

A Report on the Accessibility of Learning at Lancaster University

Produced by the Improve Your Learning Group

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Introduction

The Improve Your Learning survey garnered a total of 573 responses across all departments and year groups at Lancaster University. With 31.96% of responses from Year One undergraduates, 28.0% from Year Two undergraduates and 23.04% from Year Three undergraduates, there are slightly more results from the former, but it can be said that results are quite evenly spread between the undergraduate year groups. Along with this, there were 12.50% of responses from Postgraduate (with no distinction for taught or research degrees) and a handful of results from Year Four undergraduates, Year in Industry students and others.

Table 1: **Figure 1 Values:** A table showing the proportion and number of respondents to the survey, split by faculty and department. There are 31 rows and 3 columns. The first column lists all departments that are represented in the surveys, with FASS departments first, then FHM, then FST, then LUMS. The second column shows the percentages of the respondents from that department. The final column shows the number of respondents from that department.

Department/Faculty	Percentage of responses	Number of responses
FASS	44.42%	239
Educational Research	0.19%	1
English Literature and Creative Writing	3.72%	20
History	10.22%	55
Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts	2.04%	11
Languages and Cultures	2.23%	12
Law School (Criminology, Law)	7.25%	39
Linguistics and English Language	9.11%	49
Politics, Philosophy and Religion	7.62%	41

Department/Faculty	Percentage of responses	Number of responses
Sociology	2.04%	11
FHM	5.76%	31
Biomedical and Life Sciences	3.90%	21
Health Research	0.37%	2
Lancaster Medical School	1.49%	8
FST	38.29%	206
Chemistry	1.30%	7
Computing and Communications	3.53%	19
Engineering	2.23%	12
Lancaster Environment Centre	7.43%	40
Mathematics and Statistics	7.81%	42
Natural Sciences	2.60%	14
Physics	4.65%	25
Psychology	8.74%	47
LUMS	11.52%	62
Accounting and Finance	1.49%	8
Economics	1.86%	10
Entrepreneurship and Strategy	0.37%	2
Management Science	3.72%	20
Marketing	2.79%	15
Organisation, Work and Technology	1.30%	7

There were 553 responses regarding department, with the breakdown showing that responses primarily came from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) and the Faculty of Science and Technology (FST), with 46.65% and 35.26% of results respectively. The remaining faculties, those of Health and Medicine (FHM) and the Management School (LUMS) gathered 5.24% and 12.84% of responses. The data is spread across many of Lancaster’s departments, though there were notably 55 responses from the History department (FASS), 49 from Linguistics and English Language (FASS), 47 from Psychology (FST) and 42 from Lancaster Environment Centre (FST). The least responses came from departments such as Educational Research and Health Research, which are smaller departments on the whole, making the data appear representative of the university.

An important demographic to look at in this introduction is that of respondents with a disability, as disabled students are primarily affected by issues of accessibility (defined for our purposes as the ability to access learning and teaching to the same extent as abled students) detailed throughout this report. A disability was defined in the question as a “physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on your ability to do normal day to day activities”, with examples given of chronic illness, mental illness or Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD). The split between those who had a disability to those who didn’t was 48.21% (269 responses) to 51.79% (289 responses). This is further investigated through the follow-up question asking if students have an Inclusive Learning Support Plan (ILSP). With 38.96% of respondents saying yes in comparison to 61.04% saying no, this shows a small minority of students who identify as disabled not having an ILSP with the university.

For the sake of analysis, these questions have been grouped by the following themes: Inclusive Learning Support Plans, reporting accessibility issues, aspects of academic delivery, ratings of accessibility requirements and recommendations.

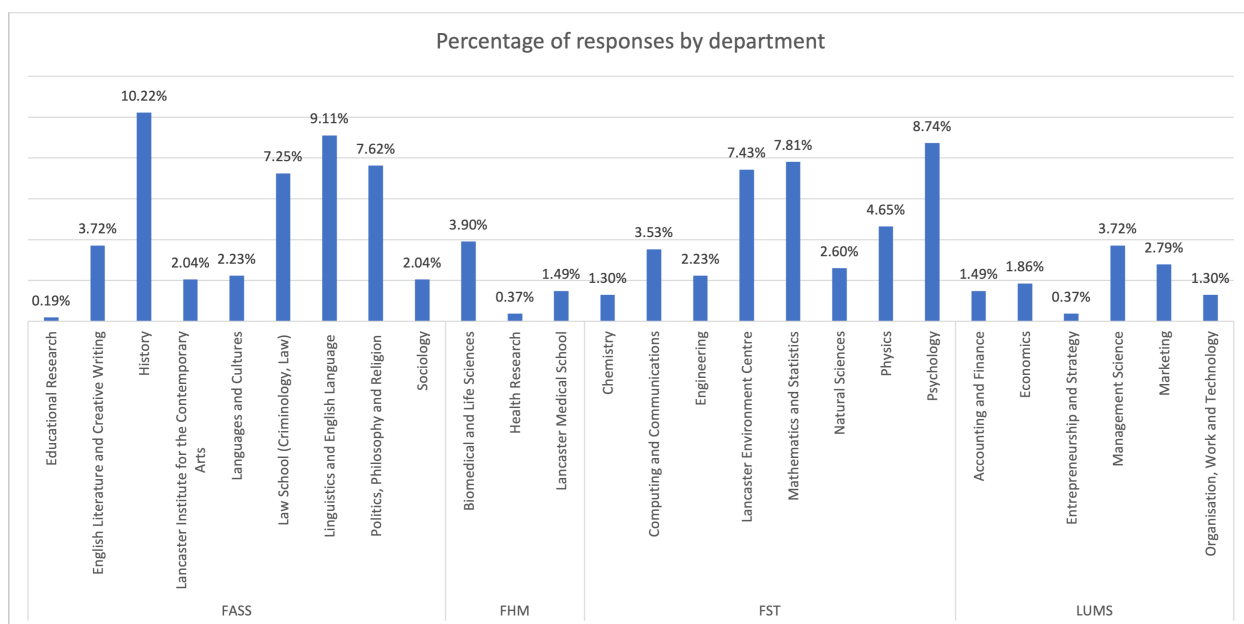


Figure 1: Figure 1: Number of respondents to the survey from each department of Lancaster University

Inclusive Learning and Support Plans

Students who have registered with the University's Disability Service have the option to produce an Inclusive Learning and Support Plan (ILSP) with the assistance of disability advisors. ILSPs contain recommendations and proposed reasonable adjustments in accordance with the student's needs and are informed by medical evidence (Lancaster University, n.d.). Students were asked the following questions: 'Do your lecturers or tutors follow your ILSP?' 'How did you find the process of getting your ILSP?' 'Do your lecturers follow your ILSP?' 'How satisfied are you with the ILSP system?' 'How supported do you feel by your department in terms of your ILSP?'. Students were only asked these questions if they had first answered 'Yes' to the question 'Do you have an ILSP?'

How many students have ILSPs?

Data from our survey indicates that a significant number of students who are eligible for ILSPs do not have them in place. While 48.21% of respondents said that they considered themselves to have a disability, a chronic illness, a mental health condition, or a SpLD (Specific Learning Disability), only 38.96% of respondents reported that they had an ILSP in place. Further research would be required to determine if this is because students are not aware that they are eligible or if they have decided not to have one in place.

How do students find the process of getting an ILSP?

We asked students to indicate how easy or difficult it was for them to get an ILSP. 57 students reported that they found the process "extremely easy" and 49 reported finding it "somewhat easy". 28 students had neutral views, saying that it was "neither easy nor difficult". Although the majority of students reported finding the process easy, a significant number indicated that the process was difficult. 27 students reported finding it "somewhat difficult" and 6 reported finding it "extremely difficult". This suggests that a review of the application process may be necessary.

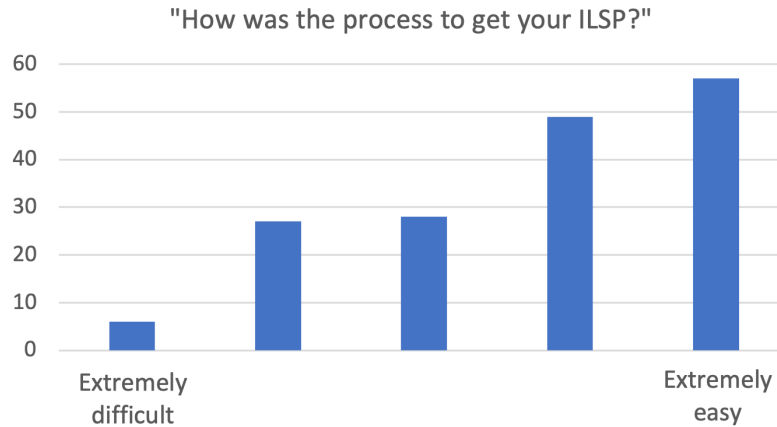


Figure 2: Figure 2.1: Recorded responses on the process of getting an ILSP”

Table 2: **Figure 2.1 Values:** A table showing the responses on the process of getting an ILSP. There are 2 rows and 7 columns. The first row rates the responses from extremely difficult to extremely easy, then gives a total of the number of responses. The second row is the number of responses for each category.

