

**AONTAS MAC LÉINN**  
CHOLÁISTE NA TRÍONÓIDE



TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN  
**STUDENTS' UNION**

# **Report on Lecture Recording at Trinity College Dublin**

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2023/2024

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## Introduction

This report presents a comprehensive analysis of a survey conducted to gauge the availability and accessibility of lecture recordings across Trinity College Dublin. The survey, undertaken between January and February 2024, collected responses from all years. Respondents spanned all 24 Schools, reflecting a wide range of academic disciplines. The survey aimed to quantify the number of modules offering universal lecture recordings without the need for special requests or justifications, thereby assessing Trinity's commitment to a learning environment based on Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Additionally, the survey sought to understand the student demographic and their needs by assessing specific categories such as mature students, student parents, or those for whom English is a second language, providing insights into the diverse needs and challenges faced by the student body.

# Equity

At Trinity College Dublin, there is no universal provision to access recordings of lectures. Some courses have lecture recordings, others are limited by technical issues or otherwise are not recorded. A few courses provide access on a case-by-case basis and some do not have the support of lecture recording at all. The result of this is that students are not given the opportunity to follow learning when not *in situ*. It is the experience of TCDSU that students often-times do not get access to the resources that they need in time. We receive lots of queries with regards to the issue of lacking supports in College on a daily basis.

The lack of lecture recording presents itself as a barrier to accessing education for those students who are working, who are parents, mature students who have other commitments and those students with disabilities, chronic illnesses or are neurodivergent. If there were lecture recordings, it would be a temporary relief in the midst of the cost-of-living and housing crisis and also make education more accessible to workers, parents, mature students who have other commitments and the likes. This is a serious issue for students, as evidenced by the fact that in September 2022, the TCDSU called on College to adopt universal lecture recording across the board (O'Leary).

Students have a variety of reasons, medical and non-medical, to require access to recorded lectures. In this way, recordings of lectures is an equality issue. For example, the cost of living crisis combined with the disastrous housing market has meant that many are commuting. It would be much better if access to lecture recordings were provided as a matter of principle in this crisis situation. If hybrid learning provisions are not implemented, the risk of deferrals and dropouts grows. At the University of Galway, 91 out of 300 deferrals were blamed on the rental market, in a trend of increasing deferrals which is becoming apparent. If the deferrals are not accepted, students could risk losing places, and if they are accepted, then the institution's financial viability is at risk (Murphy). The solution to this dilemma is to adopt lecture recordings.

Furthermore, for exam and assessment preparations, recorded lectures can be very helpful, as students can revise easier. Students can learn, clarify concepts and revise without needing further support or input from the lecturer. A study at Swinburne University of Technology in Australia notes that *'students across all disciplines in our study indicated that they used lecture-recording to review, revise or catch up on missed lectures, and, regardless of their discipline, students wanted lecture-recording to be available across all their subjects believing recordings enhanced their studies'* (Lokuge Dona et al.).

Hybrid learning in the form of lecture recordings offers choice for students. Those who work, are caregivers, or have disabilities could better avail of education should they be able to choose their own learning pace and environment. Research on the subject, such as the

European Commissions' report on quality investment in education and training found that hybrid learning increased student engagement, achievement, and overall gave a positive view of it (European Commission). Academic literature also confirms these effects (Hesse). On recorded lectures, for example, there can be captions, which make it more accessible to students with hearing problems or international students with language difficulties.

Furthermore, it will mean that students can pay more attention in class, and take notes later, especially for students with attention difficulties, like ADHD or other neurodivergent students. While many take notes hurriedly during class, this would enable students to deeply engage with the material. A paper describing the practicalities of lecture recording states, *'Lecture capture can be used to support generative note-taking as students who take more verbatim notes during a live lecture can use recordings to generate paraphrased notes at a later time during revision to improve the quality of their notes.'* (Nordmann et al.).

## State-of-Play

Most of the argumentation centres around how hybrid learning offers a more inclusive, accessible and equitable learning environment. It is important to look at the state of play at our institution specifically. It is important to also take stock of currently existing policy at our College.

Trinity College Dublin's 'Accessible Information Policy & Guidelines', the policy document based on the legal framework of the Disabilities Act (2005), sets out our College's commitment to accessible and inclusive learning for all students (Trinity College Dublin). At Trinity, 10% of students making up 1,888 learners are registered with the Disability Service according to the 2020-2021 report (Disability Service), and there are many more who are not but would still greatly benefit from adherence to the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), of which lecture recording is a key part of.

Furthermore, the Trinity-INC project has been promoting this method of delivering and designing learning (Trinity-INC), in collaboration with academics from the School of Education. There is clearly interest in it. Our College stands at an impasse; whether to continue on a more inclusive path, or more of the same old. It is the opinion of student stakeholders that implementing lecture recording is a necessary step forward.

## Benefit to the Lecturer

One possible benefit to lecturers is of course the increased access to education that students can receive. Students will be greatly appreciative of lecture recordings, as their feedback has been heard. In turn, they will be more engaged with the subject material.

Apart from this, viewing statistics is useful for the lecturer as it allows them to see where difficulties may lie for students and which concepts are the hardest to master. This will help staff know where to focus on or go back on in the next class. It is also of benefit to the TA, who may be asked to further practise the concepts in question in their tutorials by the lecturer. Therefore, lecture recordings may be of benefit both to the learner and teacher(s) in a collaborative fashion.

It is also true that if universal lecture recording is set up, and not case-by-case access, the manual labour in processing requests for recordings, retrieving them and providing them to the student in question becomes null. Furthermore, the likelihood of having to give extra support, such as office hours, one-on-one consultation or extra materials also decreases. Lecture recording is, while not a perfect one, a good substitute for making up for missed classes.

## The Myth of Decreased Attendance

There has been a myth that less students will show up to class in-person if there is a choice. However, blended learning is about supporting those who want to show up but cannot (e.g. people with disabilities, anxiety or international students away from the country for whatever reason), and as such we should focus on them rather than those who would not show up to class anyways, in-person or online. In addition, there has not been any conclusive data presented by College which shows this to be true. Some studies have found attendance unaffected in third-level institutions (Bollmeier et al.).

Also, in 2016 the University of Huddersfield set up lecture capture in 120 rooms with particularly positive feedback from disabled and international students (Walker and Whittles). This is a positive step. Such actions result in a more equitable educational system across the board.

Finally, we should be focusing on quality over quantity of learning - attendance numbers are quantity, but many students will be able to learn better with access to recorded lectures, which is quality. The argument about decreased attendance cannot be used in direct link

with a decrease in the amount of learning that happens. In short, it comes from a place of privilege to deny lecture recordings because of a myth about attendance, further distorted by conflating quantity with quality of learning.

## Case-By-Case Access is no Substitute for Universal Lecture Recording

It is vital that universal lecture recording be set-up and not just accessed on a case-by-case basis based on certified grounds, whether that be medical or non-medical. The fundamental issue is that such a mechanism based on the exception and not the rule will mean that students will fall through the cracks. This is a result of multiple factors. .

The case-by-case mechanism has delays which make the whole system slow. The time between writing to the designated contact person, then processing the request, liaising with other involved parties is a slow, stressful and bureaucratic process, one that should be better streamlined. Oftentimes, due to the already underfunded administrative structures of College and technological issues, students receive no replies as points of contacts are overwhelmed, indicating the need for more resources. In addition, by the time a request to record to a lecturer who is not recording classes reaches them, it is already too late, as the week's lecture has already been held.

Alternative arrangements may be slow to be implemented despite attempts by students to reach out to tutors, lecturers and course administrators. It has been reported in College that access to lecture recordings may take weeks or even months (Molnárfi, "Results of Inclusivity Survey"). By the time the process has finished, assesment season is about, disadvantaged students severely. However, if there was commonplace lecture recording, this unfortunate situation could be avoided, and ill students or otherwise those in need of support could still access education, without having to meet the hurdle of bureaucratic processes.

In a similar vein, the actual procedure for requesting access to remote learning is unclear. The tcd.ie website is full of broken links, unintelligible structure and is not properly searchable on Google. Communications coming from College do not explain how supports can be accessed in case of various issues. This exacerbates the issue of delay, and it may mean that students are apprehensive of reaching out when they need help. The lack of policy in this area is disadvantageous for students.

Finally, not all students have a certified reason for accessing these lectures and may not be comfortable sharing with their tutor these reasons, and therefore will be discouraged from seeking supports to follow their education. There should be more encouragement for

students to seek support. Furthermore, clarity on how, and who, to ask for supports is crucial.

## Momentum After the Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic, in essence, has provided an opportunity to build back better. There was a growth in interest towards Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, which should not be lost. We should take advantage of it and improve our educational system. No student should be disadvantaged because of factors outside of their control, through no fault of their own. With this being said, the reasons for the necessity of lecture recordings has been outlined.

