

Ulster University

Guidelines on Captioning 2020/21

Introduction

This guidance aims to

- ensure that our learning, teaching and assessment practices are inclusive, accessible, relevant and engaging for all our staff and students.
- raise awareness of the [legislative requirements](#) regarding the accessibility of online learning. The relevant legislation is The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018

The [JISC guide](#) may be helpful to better explain context:

- disseminate effective practice in developing accessible learning content
- highlight the University's approach and available support

Regulations

The relevant regulation, that these guidelines relate to, are the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. Specifically, pre-recorded time-based media published after 23 September 2020.

In line with expectations of the recording policy, this will include live sessions that are recorded and published.

The accessibility regulations build on our existing obligations to promote disability equality for people who have a disability under Disability Discrimination Act 1995 in Northern Ireland.

Background and rationale

Consistent with our university values of Integrity, Inclusion, Collaboration and Enhancing Potential, at Ulster we want to ensure that our learning, teaching and assessment practices are inclusive, accessible, relevant and engaging for all our staff and students.

Since the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has shifted the majority of teaching to remote learning via online delivery, the University remains committed to offering a high-quality learning experience for all students. The numbers of pre-recorded videos now used at Ulster within Blackboard Learn has grown significantly since March 2020 thanks to the extraordinary effort of academic staff to provide enhanced experiences for students during the Pandemic. We now need to adapt our practice according to the standards and guidelines set out here not just to meet legal requirements, but to enhance the experience for all of our students.

Accessibility is about universality and inclusivity. The University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy seeks to go further than compliance - placing diversity and inclusion at the heart of our culture.

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These standards will ensure that we are providing the best experience for all your students, and training and support is available to help you with creating accessible digital content for all. Whilst the inclusivity agenda is owned by many parts of the University, specific support with technology solutions is available from the Office for Digital Learning <https://ulster.sharepoint.com/sites/ODL>

This guidance applies to all new teaching materials prepared during the Pandemic teaching response.

Pre-recorded videos for online teaching and learning

A text alternative must be provided in the form of closed captions. The alternative text may be autogenerated, but it should ideally be checked for accuracy.

Lecturers should, where possible, provide an accessible alternative way of presenting the information in a video. The requirements and arrangements differ depending on educational context and digital platform:

Accessibility Legislation

Legislation requires

- Content and supporting documentation to be accessible
- Recordings to be captioned

Students need

- To be able to access course materials
- If required, to access materials using assistive technology

Accessible video content

- All pre-recorded media must either provide a transcript or captioning or both
- Transcripts or captioning must include written text of what is being said and of anything that is happening (e.g. music playing)
- If a document is used in the video, then an accessible version must also be provided
- Consider the cognitive load for viewers

Video content – useful tools and tips

- Live captioning is available in Panopto, MS Teams, and PowerPoint
- Give careful consideration to the recording of student contributions (see Policy for recording synchronous online lectures 2020/21)
- If feasible, focus on amending significant errors when editing captions

Enhancing the accuracy of captions

- Consider the positioning of the microphone
- Consider background noise
- Use the best quality microphone you have access to
- Speak in a slower pace and try to keep your voice pitch lower
- Speak the letters out for subject specific acronyms
- Manage student contributions to avoid speaking over one another
- Ensure the best possible Internet connection if recording in Collaborate Ultra, Panopto or other cloud-based platforms

Technology

There are two types of captions:

- **Closed** captions: this method is done after the video is recorded and the viewer can decide whether these display on screen or not. This is more time consuming but results in accurate captions, which can include descriptive elements as well.
- **Open** captions: this method is sometimes referred to as ‘live captioning’ and the viewer is unable to watch the recording without them (in the live session the viewers, depending on the platform, may be able to zoom in on the content to push the captions off their screen). Whilst less time consuming, they can’t be edited afterwards and an additional transcript file won’t be available for download.
- Recommended approach - [adding closed auto-captions in Panopto](#)

Once added captions can be edited either within Panopto or the srt file can be downloaded, edited in a text editor and then uploaded back into Panopto (to ensure the edited ones are displayed it is advised that the original srt is deleted first and then the correct version uploaded). Some people may find the latter method faster to both skim through to identify inaccuracies and for editing.

Some staff have experienced poor accuracy, with auto-captioning, resulting in a lot of manual work editing the captions. A balance needs to be found where the captioning is acceptable, and many staff have found that balance by scanning the auto-generated captioning for significant inaccuracy before editing and publishing. You may also wish to include a disclaimer when doing this:

“Please note that this video has been produced with automatic closed captions for accessibility purposes. As with any automated speech recognition system there may be some errors in the speech to text conversion process. In most cases these will be minor and won’t affect the overall learning for those who use closed captions, but if any clarity is required or if any errors in closed captions need correcting please do contact your tutor to make them aware”.

- Live or open auto-captioning in PowerPoint. Another option which can improve accuracy, and reduce manual editing is to use [live auto-generated captioning in PowerPoint](#).

The same [auto-generated tool is accessible in Microsoft Teams](#) meetings, however as of November 2020 these recordings are difficult to download.

Experimental technology

Use of YouTube

This section of the guidelines looks at approaches that others have used but which cannot be recommended as institutional approaches due to a number of technical limitations.

Some colleagues, in creative disciplines, have uploaded their recorded videos to [YouTube](#) to take advantage of alternative speech recognition technology. They are doing this in a private channel so that the videos are not publicly accessible.

They then download the caption file and import to Panopto. This approach, whilst improving accuracy for some staff is not recommended as an institutional approach. The workflow is not intuitive and whilst the videos are in a private channel there are a number of digital rights issues with this approach which cannot be controlled once the recording leaves Ulster's infrastructure.

Google Chrome captions

Google Chrome has experimental live captions built in, so individual users can enable live captions on their local version of Chrome. Some staff have been enabling this in Chrome, when sharing a screen, thus displaying live captions when using Collaborate. This is an interesting approach for a live session however if a recording is to be made the resulting video, like the PowerPoint example above, has captions locked in rather than as a separate file which means the captions cannot be edited/corrected. Transcripts can also not be downloaded.

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Further Guidance and Support

[Accessibility regulations](#) by Jisc - what you need to know,

[Developing Accessible Content](#)

[Developing Accessible Content and Practices](#), CPD Event 10 February 2021, led by ODL

[Ulster's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy](#) (2019-2022)

[W3C Web Accessibility Initiative \(WAI\) Making Audio and Video Media Accessible support pages](#)

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