	Extremely difficult				Extremely easy	Total
Number of responses	6	27	28	49	57	167

Do lecturers follow ILSPs?

We asked students how often their lecturers or tutors follow the recommendations made in their ILSPs. Figure 2.2 demonstrates that there is considerable inconsistency in the application of these recommendations.

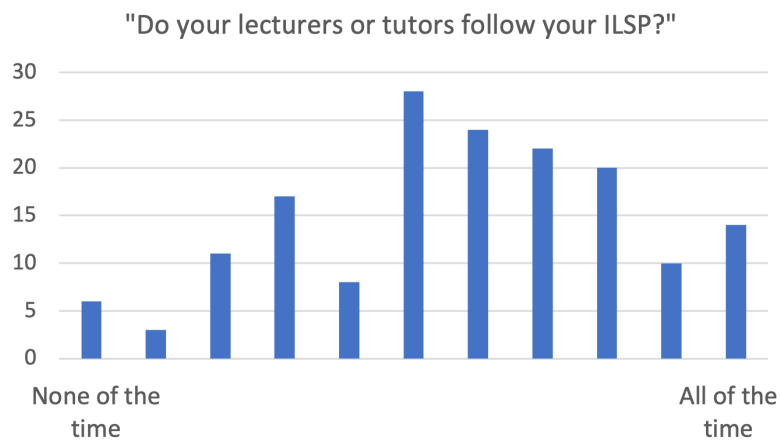


Figure 3: Figure 2.2: Recorded responses on ILSP use by lecturers and tutors

Table 3: **Figure 2.2 Values:** A table showing the answers to the question ‘Do your lecturers and tutors follow your ILSP?’. There are 2 rows and 13 columns. The first row rates the responses from ‘none of the time’ to ‘all of the time’, and then the total. The second row is the number of responses for each category.

	None of the time										All of the time	Total
Number of responses	6	3	11	17	8	28	24	22	20	10	14	163

The majority of students gave a score of 5, suggesting that their tutors only follow their ILSPs half of the time. The overall trend suggests that ILSPs are only followed more than half of the time, but a worryingly high number of students report that their ILSPs are followed less than half the time. Indeed, 6 students said that their tutors never follow their ILSP, which is a cause for concern. Analysis of the student comments regarding the implementation of ILSPs shows that some students have had positive experiences. The student below reported that their department took proactive action regarding their ILSP:

one of my lecturers emailed me before the course began letting me know that they had read my ILSP and were happy to hear ways in which they could make things accessible for me if I needed it.

However, this does not appear to be the experience of the majority of students. A reoccurring theme throughout the responses was that the onus is on the student to ask for their ILSP to be followed rather than on the department to ensure that it is meeting the needs of all its students. This can negatively impact students’ learning and can be a source of significant anxiety as the following response illustrates:

It doesn’t seem like even my tutor has looked at my plan. I have to ask for adjustments in front of the rest of my class and other times I fall behind because readings are only released a few days in advance - I can’t read that quickly.

Several other students expressed concerns that their tutors were unaware they had an ILSP, as the response below illustrates:

I don’t know if my lecturers are aware of my ILSP as they haven’t mentioned the extensions and 25% extra time that I’m supposedly get [sic], so I’m unsure if they are following my ILSP

In some cases, after being reminded of a student’s ILSP, departments have been accommodating and supportive in making reasonable adjustments. The account below is an example:

Often lecturers do not know I have an ilsp until I tell them. However lots of people have been understanding and given me extensions or additional materials once i ask. I just wish they actually read the ilsp in advance of classes.

As the respondent above notes, it would benefit students if tutors across the university read student ILSPs and implemented their recommendations. This is a sentiment echoed by the following response:

Most lecturers are unaware that I have an ILSP and only make adjustments when I tell them I have one. Once they’ve read my ILSP they are very supportive but it would be very helpful if lecturers could be notified when they are teaching a class with one or more students that have an ILSP.

The lack of awareness around which students have ILSPs can negatively affect their academic experience. This could be avoided if departments were held more accountable for reading and acting upon ILSPs.

It is concerning that students have to ask for materials to be made accessible when the reason they have an ILSP is to avoid unnecessary anxiety and ensure that their needs are met. Indeed, many student responses

indicate that students have to take personal responsibility for the implementation of their ILSP:

When asked they try their best to accommodate me but until I draw their attention to it, it feels like they haven't even bothered to look.

Some students with ILSPs have to spend time ensuring that their tutors have read their ILSP or asking that the reasonable adjustments within it are implemented. This means that students with disabilities have to spend additional time on top of their studies to ensure that they have equal accessibility to content. This causes unnecessary stress and undermines the purpose of having an ILSP in place. Students have had to take personal responsibility for the implementation of their ILSP:

Lecturers don't always seem to be aware of ILSPs. I have needed to be proactive in ensuring I can access practicals which can be challenging.

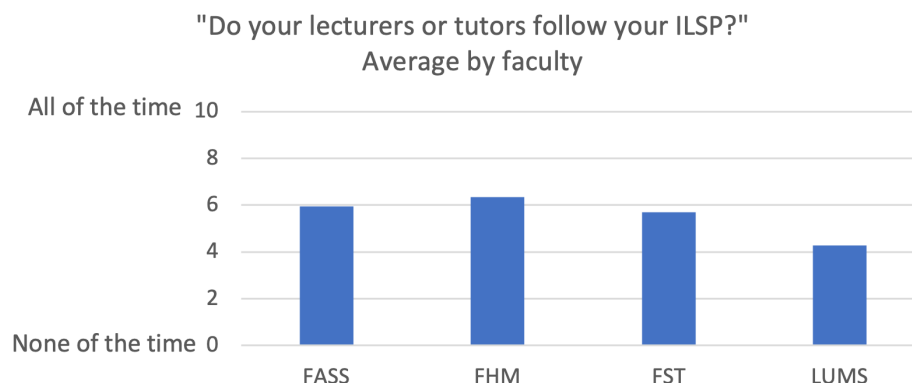


Figure 4: Figure 2.3: Comparison of responses on ILSP use by lecturers and tutors by faculty

Table 4: **Figure 2.3 Values:** A table showing the answers to the question 'Do your lecturers and tutors follow your ILSP?', this time split by faculty. There are 3 rows and 5 columns. The first row splits the responses by faculty. The second row is the average response for each category. The third row offers some interpretation as to what the average means.

	FASS	FHM	FST	LUMS
Average response	5.93	6.33	5.70	4.27
Interpretation	Neutral, leaning towards some of the time	Some of the time	Neutral, leaning towards some of the time	Not often

The fact that students have to actively ensure their needs are met impedes their learning as they cannot access their lectures or practical sessions. Additionally, some students may not feel able to ask their tutors to read and act upon their ILSP and this can have a detrimental effect on their learning. The following respondent expresses concern for students who are not able to remind tutors of their ILSP:

My lectures [sic] are happy to follow my ILSP, but only when I remind them that it exists and what they need to do. For me, that's okay and I'm happy to do that, but I worry that other students who don't have that confidence or relationship with their lectures will have a disadvantage.

It would benefit students if tutors across the university read student ILSPs so that they could better support students. Currently, the experience of students with ILSPs is dependent on how willing their department is

to accommodate their needs and whether their tutors have read their ILSP or not, which is a concern for many students:

Lecturers never follow it. If I ask they say they haven't even read the ILSPs.

The inconsistency of the application of ILSPs across seminar groups, modules, year groups and departments suggest that a standardised approach in the way ILSPs are processed and implemented is necessary. Further to this, the advisory function of ILSPs means that it is up to individual departments to decide whether to implement the reasonable adjustments specified in the ILSPs. In some cases, students are denied the reasonable adjustments outlined in their ILSPs, as the example below illustrates:

I asked for the lectures to be released earlier so that I had more time to do them before the asynchronous session on them. The lectures [sic] declined.

The response below illustrates how the department policy regarding ILSPs can affect the implementation of reasonable adjustments:

Maths don't give deadline extensions and this is really difficult when my ILSP says I should get them

Concerns about the variability between departments is underlined in the following student response:

Varies across departments, in DelC my ILSP is followed well but it isn't so much in LEC.