Every day, student representatives receive messages from students who are part of vulnerable groups and are unable to follow education and are worried about their academic performance. Students are unable to take part in the learning process without the proper supports. We are asking for cooperation between students and staff, as many of us are struggling with the cost of living, working to pay for College, anxious about going in-person due to being immunocompromised, have disabilities, are student parents, neurodivergent or who would otherwise make good use of recorded lectures.

## Lecture Recordings Should Not Be Temporary Measures

It has been argued before that lecture recording is useful insofar as only a temporary measure to alleviate the cost-of-living crisis or when a black swan event like the Covid-19 pandemic occurs. However, this is a topsy-turvy way of thinking about it. Flipping the idea on its head, there should be universal lecture recording as a measure of resilience to better deal with crisis events. It is a way of strengthening the delivery of education, both by ensuring that no rushed spending and decisions need to be made for the sudden implementation of lecture recording and also by being able to deliver education in a more accessible way. There are always some students in crisis or otherwise in need of special accommodations. Furthermore, there is always the threat of a crisis at College which calls for lecture recording. Therefore, lecture recording is a way to make education more equitable across the board.

## Concerns Over Copyright

Trade unions have serious and valid concerns over the implications of lecture recording for the collective bargaining rights of staff. In essence, senior management could use lecture

recording to teach when staff go on strike. In turn, this would break the underlying mechanism of the strike, the withdrawal of labor.

This has happened at the University of Edinburgh in 2018, according to IFUT's conference proceedings from 2021 (Molnárfi, "IFUT Proceedings 2021"), as stated within a motion on lecture recording. The same motion also raised concerns about monitoring and the evaluation of 'teaching quality', which is a very corporatized outlook on teaching and learning. It was furthermore mentioned that there are unresolved intellectual copyright issues, and the issue of increased workloads without corresponding wage or time compensation when recording, editing and publishing lecture recordings.

Staff have also raised concerns, independent of trade unions, about students selling course materials, including lecture recordings. There are a plethora of websites dedicated to such activity, some to aid in learning and some to facilitate cheating. This is a serious issue. Nevertheless, the Student & Staff Experiences of Teaching, Learning & Assessment at Trinity College Dublin 2020-21 report found that there is an appetite amongst the majority of staff at 66% to *"to retain blended teaching and learning approaches in the future i.e. a mix of in-person and online teaching and learning"* (Trinity College Dublin, "Student & Staff Experiences of Teaching, Learning & Assessment at Trinity College Dublin 2020-21"). However, it must be noted, as it was remarked in the report, that it is unclear what is meant by blended learning in their survey. It has a different interpretation from person to person. So, at the moment what this proves is that there is an opening for retaining the positives from Covid-19. There is, unfortunately, no College-wide survey for now that could determine the staff attitude towards lecture recording specifically.

The solution to the issue of lecture recordings being used to break industrial action is student-staff unity by establishing open lines of communication, solidarity organising and formal partnerships between student unions and trade unions. This would tie into the rich history of student-staff joint organising when challenging decisions unfavourable to the academic community. In 2021, the TCDSU passed a motion mandating its sabbatical officers to work with IFUT TCD on the topic (Maguire), and in 2022, the USI started cooperating with IFUT too. Third-level institutions should enter into agreements with trade unions on copyright issues, and the student unions should support the demands of the trade unions when it comes to lecture recordings. This would ease the concerns of staff.

Furthermore, student representatives should run, in conjunction with staff, awareness raising events about the illegality of selling or otherwise uploading course materials. However, the selling of course materials cannot be used as a catch-all argument against lecture recording, since such copyright theft will happen regardless, of lecture slides or otherwise.



# Technical Difficulties as a Result of Neglect by Senior Management

When it comes to lecture recording, there are technical difficulties faced by lecturers, including unresponsive IT support due to underfunding and understaffing and the lack of guidance from senior management. Furthermore, the outsourcing of AV support to FittingImage has been a major hurdle in the provision of lecture recording. Even if the lecturer wants to record their lectures, oftentimes nothing can be provided due to technical difficulties. According to the presentation titled “AV Supports for Teaching Spaces 2023” that was given to the IT Services User Group Meeting on the 22nd of February 2023, the university has approximately 400 teaching spaces, out of which 160 are configured for hybrid learning.

## AV in Teaching Spaces in Trinity

- Approximately 400 teaching spaces in the university
  - ~80 in the Central Pool / SLP, IT Services responsible
  - ~320 locally managed rooms, Schools responsible
  - ~160 spaces configured for hybrid teaching & learning

This document is intended not only to spread awareness about lecture recording amongst staff, but also to ask them to make as much noise as possible towards senior management to get the lecture recording equipment working and for everyone to be able to record their classes.

Below are a few quotes from lecturers that student representatives have received in response to asking for lecture recordings for various reasons.

*“I attempted to record this morning's lecture [...]. However, even though a member of IT services was present, we still didn't succeed in getting the recording going.”*

*“The room in which the classes take place [...] has very poor technical capabilities, and I appreciate your awareness of the lack of technical resources in some rooms and lack of technical support given to lecturers in this regard.”*

This was furthermore mentioned in the IT Services survey published in 2022 (IT Services), where staff identified the outsourcing of A/V support to FittingImage as a barrier to implementing hybrid learning. Please see below quotes from the published results of the survey by staff (p.77).

*“Cease the outsourcing of assistance for AV Equipment, and reinstate the old system of having IT staff provide the assistance - this seems to have been far more effective. Ensure that all pcs in lecture rooms are checked weekly or monthly by ITS - and definitely at the beginning of each term.”*

*“More dedicated TCD staff on AV team for teaching - the outsourcing yields people who don't know about teaching in my experience: e.g. Someone from FittingImage trying to tell me that wanting to record Powerpoint plus the document camera in a large lecture theatre in Panopto was not something that was ""normal"". Core business should have core staff dedicated.”*

*“Stop outsourcing IT services: keep services in-house. Have a member of IS services permanently on duty in major teaching centres like the Arts Building so that any issues can be dealt with promptly.”*

There exist policy solutions to this issue, such as spending on audio-visual infrastructure, more guidance to lecturers and reversing the decision to outsource A/V support to FittingImage, instead having it be provided by IT Services staff. This should be accompanied by the necessary expansion of IT Services staff and/or pay rises.

There exist local solutions to this issue, such as allowing students access to recordings of previous year's lectures, recording on the lecturer's mobile device outside of College-approved systems, setting up a Zoom *in situ* and recording it, low-tech solutions like audio-recording only in case of difficulties with activating video recording or letting students record lectures with the permission of the rest of the class is possible. To avoid GDPR concerns, directional instead of omnidirectional microphones can be used. Finally, as a last resort, if a lecturer still feels uncomfortable with universal lecture recording, the case-by-case mechanism and clear communication on how to request it, is a solution.

# Student Feedback About Lecture Recording At Trinity College Dublin

## Sample

The form had received 1,556 responses, out of a total student population of 20,567, representing a 7.57% response rate.

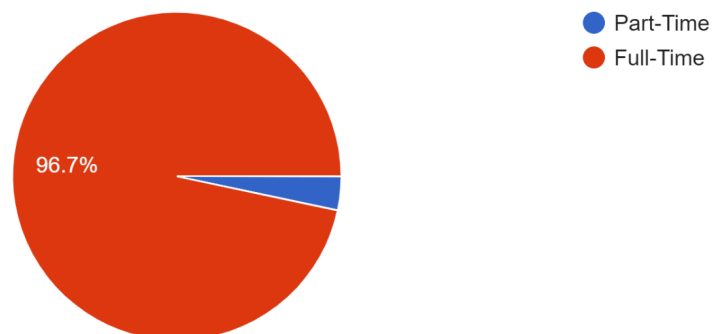
Survey	Distribution	Responses	Source
Lecture Recording At Trinity College Dublin	Via email to all students in the Campaigns Email, as well as via the Weekly Email, then via Faculty- and School-level mailing lists.	1,556	<a href="#">Please consult the sanitised data here.</a>

In various places, such as the year question, as well as when counting the number of modules, adjustments had to be made to clean, order and normalize the data and render it analysable by machine.

