progress, identify problems you are encountering and give you immediate feedback

There are plenty of other advantages to attending lectures

*The social advantages* – you get to meet up with others in your unit, exchange ideas and make new friendships.

*The convenience* - attending lectures in a regular timeslot can help you to establish a routine for study. Some students find they don’t get around to listening when they don’t have an established routine.

*Just ask* - If you have the option of attending or not, and are unsure of what you should do, ask your lecturer why you need to attend and what you will be missing if you don’t.

*Do both!* Remember - it is not an either/or decision. Attending lectures and using Lectures Online as a study tool can help to maximise your learning.

### Accessing Lectures Online

You access Lectures Online within your unit’s vUWS site. Click the link to of the lecture you wish to access and the Lectures Online student site will display.

You then have the option to either stream the lecture or download it. Streaming will allow you to listen to the audio and view slides from the lecture without them being downloaded to your computer, but requires a fast internet connection. Downloading to your hard disk or another drive will take time, but you can then listen to the lecture as often as you like, and transfer it to a portable media device for listening flexibility.

You will need a high-speed/efficient internet connection to stream or download without delays. If you don’t have this at home, use the UWS IT labs to listen to the streamed lectures through headphones or download them to your USB storage.