Standardisation across the university in the procedures surrounding reasonable adjustments and ILSPs would create a fairer student experience. When ILSPs are not read or taken seriously, the university is failing the needs of its students and causing unnecessary anxiety as the responses below illustrate:

One of the things on my ILSP is to not directly ask my [sic] to answer questions, but I find that seminar tutors still do this anyway.

I find it difficult to find groups for group work. On a small number of occasions this has not been considered and I have been stuck for finding a group.

Indeed, students commonly report that lecture slides and recordings are not made available to them early despite that being outlined in their ILSP. Some students have even reported resistance from their departments when they have asked for reasonable adjustments to be made.

Lecturers often refuse to make lecture slides available before hand and when there are class presentations they ignore that I can't do them in front of the class - it seems rare that a lecturer actually reads an ILSP and takes it into account.

This disparity in the application of ILSPs needs to be addressed and departments need to be held accountable for implementing reasonable adjustments. ILSPs are there to support students but if tutors and departments do not follow them or even read them, they are not fulfilling their purpose.

How satisfied are students with the ILSP system?

Figure 2.4 shows student satisfaction with ILSPs and Figure 2.5 compares satisfaction by faculty.

12.57% of students reported that they were "extremely satisfied" with the system and 41.32% said that they were "somewhat satisfied". This means that just over 50% of students reported some level of satisfaction with the ILSP system.

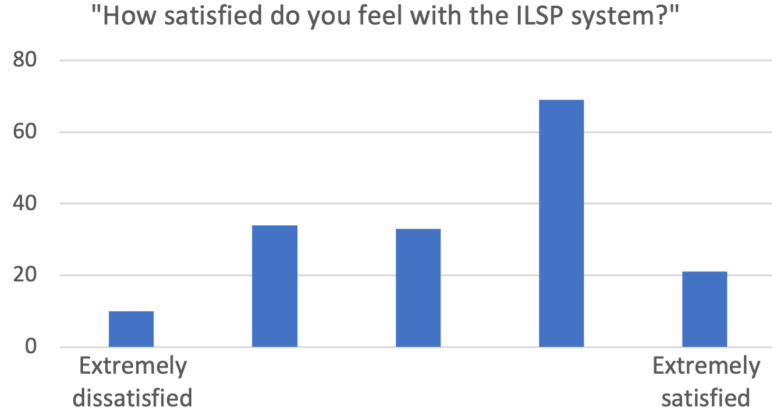


Figure 5: Figure 2.4: Recorded responses on ILSP satisfaction

Table 5: **Figure 2.4 Values:** A table showing the answers to the question 'How satisfied do you feel with the ILSP system?'. There are 2 rows and 7 columns. The first row rates the responses from 'extremely dissatisfied' to 'extremely satisfied', and then the total. The second row is the number of responses for each category.

	Extremely dissatisfied				Extremely satisfied	Total
Number of responses	10	34	33	69	21	167

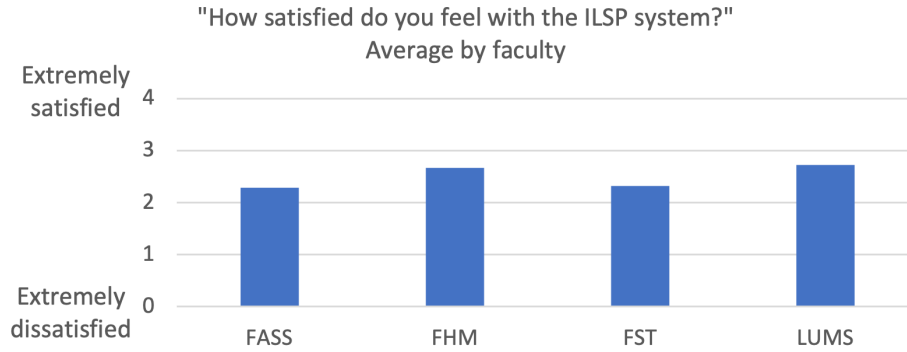


Figure 6: Figure 2.5: Comparison of responses on ILSP satisfaction by faculty

Table 6: **Figure 2.5 Values:** A table showing the answers to the question 'How satisfied do you feel with the ILSP system?', this time split by faculty. There are 3 rows and 5 columns. The first row splits the responses by faculty. The second row is the average response for each category. The third row offers some interpretation as to what the average means.

	FASS	FHM	FST	LUMS
Average response	2.28	2.67	2.32	2.73
Interpretation	Slightly satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Slightly satisfied	Fairly satisfied

However, 19.76% of students reported a neutral level of satisfaction and 20.36% of students said they felt “somewhat dissatisfied”. These findings, alongside the fact that 5.99% of students reported feeling extremely dissatisfied with the system, suggest that there is significant room for improvement.

Some students reported that the recommendations in their ILSP were not always followed, with one student saying:

Because of a learning difficulty, I find it difficult to read from screens without an accessibility software which cannot be used with some of the formats the readings are given in despite the software being advocated by the university. I also needed the powerpoints to be available before the lecture so that I could import them into my software, which was difficult as this was not met by many lecturers

A similar point is echoed in the following response, which indicates that lecturers do not always upload content enough in advance for students with external software to be able to use it:

Common issue is lecturers not uploading lecture [sic] handouts in correct time before the lecture, meaning students don’t have time to put it in external software they may need

Overall, there seems to be significant inconsistency with student satisfaction with the ILSP system indicating that it may need greater standardisation. Students reported that reasonable adjustments like lecture slides were not consistently met and the following response illustrates how the support received may be dependent on the lecturer:

For the first time in my four years of Lancaster, one lecturer emailed me saying she’d been notified about my ILSP and was very helpful. I’ve had nothing from others and when I’ve needed to use it in the past I’ve needed to go to my program director because it wasn’t shared down.

While some students reported that they have found online and recorded lectures with captions helpful, others have said that captions are inconsistent with one student reporting that:

captions on lectures are either autogenerated or non-existent. this makes them extremely hard to follow.

How do departments support students with ILSPs?

Students were asked to rate how supported they felt by their department in regard to their ILSP which we will explore on a general, faculty, and departmental level.

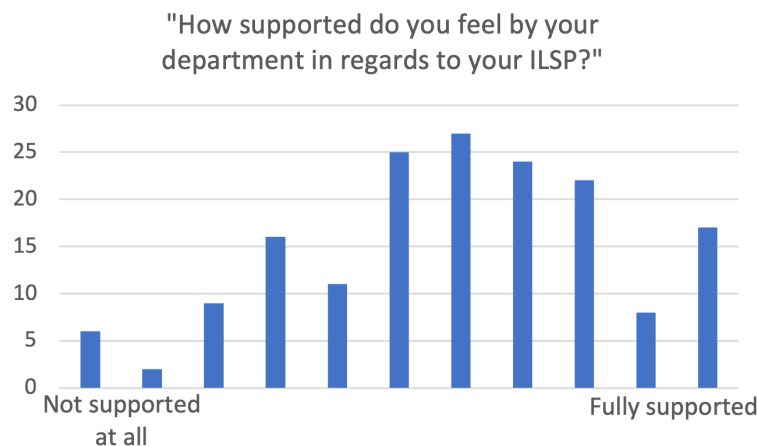


Figure 7: Figure 2.6: Recorded responses on support for ILSPs

Table 7: **Figure 2.6 Values:** A table showing the answers to the question ‘How supported do you feel by your department in regards to your ILSP?’. There are 2 rows and 13 columns. The first row rates the responses from ‘not supported at all’ to ‘fully supported’, and then the total. The second row is the number of responses for each category.

	Not sup- ported at all										Fully supported	Total
Number of responses	6	2	9	16	11	25	27	24	22	8	17	167

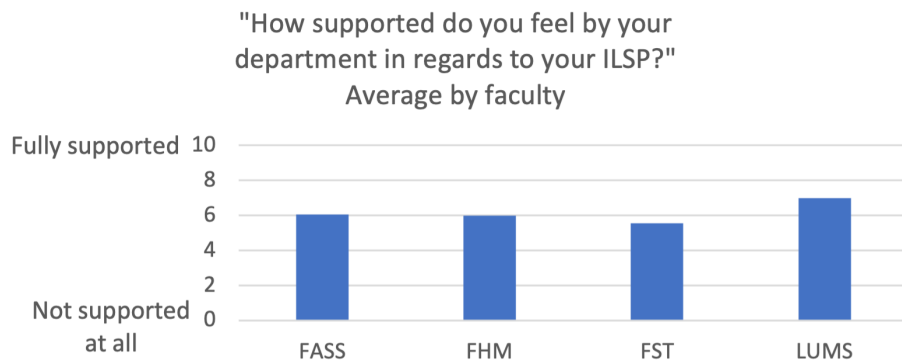


Figure 8: Figure 2.7: Comparison of responses on support for ILSPs by faculty

Table 8: **Figure 2.7 Values:** A table showing the answers to the question ‘How supported do you feel by your department in regards to your ILSP?’, this time split by faculty. There are 3 rows and 5 columns. The first row splits the responses by faculty. The second row is the average response for each category. The third row offers some interpretation as to what the average means.