## Full-Time vs Part-Time Students

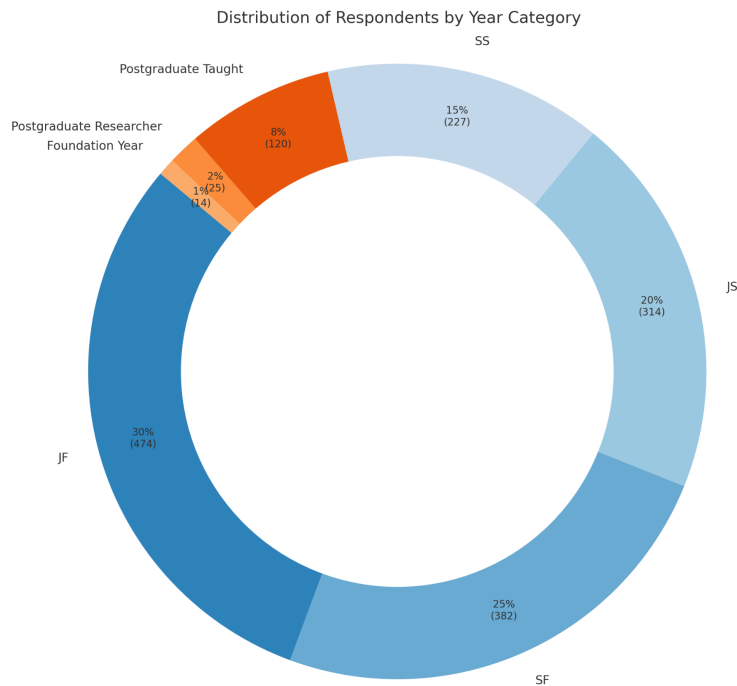
Full Time or Part-Time Student?

1,556 responses



97% of those who filled out the survey were full-time students, and 3% were part-time students.

## Year Distribution

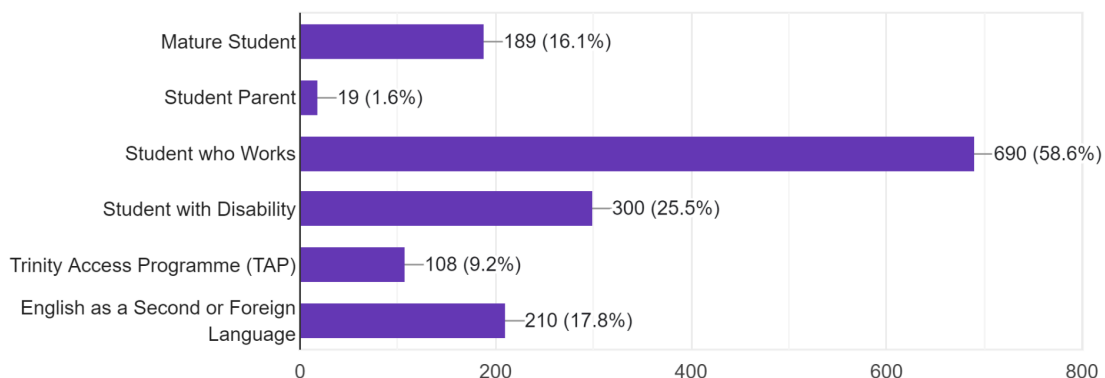


Undergraduate students tended to fill out the survey more, with 90% of responses in this category, then postgraduate taught students at 8%, postgraduate researchers at 2% and Foundation Year at 1%. This is explained by the fact that postgraduates, both taught and research, might rely on lecture recordings differently compared to undergraduates due to their more specialised and research-oriented coursework.

## Student Categories

Which categories do you belong to from the below? (tick all that apply)

1,177 responses



The survey question addressing various student categories is pivotal in understanding the multifaceted landscape of the student body's needs and preferences regarding lecture recordings. By allowing respondents to identify with one or more categories such as mature students, student parents, individuals working alongside their studies, and non-native English speakers, our survey acknowledges the complexity of student identities and the unique challenges they face in their academic journey.

Mature students and student parents, for instance, may have significant commitments outside their academic life, such as family responsibilities or full-time employment. For these students, lecture recordings can be an invaluable resource, offering the flexibility to engage with course material at times that fit their complex schedules. This flexibility can ease the stress of balancing academic commitments with personal or professional responsibilities, potentially enhancing their learning experience and academic performance.

Similarly, for students who are working while studying, the ability to access lecture recordings can mitigate the pressures of juggling employment with education. It provides them an opportunity to revisit complex materials or catch up on missed classes, thereby ensuring that their work commitments do not adversely affect their academic progress.

Non-native English speakers might find lecture recordings particularly beneficial as they offer a chance to review lectures at their own pace, pause and replay difficult sections, and use them as a tool to improve language proficiency alongside academic learning. This can be crucial in enhancing comprehension and retention of course material, ultimately contributing to a more equitable educational environment.

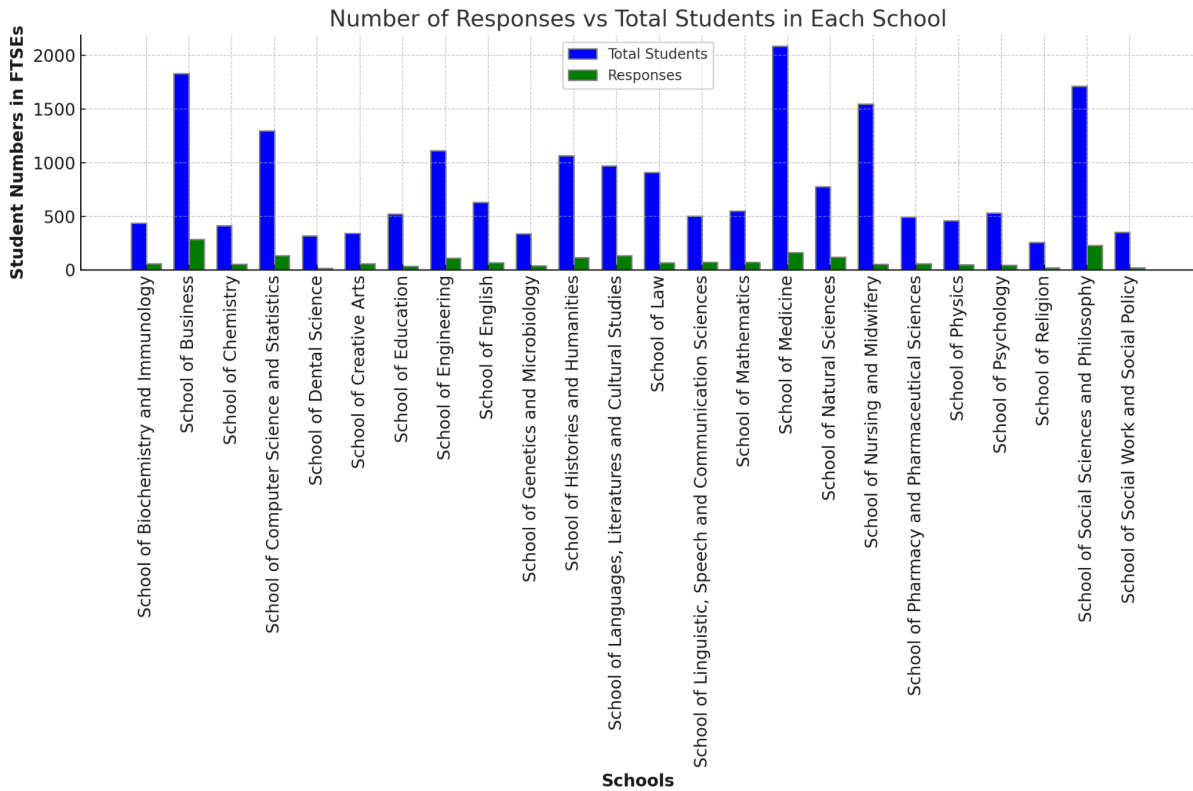
The inclusion of these categories in the survey highlights an understanding that the student experience is not monolithic; rather, it is shaped by a constellation of personal, professional, and academic factors. Analyzing responses to this question can shed light on how different segments of the student population utilize and value lecture recordings, providing insights that can inform more inclusive and supportive teaching practices within the institution. By tailoring educational resources such as lecture recordings to meet the diverse needs of its

student body, the College can foster a more inclusive, accessible, and effective learning environment for all its students.

- **Student Who Works (690 respondents):** This category, the most represented in the survey, underscores the significant number of students balancing their academic pursuits with work commitments. Lecture recordings likely serve as a critical resource for these students, offering them the flexibility to engage with course materials around their work schedules, thereby supporting their dual roles.
- **Student with Disability (300 respondents):** The substantial representation of students with disabilities highlights the importance of lecture recordings as an accessibility tool. For these students, recordings can provide an alternative means of accessing lectures, accommodating various learning needs and ensuring equitable educational opportunities.
- **English as a Second or Foreign Language (210 respondents):** For students in this category, lecture recordings are more than just a convenience; they are a vital resource for revisiting complex materials at their own pace, enhancing understanding, and improving language proficiency.
- **Mature Student (189 respondents):** Mature students, often returning to education after a significant break or balancing studies with other life commitments, likely find value in the flexibility and review opportunities that lecture recordings provide, facilitating their reintegration into academic life.
- **Trinity Access Programme (TAP) Students (108 respondents):** These students, coming from backgrounds that may not traditionally lead to higher education, might particularly benefit from the additional support and flexibility that lecture recordings offer, aiding in their academic success and integration.
- **Student Parent (19 respondents):** Although a smaller group, the inclusion of student parents in the survey underscores the diverse life circumstances of the student body. For these individuals, lecture recordings can be indispensable in managing the demands of both academic and family life.

