

Subtitling, accessibility and teaching

This paper is intended to provide an overview of the importance of subtitling and provide clear instructions on how to subtitle media in teaching, the best way to achieve this and the support that is available. These University guidance notes are intended to complement any more detailed guidance available locally.

Accessible learning is a key component of our ability to support students with a declared disability and to assist others for whom subtitling or text alternatives to video or audio may be helpful (e.g. those for whom English is not their first language or who may be listening to online content with poor or interrupted sound quality, e.g. on public transport).

The difference between subtitles and captions

The terms subtitles and captions tend to be used interchangeably but there is a difference. Subtitles refer to text that is added to a video (often used to display text in a language that is different from the presentation audio). Captions are for those who are deaf or who have hearing impairments. Captions contain additional information about background sounds, and who is speaking as well as the audio text.

Live Sessions

If the Student Disability Service (SDS) have identified a subtitling requirement for a student, SDS will arrange and organise support for that student for live sessions.

Recorded sessions

Recorded sessions remain the responsibility of the School.

We realise staff are under extreme pressure at this time and it is the aim of this document to help colleagues ensure that their teaching materials are as accessible as possible.

Where we know there is a student who has a formal learning adjustment for subtitles then manually edited subtitles should be considered for video content. The Student Disability Service will organise subtitles for live sessions for these students, but it is the School's responsibility to subtitle recorded video content needed by students with this adjustment.

Ideally, auto-captions/subtitles should be reviewed and edited to ensure accuracy after processing by a subtitling robot. In some disciplines this will be essential (e.g. some programmes in MVM). Beyond that, although not 100% accurate, auto-captions are often better than no captions.

When and how to subtitle teaching materials

Support, guidance and information is available (see below) but this is a complex and evolving area, further complicated by the challenge of moving and adapting to hybrid teaching with the associated significant increase in the production of video and other online teaching materials. We hope this guidance will help colleagues to make informed decisions on the role that subtitling should play in their teaching, the technology and other support that is available to support subtitling, and other ways to make teaching more accessible.

Subtitling for:

1. Pre-recorded media content (e.g. short blocks of video material, recorded lectures/teaching material only ever watched online asynchronously)

Pre-recorded media can be uploaded to Media Hopper Create and automated subtitles can be requested for any media uploaded. These subtitling robots are usually around 80% accurate. This is a good step towards compliance.

- [How to create and upload media to Media Hopper Create](#)
- [How to request automated subtitles for media in Media Hopper Create](#)

To enhance accessibility, if you are concerned about the accuracy of automatic subtitles, you can either

- Provide the content (or key elements of it) in an [alternative format](#) (e.g. transcript, summary report, PowerPoint slides with notes in an HTML format or Word not PDF)

And/Or

- Correct the subtitles:
 - This can be done by you or colleagues locally. It is estimated that one minute of media takes between 12 and 15 minutes to correct.
 - [How to correct automated subtitles on Media Hopper Create](#)

2. Live and recorded lectures (for students to watch live or view later as a recording)

It is not currently possible to provide live captions for lectures through Media Hopper Replay (our lecture recording and streaming service). Services for live captions are prohibitively expensive and less accurate than the automatic captioning available for recordings.

Instead it is possible to move recorded content from Media Hopper Replay into Media Hopper Create to make use of the automated subtitling facilities in that system.

- [Migrating content from Media Hopper Replay to Create](#)
- See details given above (section 1) on how to request and correct subtitles on Media Hopper Create

NB MS Teams is not recommended for lectures. It has poor integration with Learn and, like Collaborate, there is a limit on numbers (250 for a normal Teams call).

3. Live small group teaching (e.g. tutorials, seminars)

Unless you are recording this and making it available for students to watch later (e.g. via LEARN) live small group teaching does not need to be subtitled under the 2018 regulations (although this is something to work towards to fully meet our requirements under the Equality Act 2010).

The recommended service to support live small group teaching is Collaborate. Collaborate is integrated with the Learn VLE. There is currently no live or recorded subtitling feature in Collaborate (planned for 2021). Recordings can be downloaded from Collaborate and uploaded the Media Hopper Create where subtitles are required.

- [Uploading Collaborate recordings to Media Hopper Create](#)
- See details given above (section 1) on how to request and correct subtitles on Media Hopper Create.

Some versions of [PowerPoint allow automated live subtitles](#) which could be a workaround if live subtitles are required.

In MS Teams you can use the live subtitling functionality to subtitle in real time. As previously noted this will not be fully accurate and the accuracy will depend on the nature of the content.

If you do want to record this sort of teaching and make the recording available to students you first need to get permission from the students. “The person who initiates and stops the recording must make all participants aware that recording is about to commence, and that recording is stopped. Participants should be made aware whether other virtual class elements such as text chat or the participant list will be recorded.”¹ You can then follow the instructions provided above to add subtitles.

¹ Extract from addendum to Lecture Recording Policy in preparation

If you have a student in your class with an adjustment for subtitles the Student Disability Service will arrange for the student to be supported during live video content. Once the content is recorded it becomes the responsibility of the school and the automated subtitles should be edited.

How best to support a student with a declared disability?

Please review the guidance provided by the Student Disability on [supporting students with specific conditions](#) and seek advice from your local School Teaching Organisation.

What steps should I take if a student is struggling to access or follow my teaching?

Discuss this with the student (and potentially their Personal Tutor) to find out what is causing the difficulty and encourage them to seek support (directly or via their Personal Tutor) – e.g. a language issue (potential support from ELE), study skills (IAD), disability/learning adjustment (SDS) or something else (Personal Tutor).

Additional steps and automated platforms (subtitling robots)

We are considering the purchase of additional and more accurate automated robots to provide subtitling (as well as automatic transcripts). Including robots that can act automatically on Lecture Recordings within the Echo 360 system. We will keep everyone informed about progress in this area.

What additional advice and general guidance is available to make my teaching more accessible?

[Accessibility and lecture recording \(Information Services\)](#)

[Requesting subtitles for your content \(Information Services\)](#)

[Creating accessible materials \(Information Services\)](#)

[Subtitling guidance for staff \(Student Disability Service\)](#)

[Learning Technology & Accessibility \(Information Services\)](#)

[Mainstreaming learning adjustments \(Institute for Academic Development\)](#)

[Accessible & inclusive learning \(Institute for Academic Development\)](#)

[Dos and don'ts on designing for accessibility \(UK Government Guidance\)](#)

Authors

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