	FASS	FHM	FST	LUMS
Average response	6.04	6.00	5.54	7
Interpretation	Slightly supported	Slightly supported	Neutral, leaning towards slightly supported	Supported

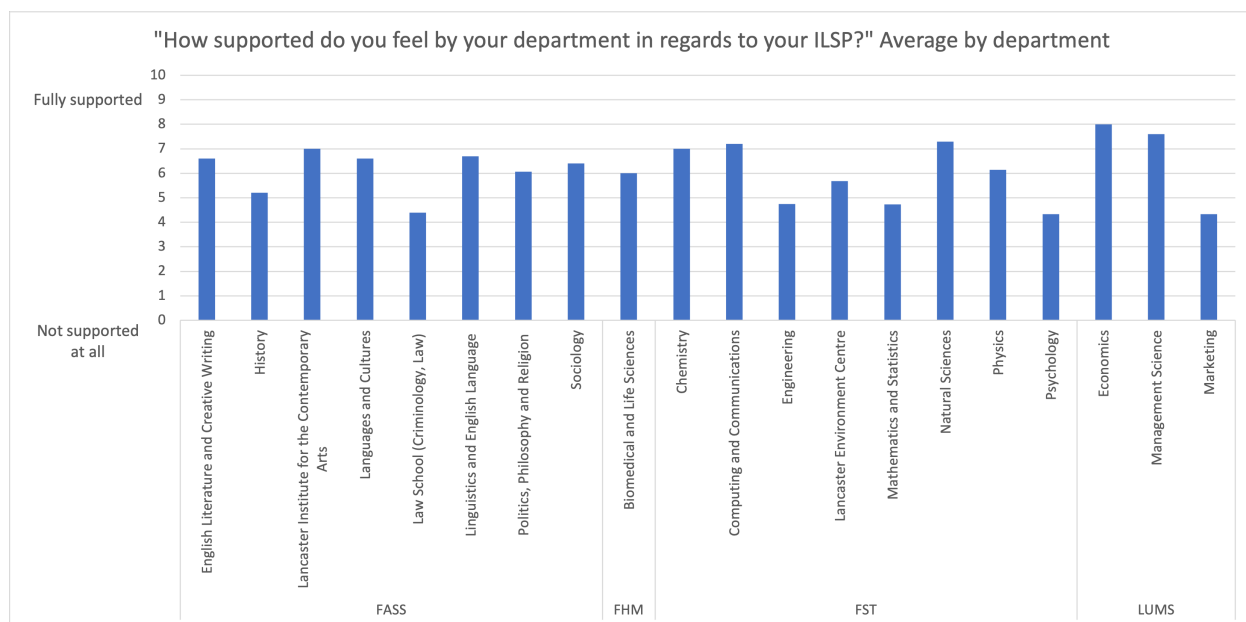


Figure 9: Figure 2.8: Comparison of responses on support for ILSPs by department

Table 9: **Figure 2.8 Values:** A table showing the answers to the question ‘How supported do you feel by your department in regards to your ILSP?’ split by department. There are 25 rows and 2 columns. The first column lists all departments that are represented in the surveys, with FASS departments first, then FHM, then FST, then LUMS. The second column shows the average rating of how supported they feel by their department in regards to their ILSP, with 10 being fully supported and 0 being not supported at all. The third column offers some interpretation as to what the average means.

Department/Faculty	Average response	Interpretation
FASS	6.04	Slightly supported
English Literature and Creative Writing	6.60	Quite supported
History	5.21	Neutral, leaning towards slightly supported
Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts	7.00	Supported
Languages and Cultures	6.60	Quite supported
Law School (Criminology, Law)	4.40	Slightly unsupported
Linguistics and English Language	6.70	Quite supported
Politics, Philosophy and Religion	6.07	Slightly supported
Sociology	6.40	Slightly supported
FHM	6.00	Slightly supported
Biomedical and Life Sciences	6.00	Slightly supported
FST	5.54	Neutral, leaning towards slightly supported
Chemistry	7.00	Supported
Computing and Communications	7.20	Supported
Engineering	4.75	Neutral, leaning towards slightly unsupported

Department/Faculty	Average response	Interpretation
Lancaster Environment Centre	5.69	Neutral, leaning towards slightly supported
Mathematics and Statistics	4.73	Neutral, leaning towards slightly unsupported
Natural Sciences	7.29	Supported
Physics	6.14	Slightly supported
Psychology	4.33	Slightly unsupported
LUMS	6.56	Quite supported
Economics	8.00	Mostly supported
Management Science	7.60	Mostly supported
Marketing	4.33	Slightly unsupported

As Figure 2.6 demonstrates, there are many students who do not feel supported by their department in regards to their ILSP, though more students feel supported than those who do not.

This trend is evident across faculties (Figure 2.7) and indicates that there is an inconsistency in the level of support delivered to students with ILSPs across the university (Figure 2.8).

However, some students report feeling very supported by their department with one respondent saying:

All my lecturers have been very clear that any adjustments that need to be made, they'll do their best to meet.

Other students expressed neutral views or said that they had not yet encountered any problems. Worryingly, a significant number of students reported that they did not feel supported by their department. Some students even reported tutors being hostile when asked to follow ILSPs as the following two accounts demonstrate.

... On occasion, I feel like I've angered my supervisor when asking for clarification, despite that being one of the things shared on my ILSP...

I felt really targeted by a seminar teacher in languages, but this may have been because they didn't know about my ILSP or SpLD, so they were unaware that I was entitled to reasonable adjustments. My departments for English and Linguistics emailed me (seminar tutors) within the first week to discuss reasonable adjustments, however, I have heard absolutely nothing from Languages, and it feels as if they do not care/ understand my disability.

Some students have described feeling that their needs have been ignored despite having an ILSP as these two responses illustrate.

Quite often they can be dismissive or make no effort to understand and carry on as they were. Some require a reasonable "excuse" and it can be really horrible to feel as though you have to explain in detail why you are unable to do something to a stranger.

I've asked for accessibility requirements outlined in my ILSP and just been told no. Lecturers don't seem to care.

Conclusion

Taking into account the data and individual student responses from the survey, it seems that, when implemented properly and consistently, the ILSP system can have a positive effect on the experience of students with disabilities.

However, ILSPs are not always implemented and many students report that they have to take personal responsibility for ensuring reasonable adjustments are made. This can cause unnecessary anxiety and prevent students from accessing their lectures or course content.

Departments and tutors differ in their receptiveness to ILSPs and this can have a detrimental effect on the academic experience of students with disability.

It seems that students would benefit from a more standardised approach to the implementation of ILSPs across the university. Many students feel ignored and a worrying number of students report that their ILSPs have not been read by their tutors. For the ILSP system to fulfil its function, it is evident that changes need to be made.

Reporting Accessibility Issues

Students with ILSPs were then asked the following two questions about reporting accessibility issues: ‘Would you feel comfortable with reporting an accessibility issue, for example a lecturer not providing reasonable adjustments?’ and ‘Do you know how to report an accessibility issue? For example, lecturers not providing reasonable adjustments, not being able to access a building, or being unable to access learning content, such as scans of library books.’

In total, we received 168 responses from students for these two questions. This section will examine those results, looking at the trends across the university as well as in individual faculties, before providing some recommendations based on those findings.

Would you feel comfortable reporting an accessibility issue?

Across the university

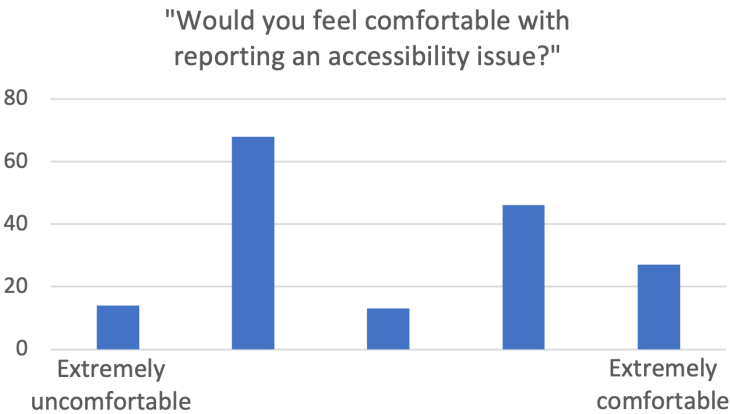


Figure 10: Figure 3.1: Recorded responses on comfort reporting accessibility issues

Table 10: **Figure 3.1 Values:** A table showing the answers to the question ‘Would you feel comfortable with reporting an accessibility issue?’. There are 2 rows and 7 columns. The first row rates the responses from ‘extremely uncomfortable’ to ‘extremely comfortable’, and then the total. The second row is the number of responses for each category.