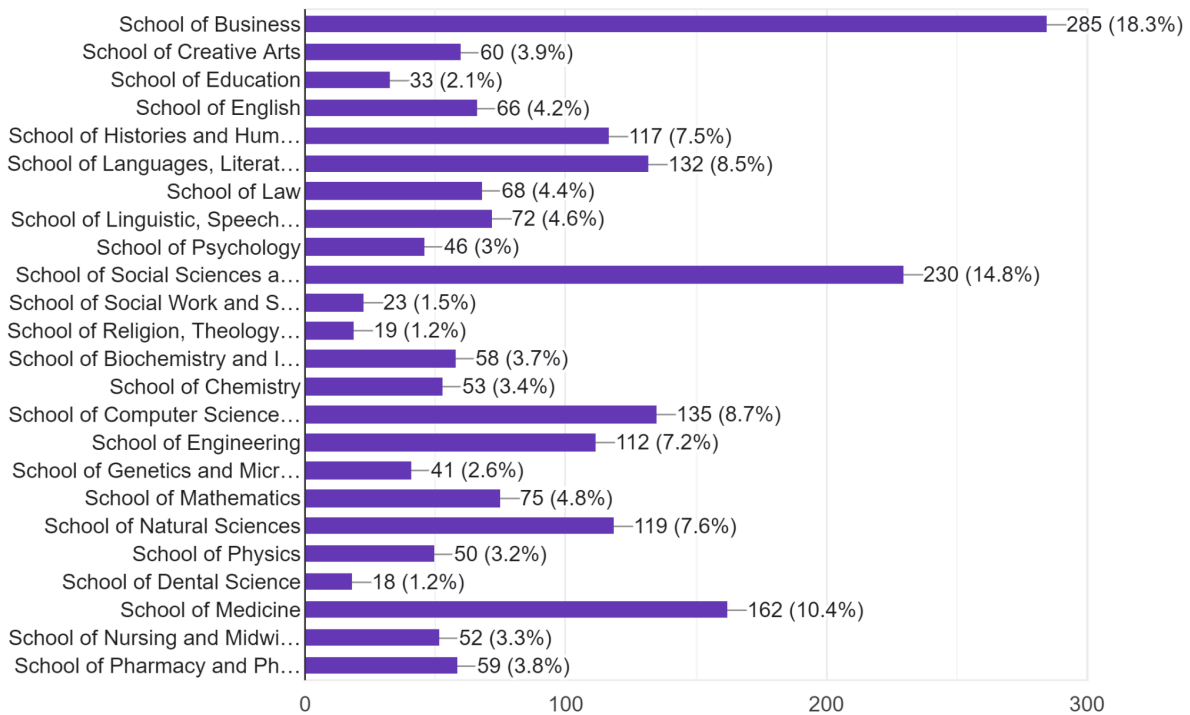
## Response Rates per School

The survey received a varying amount of responses from all Schools. The response rates across all the schools range from a minimum of 3.36% to a maximum of about 17.61%. This range indicates the variability in student engagement with the survey across different schools. This may be down to various factors, such as some Schools being less engaged with student union matters as others, or the workload of certain courses. Regardless, the responses are enough to make a decent analysis.



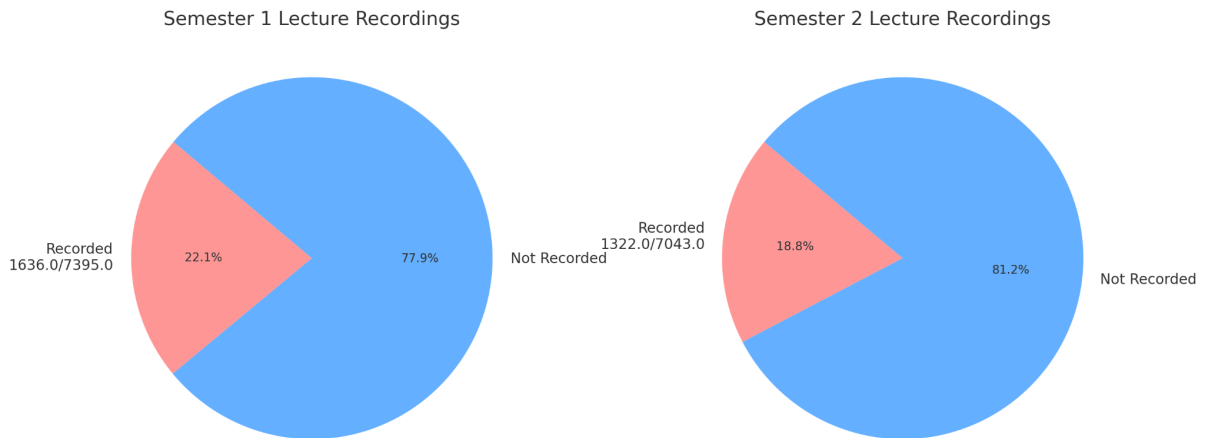
### Which School? (tick multiple if multi-school / Joint Honours)

1,556 responses



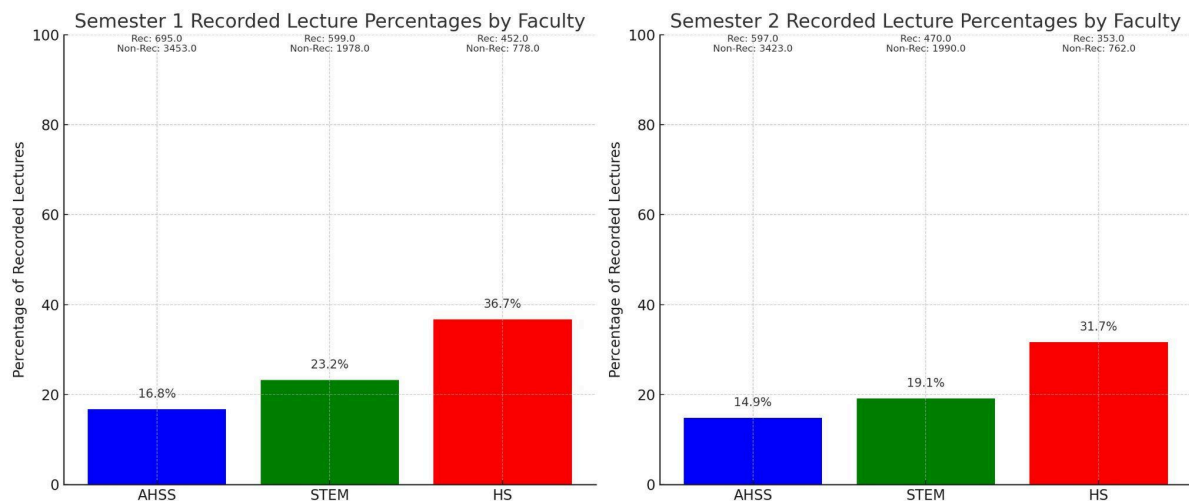
## Lecture Recordings Overall

The average student saw 22.1% of their lectures recorded in Semester 1 and 18.8% in Semester 2, whereas 77.9% not recorded in Semester 1 and 81.2% not recorded in Semester 2.



## Lecture Recordings per Faculty

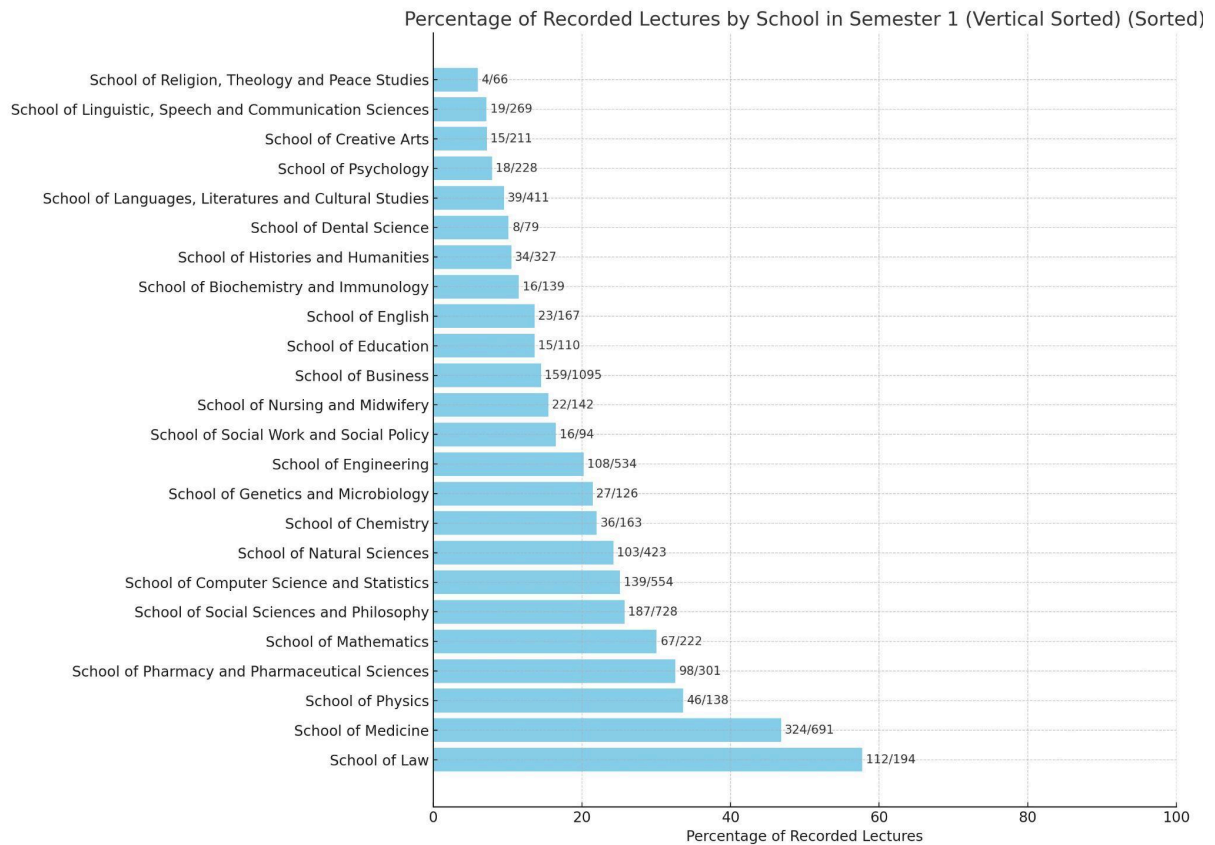
The responses showed that in both Semester 1 and Semester 2, Health Sciences, then STEM and then AHSS recorded the most lectures.

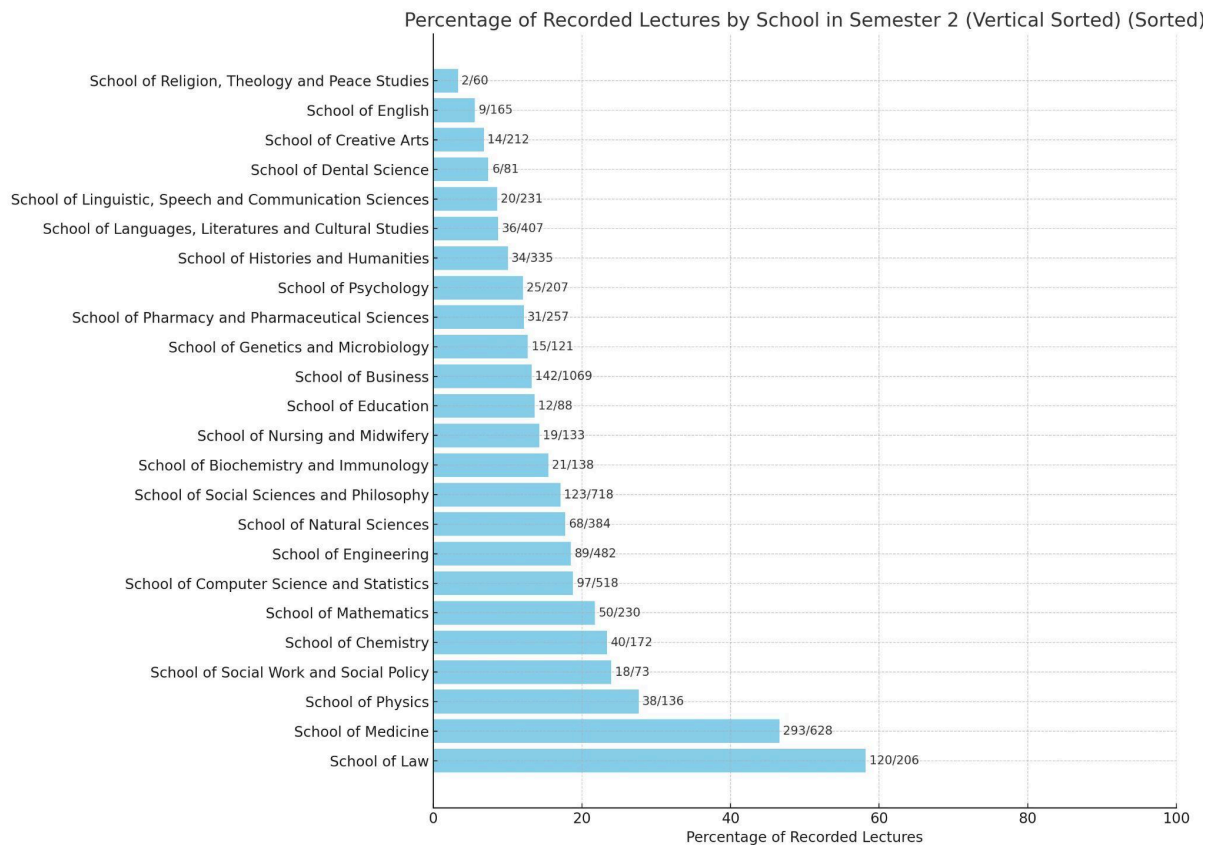


## Lecture Recordings Per School



The per-School breakdown as indicated in the below figures for Semester 1 and Semester 2 reveal a varied picture. The changes seen when transitioning from Semester 1 to Semester 2 indicate that there is a lot left to the lecturer's discretion. Schools that remain consistently at the top, or at the bottom, indicate a culture of recording lectures or adequate technological facilities within the rooms teaching takes place in for these Schools. Ultimately, without knowing more details about the reasons behind recording and non-recording, there are many complex variables at play.



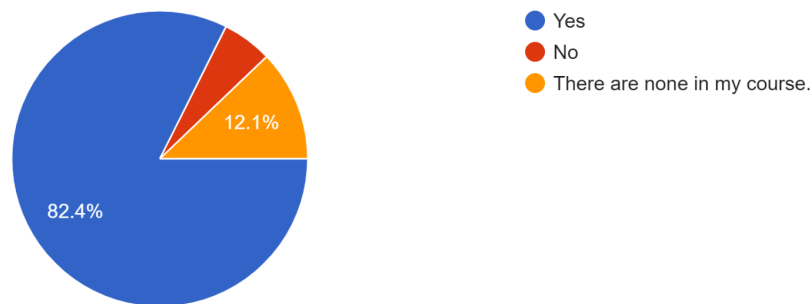


## Access to Lecture Recordings

The survey question on availing lecture recordings revealed that a significant majority of respondents, 82.4%, have accessed lecture recordings when they were made available. This indicates a strong utilisation of lecture recordings among the participants. On the other hand, a smaller portion, about 5.5%, stated they have not accessed lecture recordings, suggesting a minority of students either do not find them necessary or beneficial, or perhaps face barriers to access. Unfortunately, 189 respondents, representing 12.1% of the total, indicated that there are no lecture recordings available in their course, highlighting a gap in the provision of lecture recordings across different paths of study. This underscores the high demand and positive reception for lecture recordings among students, while also pointing to potential areas for improvement in making lecture recordings universally available.

Have you ever accessed lecture recordings, where they were made available for you?