	Extremely uncomfortable				Extremely comfortable		Total
Number of responses	14	68	13	46	27		168

When asked how comfortable students would feel reporting an accessibility issue, the most common response overall was ‘uncomfortable’ (68 students or 40.48%) followed by ‘comfortable’ (46 students or 27.38%).

Overall, more students were uncomfortable than comfortable, with 82 students (48.81%) responded that they were ‘uncomfortable’ or ‘extremely uncomfortable’ and 73 students (43.45%) responded they were ‘comfortable’ or ‘extremely comfortable’.

These results seem to suggest there is a large variety across the university of students’ comfort in reporting accessibility issues and while the numbers are close, overall, there are more students who feel uncomfortable reporting than students who do feel comfortable.

Across faculties

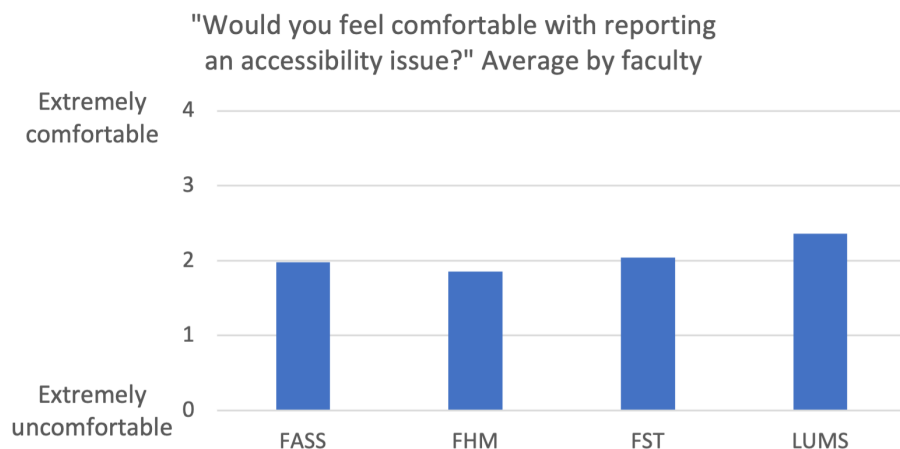


Figure 11: Figure 3.2: Comparison of comfort reporting accessibility issues by faculty

Table 11: **Figure 3.2 Values:** A table showing the answers to the question ‘Would you feel comfortable with reporting an accessibility issue?’, this time split by faculty. There are 3 rows and 5 columns. The first row splits the responses by faculty. The second row is the average response for each category. The third row offers some interpretation as to what the average means.

	FASS	FHM	FST	LUMS
Average response	1.98	1.86	2.04	2.36
Interpretation	Neutral	Neutral, leaning towards slightly uncomfortable	Neutral	Neutral, leaning towards slightly uncomfortable

In FASS, we had 82 respondents who stated they had ILSPs. ‘Uncomfortable’ was the most common response, with 34 responses (41.46% of FASS participants with ILSPs) followed by ‘comfortable’ (at 22 responses or 26.83%). Overall, more student leaned towards uncomfortable than comfortable, with 42 students (51.22%) responding that they were ‘uncomfortable’ or ‘extremely uncomfortable’) and 35 students (42.68%) responding as ‘comfortable’ or ‘extremely comfortable’. This aligns with the general university patterns though we must bear in mind that FASS was the faculty with the largest number of respondents for these questions.

In FHM, we had 6 respondents who stated they had ILSPs. FHM also follows the cross-university findings with the most common response being ‘uncomfortable’ (3 students, or 42.86% of FHM respondents). 4 students (57.15%) responded they were ‘uncomfortable’ or ‘extremely uncomfortable’ while 2 students (28.57%) responded being ‘extremely comfortable’ and no respondents from FHM responded ‘comfortable’. While the results from FHM follows the main cross-university trends, we must bear in mind the small number of

participants makes it difficult to draw secure conclusions.

LUMS is the only faculty with responses that differ from the cross university pattern. We had 11 respondents with ILSPs from LUMS, and the most common response was ‘extremely comfortable’, with 5 students responding as such (45.45% of LUMS respondents). 5 students (45.45% of LUMS respondents) reported being ‘uncomfortable’ or ‘extremely uncomfortable’ while 6 students (54.54% of LUMS respondents) felt ‘comfortable’ or ‘extremely comfortable’ reporting an accessibility issue.

68 students from FST with ILSPs responded to our survey and they follow the cross-university pattern. 28 of them (41.18%) reported being ‘uncomfortable’ with reporting accessibility issues, making that the most common response. Again (though by a slim margin), students overall leaned towards uncomfortable than comfortable with reporting accessibility issues, with 31 FST students (45.59%) said they were ‘uncomfortable’ or ‘extremely uncomfortable’ and 30 students (44.11%) reported being ‘comfortable’ or ‘extremely comfortable’.

Do you know how to report an accessibility issue?

Across the university

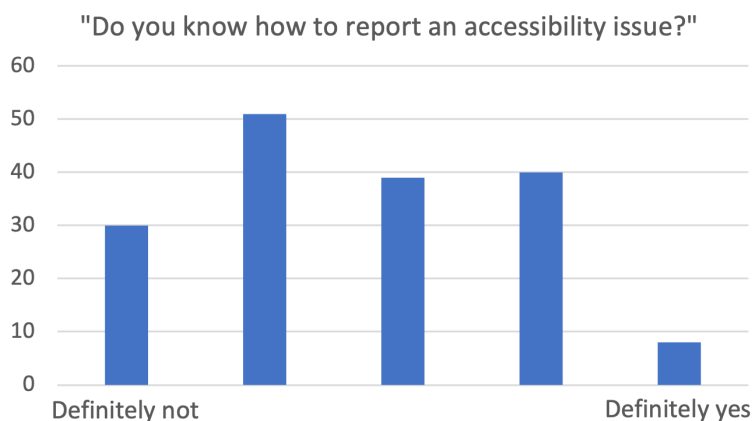


Figure 12: Figure 3.3: Recorded responses on knowledge of reporting processes

Table 12: **Figure 3.3 Values:** A table showing the answers to the question ‘Do you know how to report an accessibility issue?’. There are 2 rows and 7 columns. The first row rates the responses from ‘definitely not’ to ‘definitely yes’, and then the total. The second row is the number of responses for each category.

	Definitely not				Definitely yes	Total
Number of responses	30	51	39	40	8	168

The most common response was that students did not know how to report an accessibility issue, with 51 students (30.36%) responding this way. The second most common response was ‘yes’ (40 students or 23.81%), very closely followed by ‘maybe’ (39 students or 23.21%). 30 students (17.86%) responded that they definitely did not know how to report an accessibility issue and only 8 students (4.76%) responded that they definitely did.

Across faculties

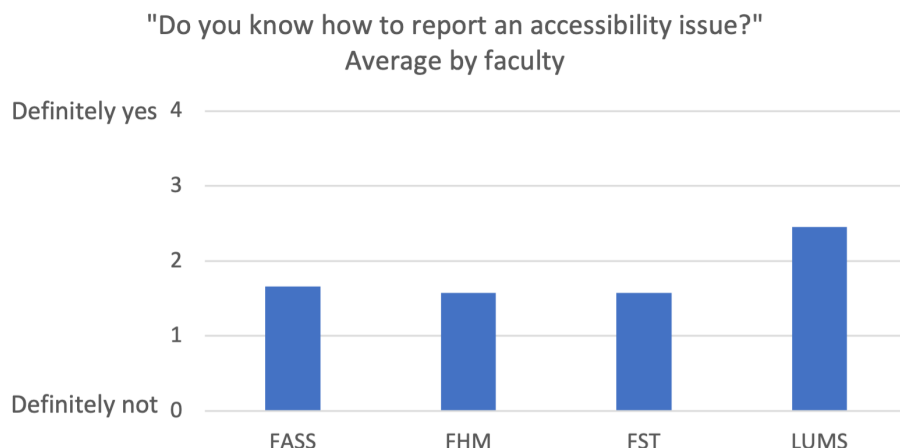


Figure 13: Figure 3.4: Comparison of knowledge of reporting processes by faculty

Table 13: **Figure 3.4 Values:** A table showing the answers to the question ‘Do you know how to report an accessibility issue?’, this time split by faculty. There are 3 rows and 5 columns. The first row splits the responses by faculty. The second row is the number of responses for each category. The third row offers some interpretation as to what the average means.