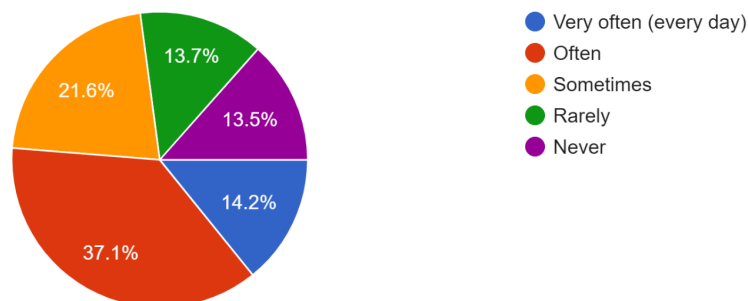
1,556 responses



The survey responses on the frequency of using lecture recordings present a compelling narrative about their value in the academic environment. A notable 37% of respondents access lecture recordings often, underscoring their pivotal role in students' regular study routines. This is complemented by the 22% who engage with recordings sometimes, likely leveraging them as a strategic resource for revision or catching up on missed material. Remarkably, 14% of the participants use lecture recordings "Very often (every day)," indicating a dedicated cohort for whom these recordings are an indispensable part of their daily learning process. Although 13% reported accessing the recordings rarely and another 13% never use them, these figures highlight the diverse learning preferences, as well as the potential lack of lecture recordings, within the student body rather than detracting from their overall utility. The fact that nearly three-quarters (73%) of respondents utilise lecture recordings with some regularity attests to their widespread acceptance and effectiveness as a learning tool. This data paints a picture of lecture recordings as an invaluable asset to the academic community, offering flexibility, accessibility, and support to a broad spectrum of learners, and reinforcing the notion that lecture recordings are indeed an invaluable resource for enhancing educational experiences and outcomes.

How often do you access lecture recordings?

1,494 responses



These responses to the question of why students accessed lecture recordings when available reflect the proportion of respondents who cited each reason, highlighting the

diverse and multifaceted benefits thereof. The reasons range from logistical challenges, like commuting, to personal preferences and needs, such as mental health considerations and learning styles, underscoring the value of lecture recordings in accommodating a wide array of student circumstances and preferences.

- **To avoid a lengthy commute (652 respondents):** This group, the most represented in the survey, highlights the significant challenge that commuting poses for many students. Lecture recordings serve as an invaluable resource for these individuals, providing them with the flexibility to engage with course materials without the need for time-consuming travel.
- **Other study-related activities (606 respondents):** Reflecting the diverse academic commitments students undertake, this category emphasizes the importance of flexible learning options. Lecture recordings enable these students to balance their study-related activities effectively, ensuring they can access lectures at their convenience.
- **Work commitments (420 respondents):** A substantial number of students are balancing work and study, underscoring the crucial role of lecture recordings in supporting their dual commitments. These recordings offer the flexibility needed to integrate learning into busy work schedules, facilitating continuous engagement with their courses.
- **Mental health reasons (407 respondents):** This significant portion of respondents indicates the growing recognition of mental health considerations in academic settings. Lecture recordings provide a less stressful alternative to in-person attendance, offering a supportive tool for students managing mental health challenges.
- **I prefer the recorded lecture over attending the lecture in person (361 respondents):** Demonstrating a clear preference for recorded content, this group finds value in the unique advantages of recorded lectures, such as the ability to pause, rewind, and review material, catering to individual learning paces and styles.
- **Family commitments (327 respondents):** For students juggling academic responsibilities with family obligations, lecture recordings offer a lifeline. This flexibility ensures that family commitments do not hinder academic progress, allowing for a more balanced approach to personal and academic life.
- **Other extracurricular activities (299 respondents):** Active involvement in extracurricular activities is essential for a well-rounded educational experience. Lecture recordings enable these students to participate in such activities without sacrificing their academic learning, highlighting the recordings' role in fostering a comprehensive educational journey.
- **Disabilities and/or medical conditions (286 respondents):** Lecture recordings are particularly beneficial for students with disabilities or medical conditions, providing an accessible learning format that can accommodate various needs, thereby ensuring inclusivity and equal access to educational content.
- **Neurodivergent or other attention difficulties (260 respondents):** This group's reliance on lecture recordings underscores the importance of adaptable learning resources. Recordings can be tailored to suit the needs of neurodivergent students and those with attention difficulties, enhancing focus and comprehension.

- **I do not need lecture recordings (138 respondents):** This category reflects a portion of the student body that may not rely on recorded lectures, possibly due to consistent in-person attendance or alternative learning preferences, indicating the diverse approaches to education within the student population.
- **I always attend in-person lectures. (138 respondents):** Equally represented as the previous group, these students demonstrate a commitment to traditional lecture attendance, suggesting a preference for the live interaction and immediacy of the in-person educational experience.
- **I prefer not to attend lectures (69 respondents):** The smallest group among the respondents, these students might lean towards self-study or alternative educational resources, highlighting the spectrum of learning preferences and the need for diverse educational approaches to cater to all students.

The data compellingly validates the equity hypothesis regarding the necessity of lecture recordings. Students have identified critical factors such as mental health concerns, disabilities or neurodiversity, and cost-of-living challenges—including lengthy commutes and work commitments—as primary motivations for their reliance on lecture recordings.

Echoing this sentiment, a 2019 study by the ILCU (League) highlighted financial anxieties among students, with 24% citing finance as their foremost concern. A staggering 74% reported the need to undertake employment during the academic term to manage expenses, leading to 55% opting to work instead of attending lectures—a significant increase from 22% in 2017. This underscores the dual role of lecture recordings as both a welfare support and an academic necessity, aiding students in balancing their educational and financial commitments.

Family obligations also play a pivotal role, affecting a broad spectrum of students, from young parents to mature students juggling caregiving responsibilities. These commitments, ranging from caring for ailing relatives to managing parental duties, are not only vital for the students' mental well-being but also underscore the importance of flexible learning solutions like lecture recordings.

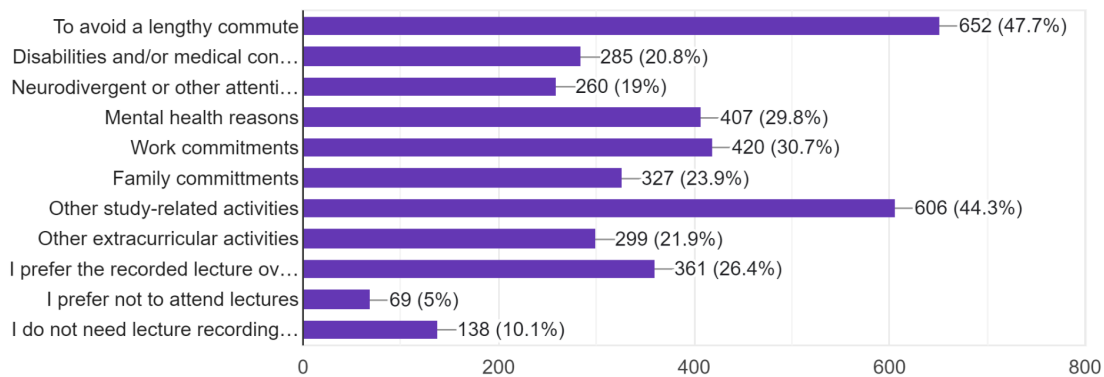
Study-related purposes emerged as a top priority among respondents, reinforcing the notion that lecture recordings are instrumental in fostering academic achievement. Activities such as revisiting missed lectures, clarifying concepts, and preparing for exams or assessments highlight the recordings' utility in accommodating diverse study habits and time-management needs. This is particularly relevant for students with neurodivergences, who may benefit from the flexibility to learn at their own pace, further advocating for a more adaptable approach to education that respects individual learning styles.

Extracurricular engagements were also recognized for their importance, underscoring the holistic nature of the college experience, which extends beyond academic instruction. Engaging in social activities and establishing interpersonal connections not only enhances students' social skills but also serves as a crucial buffer against mental health challenges. The implication is clear: the absence of such social frameworks would likely escalate the demand for counseling services, highlighting the integral role of socialization in student welfare.

Notably, the data reveals a minimal preference for lecture recordings over in-person attendance, indicating that while students value face-to-face interactions with lecturers, they view recordings as complementary rather than substitutive. This distinction is critical for addressing concerns regarding potential attendance issues, affirming that students perceive lecture recordings as supplemental resources that enhance, rather than replace, the traditional learning experience.

Where they were made available to you, for what reasons did you access a lecture recording instead of attending an in-person lecture? Please select all reasons that apply.

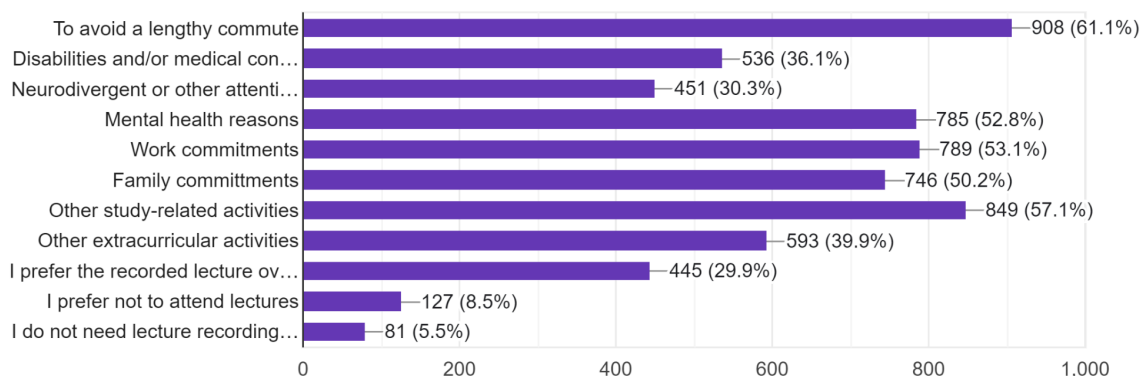
1,368 responses



The responses to the envisioned reasons for access were similar, and highlight's students' understanding of the difficulties faced by learners in following education in the current socioeconomic climate.