	FASS	FHM	FST	LUMS
Average response	1.66	1.57	1.57	2.45
Interpretation	Neutral, leaning towards probably not	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral, leaning towards probably yes

Same as the cross-university results, the most common response from FASS students with ILSPs was that they did not know how to report an accessibility issue, with 26 students (31.71%) answering as such. The second most common response from this group was ‘maybe’, with 23 respondents (28.05%), followed by ‘yes’ with 16 students (19.51%). 13 students (15.85%) stated they definitely did not know how to report an accessibility issue and the least common result was ‘definitely yes’ with only 4 students (4.88%) feeling this way.

Following the pattern, the most common response from FHM students with ILSPs was that they did not know how to report an accessibility issue, with 3 students (42.86%). The second most common response was ‘yes’ (2 students, or 28.57%), followed jointly by ‘maybe’ and ‘definitely no’, which both had one student each (14.29%) responding as such. None of the participants from FHM with ILSPs said they definitely knew how to report an accessibility issue, though as pointed out previously when discussing FHM’s results for question 6, we would need more participants to make a more conclusive statement.

Deviating from the patterns seen so far, the most common response for LUMS students with ILSPs were that they did know how to report accessibility issues, with 5 students (45.45%) responding as such. The rest of the participants were equally distributed at ‘definitely yes’, ‘maybe’ and ‘definitely no’, with each option having 2 students (18.18% each) responding with them. Once more, we would need more responses from LUMS in order to make a conclusive statement.

From FST, 22 students with ILSPs (32.35%) responded that they did not know how to report accessibility

issues. The second most common response was ‘yes’ (17 students or 25%), then ‘definitely no’ (14 students or 20.59%), followed by ‘maybe’ (13 students or 19.12%). Only 2 students (2.94%) responded that they definitely knew how to report an accessibility issue.

Concluding remarks and recommendations

It is important that all students know how to report any issue they have accessing their learning and feel comfortable doing so. Our findings however suggest there are varying levels of comfort and knowledge about this across the university, though the sample size for each department is small and shouldn’t be taken to suggest that certain departments are worse than others without further research.

Overall, more students feel uncomfortable than comfortable reporting accessibility issues. However, the number of students who feel comfortable versus uncomfortable in all faculties are always close, suggesting there are some good practices happening but there is no formal structure to ensure every student receives the same support and experience. We would recommend good practices be identified and made a university standard across all departments and for academic tutors to help facilitate this as a good academic tutor-tutee relationship can help more students feel comfortable speaking up if they have an issue.

Additionally, knowing how to report an accessibility issue is a clear problem from our findings, with most students stating they do not know how to report and only a small minority confident that they do know how to. We would recommend information about who they can speak to and how they can report issues be made explicit in formal written sources that are accessible to students (e.g. departmental handbooks, Moodle etc.) and that academic tutors also make students aware of what are entitled to and what they can do if they have difficulties with accessibility.

Aspects of Academic Delivery

Students across campus were asked the following questions regarding changes to academic delivery: ‘How often did your lecturers put up lecture slides (the PowerPoint) before a lecture in the last academic year?’, ‘Before coronavirus, how often did your lecturers provide lecture recordings?’, ‘How often do your lecturers provide captions on recorded lectures?’, ‘Do you feel that your lectures are put online an adequate time before seminars/workshops?’.

A total of 1509 responses were recorded across these four questions. The following section will examine the university-wide trends for each of the four questions in detail.

How often did your lecturers put up lecture slides before a lecture in the last academic year?

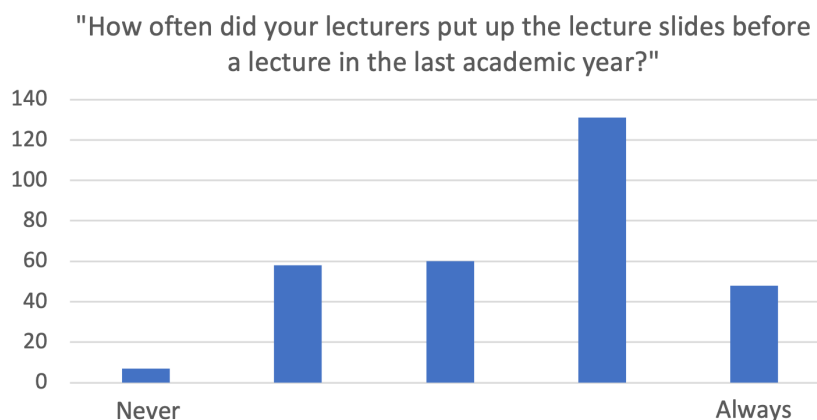


Figure 14: Figure 4.1: Recorded responses on early release of slides

Table 14: **Figure 4.1 Values:** A table showing the answers to the question ‘How often did your lecturers put up lecture slides before a lecture last academic year?’. There are 2 rows and 7 columns. The first row rates the responses from ‘never’ to ‘always’, and then the total. The second row is the number of responses for each category.

	Never				Always		Total
Number of response	7	58	60	131	48		304

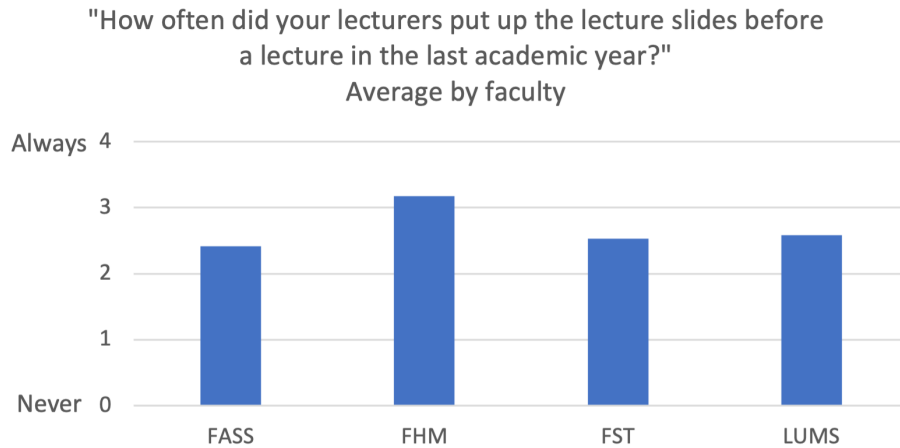


Figure 15: Figure 4.2: Recorded responses on early release of slides

Table 15: **Figure 4.2 Values:** A table showing the answers to the question ‘How often did your lecturers put up lecture slides before a lecture in the last academic year?’, this time split by faculty. There are 3 rows and 5 columns. The first row splits the responses by faculty. The second row is the number of responses for each category. The third row offers some interpretation as to what the average means.

	FASS	FHM	FST	LUMS
Average response	2.41	3.18	2.53	2.58
Interpretation	Neutral, leaning towards often	Often	Neutral, leaning towards often	Neutral, leaning towards often

When asked how often lecturers put up lecture slides before the lecture in the last academic year, the most common answer from students was ‘most of the time’, with 131 responses, with the second most common response being ‘about half of the time.’

Overall, the trends suggest that most students receive their lecture slides before the lecture in most cases, with a total of 179 responses being ‘always’ or ‘most of the time’, and only 59 students answering either ‘sometimes’ or ‘never.’

These findings suggest a wide variety of responses, with some individuals receiving slides for all lectures, but some students never receiving the slides. We, therefore, recommend that there is greater standardisation

across departments.

Before coronavirus, how often did your lecturers provide lecture recordings?

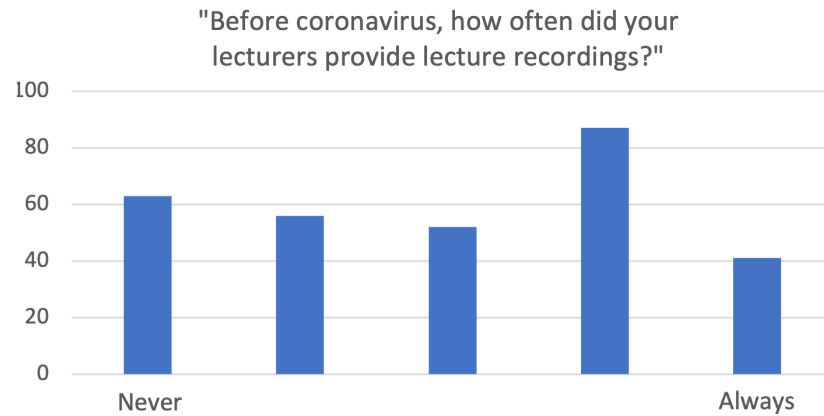


Figure 16: Figure 4.3: Recorded responses on lecture recordings

Table 16: **Figure 4.3 Values:** A table showing the answers to the question 'Before coronavirus, how often did your lecturers provide lecture recordings?'. There are 2 rows and 7 columns. The first row rates the responses from 'never' to 'always', and then the total. The second row is the number of responses for each category.