For what reasons can you envision accessing a lecture recording instead of attending an in-person lecture? Please select all reasons that apply.

1,486 responses



The answers to the question which concerns the use of lecture recordings for study-related purposes was interesting too. The results of this question clearly highlight that lecture recording is not understood by students to be replacing live attendance, but rather

complimenting it. It is clear that lecture recordings are crucial for academic achievement. For example, making up for a missed lecture, preparing for the exam, reinforcing experiences at the lecture and improving retention were all self-reported by students. Clarifying material and checking notes, or preparing for a lecture, were also reported.

Furthermore, managing distractions in a lecture was also important. These all tie into issues like making education accessible for those with disabilities or attention difficulties who may get distracted during a lecture out of no fault of their own, those who work and may miss a lecture and those who have fallen behind on lectures due to personal or family reasons and may need to catch up by watching lecture recordings.

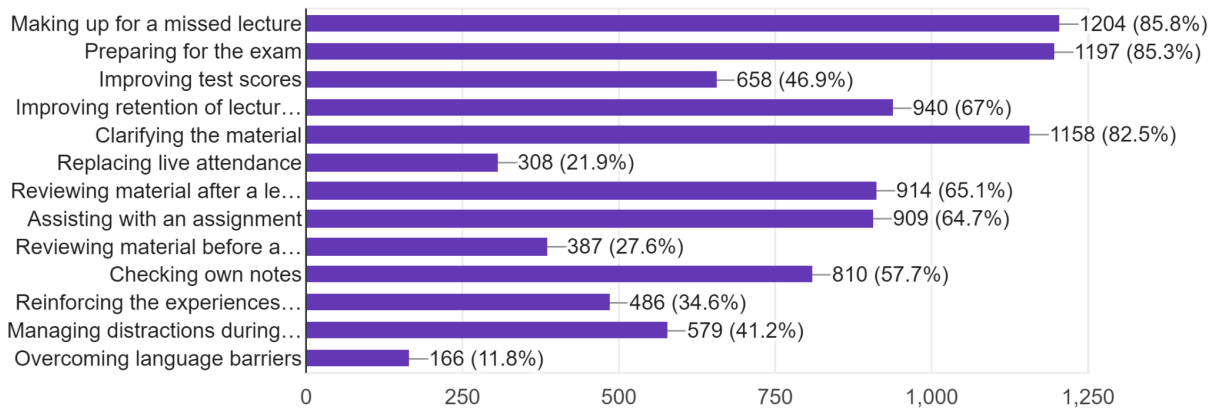
On the other hand, replacing live attendance of lectures was one of the least popular replies, reaching only 21%. The #ReturnOrRefund protests by grassroots group Students4Change in September 2021 which attracted hundreds of students clearly demonstrates the value that students place on face-to-face learning. Lecture recording is to be seen and adopted not as a competitor, but as a helping hand to teachers. Modern pedagogy speaks to the benefits of the implementation of accessible lecture recording, a call which our College must heed.

- **Making up for a missed lecture (1204 respondents):** Students find lecture recordings useful for catching up on lectures they were unable to attend, highlighting the importance of recordings in providing continuous access to educational content despite physical absences.
- **Preparing for the exam (1198 respondents):** Students use recordings as a revision tool for exam preparation, indicating the role of recordings in reinforcing learning and enhancing exam readiness.
- **Improving test scores (658 respondents):** Students believe that accessing lecture recordings helps in achieving better test scores, suggesting a correlation between the availability of recordings and academic performance.
- **Improving retention of lecture materials (941 respondents):** Students use recordings to reinforce their understanding and retention of the lecture content, underscoring the role of recordings in enhancing long-term knowledge retention.
- **Clarifying the material (1159 respondents):** Students revisit recordings to clarify parts of the lecture they found confusing, highlighting the value of recordings in providing a second chance to grasp complex concepts.
- **Replacing live attendance (308 respondents):** Students use recordings as an alternative to attending lectures live, reflecting the changing dynamics of lecture attendance and the growing reliance on digital learning platforms.
- **Reviewing material after a lecture (915 respondents):** Students review the lecture recordings post-lecture to consolidate their learning, emphasizing the recordings' role in reinforcing and supplementing classroom instruction.
- **Assisting with an assignment (910 respondents):** Students refer to recordings to aid in completing assignments, indicating the utility of recordings in providing accessible references that enhance academic work.

- **Reviewing material before an exam (387 respondents):** Students review lecture recordings specifically before exams as a part of their study routine, highlighting the strategic use of recordings in exam preparation.
- **Checking own notes (811 respondents):** Students use recordings to verify and supplement their lecture notes, illustrating the role of recordings in supporting effective note-taking and information retention.
- **Reinforcing the experiences from a live lecture (487 respondents):** Students view recordings as a way to reinforce their in-class learning experience, suggesting the complementary nature of recordings to live lectures.
- **Managing distractions during lectures (580 respondents):** Students find recordings helpful in managing distractions that occur during live lectures, pointing to the advantage of recordings in providing a distraction-free learning environment.
- **Overcoming language barriers (166 respondents):** Students utilize recordings to overcome language and comprehension barriers, showcasing the inclusivity of recordings in catering to a diverse student body with varying language proficiencies.

If you use lecture recordings, why? Please select all reasons that apply.

1,404 responses

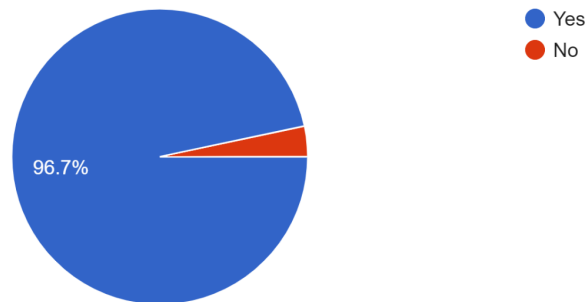


A staggering 96.7% of students think that there should be more lecture recordings at Trinity, while a tiny minority of 3.3% disagree.



Do you think there should be more lecture recordings provided in Trinity?

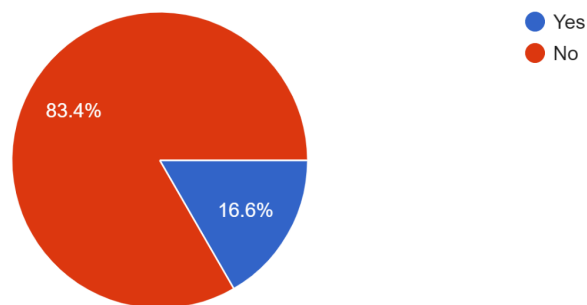
1,556 responses



As for self-reported effect on lecture attendance, 83.4% believed that their attendance would not be negatively affected if there was universal lecture recording at College, while 16.6% believe that it would be.

Would your in-person attendance be negatively affected if there was general lecture recording across College?

1,556 responses



## What Are Students Saying?

The open-ended questions in the survey were opportunities for students to submit additional commentary on the issue. With a total of 1342, they both received great engagement, not just in terms of quantity but also the quality and depth of contributions. The level of engagement shows that this is an issue that the student body cares about, and as such special attention must be paid to it by staff.