	Never				Always		Total
Number of responses	63	56	52	87	41		299

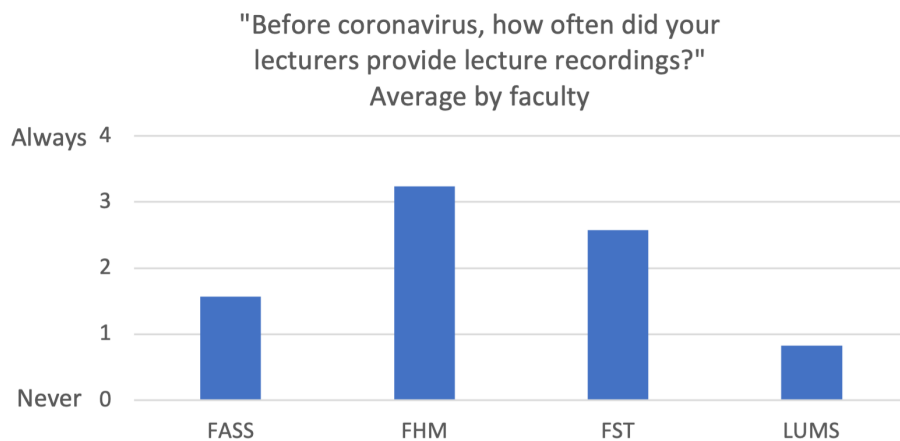


Figure 17: Figure 4.4: Comparison of lecture recording availability by faculty

Table 17: **Figure 4.4 Values:** A table showing the answers to the question ‘Before coronavirus, how often did your lecturers provide lecture recordings?’, this time split by faculty. There are 3 rows and 5 columns. The first row splits the responses by faculty. The second row is the average response for each category. The third row offers some interpretation as to what the average means.

	FASS	FHM	FST	LUMS
Average response	1.57	3.24	2.58	0.83
Interpretation	Neutral, leaning towards rarely	Often	Neutral, leaning towards often	Rarely

When asked if lecturers provided lecture recordings, prior to the coronavirus pandemic, the most common answer from students was ‘most of the time’, with 87 responses, with the second most common response being ‘never’, receiving 63 responses.

Overall, the trends suggest that most students received lecture recordings, with a total of 128 responses being ‘always’ or ‘most of the time’, with 119 students answering either ‘sometimes’ or ‘never’.

These results, again, show a wide variety of responses from across the university and suggest a need for much greater standardisation between departments.

How often do your lecturers provide captions on recorded lectures?

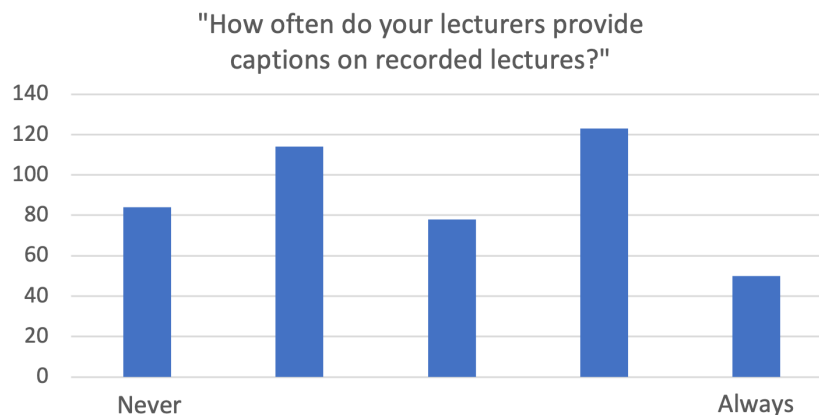


Figure 18: Figure 4.5: Recorded responses on captions

Table 18: **Figure 4.5 Values:** A table showing the answers to the question ‘How often do your lecturers provide captions on recorded lectures?’. There are 2 rows and 7 columns. The first row rates the responses from ‘never’ to ‘always’, and then the total. The second row is the number of responses for each category.

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Most of the time	Always	Total
Number of responses	84	114	78	123	50	449

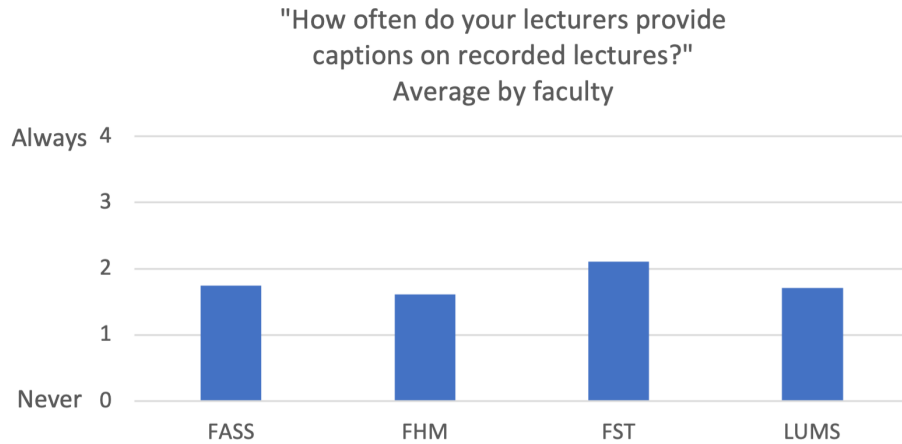


Figure 19: Figure 4.6: Comparison of caption availability by faculty

Table 19: **Figure 4.6 Values:** A table showing the answers to the question ‘How often do your lecturers provide captions on recorded lectures?’ this time split by faculty. There are 3 rows and 5 columns. The first row splits the responses by faculty. The second row is the number of responses for each category. The third row offers some interpretation as to what the average means.

	FASS	FHM	FST	LUMS
Average response	1.74	1.61	2.11	1.71
Interpretation	Neutral, leaning towards rarely	Neutral, leaning towards rarely	Neutral	Neutral, leaning towards rarely

When asked if lecturers provided captioning for recorded lectures, the most common answer from students was ‘most of the time’, with 123 responses, with the second most common response being ‘sometimes’, receiving 114 responses.

Overall, the trends suggest that most students do not receive lecture captioning, with a total of 178 responses being ‘sometimes’ or ‘never’, and 73 students answering ‘always’ or ‘most of the time’. Further to this, only 11% of students received captioning on all of their lecture material.

These results, therefore, show a severe inaccessibility of recorded lectures, and that a standardised system of captioning should be enforced for all departments, in order to ensure that all lecture material is accessible for all students.

Do you feel that your lectures are put online an adequate time before seminars/-workshops?

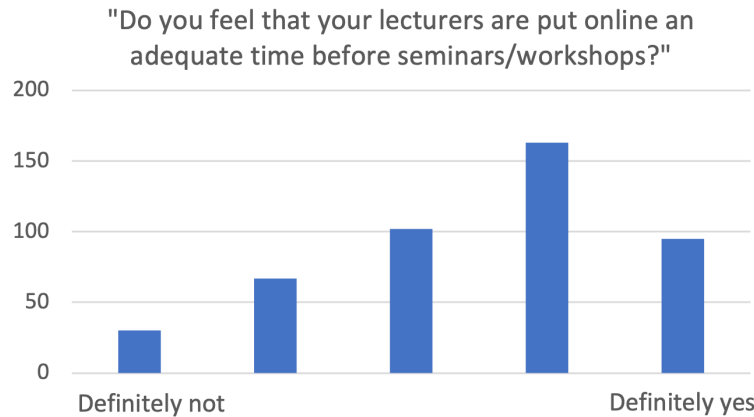


Figure 20: Figure 4.7: Comparison of lecture recording timely release by faculty

Table 20: **Figure 4.7 Values:** A table showing the answers to the question ‘Do you feel that your lectures are put online an adequate time before seminars/workshops?’. There are 2 rows and 7 columns. The first row rates the responses from ‘never’ to ‘always’, and then the total. The second row is the number of responses for each category.