*“On a personal level, my commute to college is over an hour and a half most days and I am unfortunately at the mercy of public transport to come to college. Because of where I live, the public transport is often cancelled last minute. Which leaves me with no way to travel for another hour, causing me to miss lectures semi regularly.”*

*"I have a very poor memory and rewatching lectures a week or so after attending helps greatly with retention, especially when the lecture slides have no information on them and the lecturer is saying all the important stuff aloud."*

*"I would like lecture recordings for as many lectures as possible to help my performance. I have gone to lectures incredibly sick before in order to not miss material, because the lecturer refuses to record lectures. This genuinely impacted my health and others (but if I hadn't, likely would have hurt my grade). Additionally, some classes are at horrific hours or times in my personal schedule that make attending a pain. I would also like lecture recordings because it allows me to review what the lecturer said, word for word, in the event of confusion when studying, as some lecturers' slides are insufficient."*

*"Neurodivergent students and students with disabilities as well as foreign language students are just a few of the groups of students who could benefit from widespread recorded lectures. Having one 50-minute lecture where you are expected to remember all information shared and take notes while reading slides and listening can be very difficult and in some cases impossible. Due to my disability, I have permission to record lectures and I frequently listen back to them to catch sections where I couldn't keep up or couldn't keep my focus and needed to take a break. This, however, is unhelpful when I am sick or cannot get to class due to my disability and there is no recorded lecture available. I can see how some students might abuse lecture recordings, using them as an excuse not to go to class for social reasons or simply because they do not want to, but for students with disabilities just like myself, it would take a tremendous amount of pressure off of forcing oneself to attend the lecture, in an effort to not miss anything and having it end up making you feel worse for going, and you couldn't pay attention anyway. I cannot speak for all lecturers, but I am sure that pressing "start record" and "end record" at the beginning and end of class wouldn't cause them too much stress and it would help a multitude of students with their studies and their stress levels."*

*"Often when I'm attending a lecture it's my 3rd,4th,5th etc of that day having had maybe an hours break for lunch. There is only so much your ears can tune in to and process. Why should I not be given the opportunity to "reattend" that lecture at a later time when I am more refreshed, or to simply watch the recording as I revise the material prior to exams. For many lectures I feel it is your one chance to access the information as slides often lack crucial info/details, and if you miss eg the first 10 min bc your last lecture/lab ran overtime or you were genuinely sick that day why should you be disadvantaged? Recording lectures is simple and of little inconvenience to professors. We have the technology. We did it during the pandemic. There really is no excuse for not doing it now. "*

*"Module recordings give a peace of mind that should I need to go back to clarify a piece of a lecture that I didn't understand/didn't hear/couldn't write down fast enough can be accessed. Many times the slides are not enough to do this, or don't explain as well as the lecturer does. Also, where I have family commitments requiring me to travel, especially for lectures that are late in the day (around 5-6 o'clock), these alleviate some of the stress and guilt I feel in missing out, having to chase down notes, having to review the material multiple times."*

*“As a mature student not from Dublin the accommodation cost and availability of having to live in Dublin is a huge negative of college. I find live lectures harder to focus on and would rather organise my own time”*

*“being able to rewatch lectures to review and improve notes would be greatly beneficial, along side if i had any illness i could stay home to avoid infecting others. when preparing for essays or exams being able to rewatch sections of the lecture to understand it better would be very good. my commute isn't too long but can be quite unreliable even when leaving early, in cases of cancelled trains or long delays being able to access the lectures to keep on top of anything the lecturer might mention at the start of class is highly valuable. if a lecture is very confusing, meaning able to not make notes and actually thoroughly listen to the lecturer explaining the content is very useful.”*

*“Because I have social anxiety and it is a struggle to go to lectures and also understanding the lecture with English as a second language. The times I had lectures recorded and I had subtitles I could understand lectures right away. Instead I feel the teachers go too fast, making me lose interest in the subject. Sometimes their accent is very hard to understand and also their tone of voice is very low. It is much easier to take notes at my own pace, and pausing and rewinding when I don't understand.”*

*“Sometimes it is very hard to manage both work and coming to lectures especially since sometimes lectures are at acc wild times, ex 1 hour at 9am and then 1 hour at 5pm which not only makes it purely inconvenient to come to both or any of those lectures but also that would make it almost impossible to work during the day.”*

*“I have an unregistered hearing disability (impaired hearing in one ear) and often miss what is said in person. As well, if I miss a class, it is because of genuine inability to attend without compromising my overall health, so I have the option of missing and reviewing a recording or just missing and not being privy to the lecture contents - the availability of the recording doesn't really influence my decision to go or not go to class.”*

*“My commute is 2.5 hours one way, some days I only have 2 lectures. If there was recorded lectures I could stay at home, save money on my commute and go in for when I'm in longer like 9am-6pm. “*

*“I would like all lectures to be recorded for all courses. This would allow me to be more flexible with different commitments I have, such as work (which i do to cover the obscene rent & living costs), sporting commitments and to improve my sleep patterns, by not having to wake up ridiculously early for a long commute to a 9am.”*

*“having ADHD and anxiety means I find it hard to retain information from lectures and it's so frustrating trying to keep up with my peers academically when I have no way to re-hear what is said in class”*

*“I have multiple health issues and physical disabilities that affect my daily function. Having the option to rest at home but still receive lecture material, would mean I would not push my body to the extremes in order to attend and ensure I get delivered my education. Without lecture recordings, if I really can't make it to class, I have to compensate so heavily with*

*at-home work to make up for the missed lecture, which further impacts my health or pain flare. The option and flexibility lecture recordings give would allow me to rest and recover more, not at the expense of academic experience. Commuting on public transport to and from college is not only a very physically taxing one, but also quite an unsafe one for a visibly disabled young person. Some days I am not able to handle the abuse I often face for using mobility aids, which makes me want to avoid college. Having the option to stay home and still learn would help with the anxiety and stress faced by these issues.”*

*“So thankful for professors who have asked and made arrangements to have their lectures recorded / upload old ones.”*

*“As an autistic person with ADHD I am unfortunately limited in how many in-person lectures I can attend and the value that I obtain from these lectures. Due to my autism, I find myself in a constant balancing act to ensure I do not fall into a state of ‘autistic burnout’. Such burnouts are caused by an excess of sensory stimulation which can arise from being overwhelmed with social, work, familial, or educational obligations. If I fail maintain this balancing act for whatever reason, I will often have to cut out actions such as making trips on busy public transport in favour of spending time recovering in a controlled environment. Unexpected occurrences can throw off this balancing act, for example a relative arriving to stay in my home for a weekend could theoretically strip me of my weekend recovery time. If I cannot ‘make up’ for lost recovery time, I will eventually reach a point of autistic burnout. I have previously spent 3 years housebound and nonverbal due to burnout. The ability to keep up with lectures from home in the event of overwhelm would be extremely valuable. It would not affect my desire to be on the Trinity campus day to day, as I feel endlessly grateful and proud to be a Trinity student. My ADHD also causes me to lose focus constantly, I would appreciate the ability to patch up holes that are inevitably left in my notes so that I can better grasp the material.”*

The commentary provided by students clearly supports the earlier hypothesis about the need for lecture recording for equity reasons, including mental health, disabilities, cost-of-living and work and for academic reasons, including revising, catching up on missed lectures and clarifying concepts. The stories speak for themselves and give new insights, such as how not everyone can afford to go to the doctor for a medical note if they do not have medical insurance in Ireland, like international students. As such, the reader of this paper is invited to reflect about the implementation of general lecture recording across the board and the implications it could have for a more equitable education system.

The graph below reflects the number of mentions for various issues in the open-ended survey responses, specifically with "lecture" excluded from the study-related activities category. This adjustment was made by refining the keyword list, ensuring that mentions related to study activities did not include general references to lectures. Each response was scanned for the presence of issue-specific keywords, and each match contributed to the respective issue's count. The process involved a machine-assisted examination of the text to



## Recommendations

Considering the argumentation herein outlined, the following is recommended as practical steps to implement universal lecture recording.

- 1) Cease the outsourcing of A/V to FittingImage and replace it with in-house support from IT Services who provide prompt support, accompanied by the necessary expansion of staff and/or pay rises.
- 2) Set up a clear line of reporting infrastructure issues, with a taskforce in control of a dedicated budget that quickly fixes the problems as necessary.
- 3) Set up clear procedures for access to lecture recordings case-by-case and lecturers to raise awareness that it is possible to do so, similarly enact a unified section on the tcd.ie website for it.
- 4) Staff should be surveyed on their opinion of lecture recording and should engage in dialogue about this issue, through for example, joint student-staff town halls.
- 5) Student unions engage in partnerships with trade unions active in College (SIPTU, UNITE, IFUT) in order to support the demands of staff when it comes to lecture recording, and reach an agreement for universal lecture recording.
- 6) Schools to train their staff and send them guidelines on recording lectures. The guidelines should contain a list of College-approved software but also alternatives to use for recording of lectures. There should be a support email and one-on-one sessions by IT Services staff to train lecturers.
- 7) The College to run an awareness campaign about the need for universal lecture recording and why it is important to learners.
- 8) Staff to be given necessary resources to cope with the changes.
- 9) Student representatives discourage the selling of lecture materials through their communication channels with students, in cooperation with staff, following the good example of Academic Integrity Week.
- 10) The College to adopt the policy of universal lecture recordings following the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

## Acknowledgements

This report was written by TCDSU President László Molnárfi and a substantial part of the report was repurposing the report that he made as School of Social Sciences and Philosophy Convenor in 2022/2023 (Molnárfi, "Lecture Recording - Student Preferences at the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy of Trinity College Dublin"). A number of graphs were machine-assisted. Thank you to the 1,556 students who filled out the form.

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