	Never				Always	Total
Number of responses	30	67	102	163	95	457

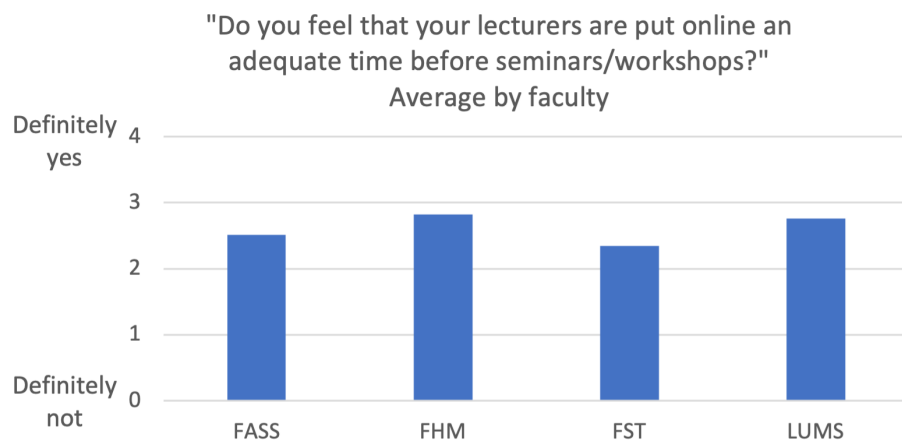


Figure 21: Figure 4.8: Recorded responses on the timely release of lecture recordings

Table 21: **Figure 4.8 Values:** A table showing the answers to the question Do you feel that your lectures are put online an adequate time before seminars/workshops?’ this time split by faculty. There are 3 rows and 5 columns. The first row splits the responses by faculty. The second row is the number of responses for each category. The third row offers some interpretation as to what the average means.

	FASS	FHM	FST	LUMS
Average response	2.52	2.83	2.34	2.76
Interpretation	Neutral, leaning towards often	Often	Neutral, leaning towards often	Often

When asked if they felt that lectures were put online at an adequate time before seminars and workshops, the most common answer from students was ‘probably yes’, with 163 responses, and the second most common response being ‘might or might not’, receiving 102 responses.

Overall, the trends suggest that most students do receive lectures in adequate time before seminars and workshops, with a total of 258 responses being ‘definitely yes’ or ‘probably yes’, and only 107 students answering ‘probably not or ‘definitely not’.

These results, however, suggest that a number of students do not receive lectures an adequate amount of time before their seminars or workshops, and therefore, do not have enough time to prepare for these sessions. It is therefore necessary to ensure that all lecture material is put online an adequate amount of time before seminars and workshops across all departments.

Concluding remarks and recommendations

Across all questions discussed in this section, a wide variety of responses were submitted in all cases. This shows that students are not having similar educational experiences across campus, and as a result, more standardisation across departments is required, in order to ensure that all students are having similar, positive experiences, with regard to lecture recordings and slides being put online in adequate time.

Further to this, large issues with relation to captioning were discovered, with more students not receiving captioning than students who do. Further to this, only 11% of students received captioning on all lectures. This means that large amounts of lecture material are inaccessible for a wide range of students across campus, and this suggests that individuals should be hired in order to aid academics with captioning or that the university should invest in better captioning software, in order to ensure that all students’ educational needs are met.

Ratings of Accessibility Requirements

Students (both those who self-identified as having a disability and those who didn’t) were asked to rate the usefulness of various accessibility requirements. 455 students responded to this question. They were asked to rate lecture recordings (when teaching is face-to-face), lecture recordings being provided an adequate time before the seminar (when teaching is online), PowerPoint slides being put up before a lecture, and captions on lectures.

Responses split by ILSP

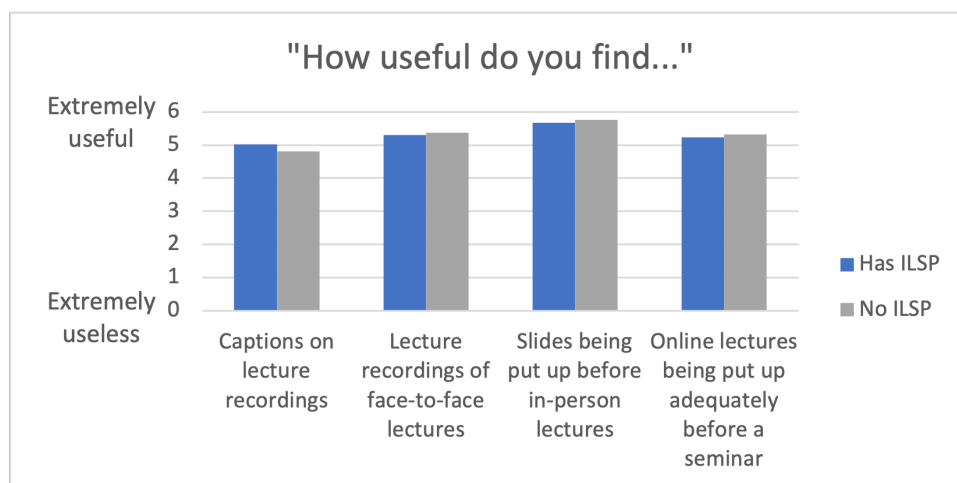


Figure 22: Figure 5.1: Comparison of accessibility requirement usefulness by ILSP

Table 22: **Figure 5.1 Values:** A table showing the rating of various accessibility requirements. There are 3 rows and 5 columns. The first row is the different accessibility requirements. The second row shows the average response of students with an ILSP. The third row shows the average response of students without an ILSP.

	Captions	Lecture recordings	Slides	Adequate time
Average response (ILSP)	5.02	5.31	5.68	5.23
Average response (No ILSP)	4.80	5.37	5.76	5.31

One benefit of asking this question is the ability to evaluate whether students without a disability valued these accessibility requirements as much as disabled students, and therefore assess whether or not the implementation of these would be beneficial to all students. It is evident that students with and without disabilities felt roughly the same way about each of the issues. Students with an ILSP found captioning more valuable than students who didn't have an ILSP, but for each of the remaining factors, students without an ILSP rated them more highly.

Responses overall

Table 23: **Figure 5.2 Values:** A table showing the rating of various accessibility requirements. There are 2 rows and 5 columns. The first row is the different accessibility requirements. The second row shows the average response by students overall.

	Captions	Lecture recordings	Slides	Adequate time
Average response (Overall)	4.89	5.34	5.73	5.28

Overall, students responded that PowerPoint slides being put up before a lecture was the most valuable aspect of academic delivery. This was followed by lecture recordings and online lectures being put up an

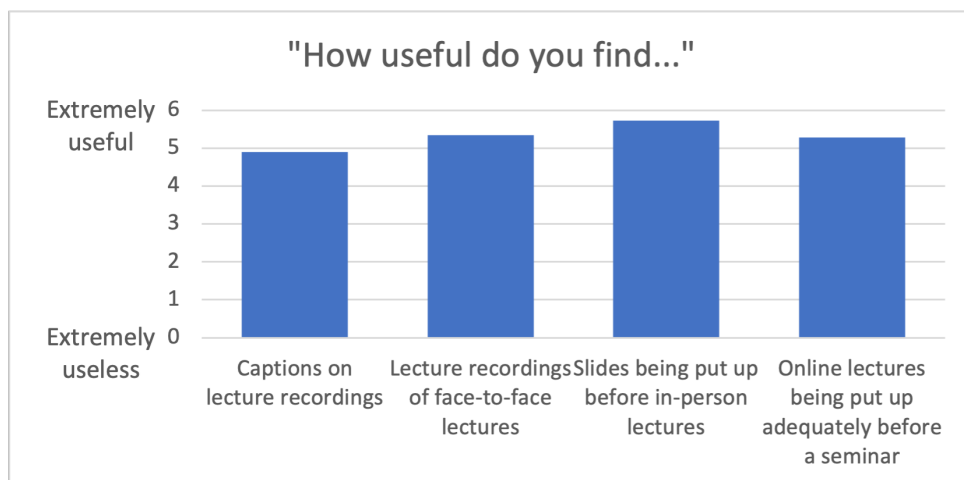


Figure 23: Figure 5.2: Recorded responses on the usefulness of accessibility requirements

adequate time before a seminar. Captions were deemed the least useful aspect, but rated higher by students with ILSPs than students without (as already discussed).

Conclusions

This question was used to explore which of these factors students valued the most in order to inform the recommendations in this report. It is evident that students value each of these factors highly and that there was not significant difference between each, but notably PowerPoint slides being provided before a seminar was the highest rated category.

Recommendations by students

The recommendations from this report will be split into two categories; first, the recommendations made by students themselves as part of the survey (covered in this chapter), and second, the proposals from the data itself (covered in the next chapter). The question that was asked was ‘Do you have any recommendations to make lectures more accessible?’, accompanied by a text box for students to fill out. This received 181 responses. Many of the themes answered in this question were also repeated when students were asked “Is there anything else you would like to share, or any information that you think may be relevant or useful to us based on the questions you have answered?” 151 students answered this question, some of which were further recommendations and have been included in this analysis.

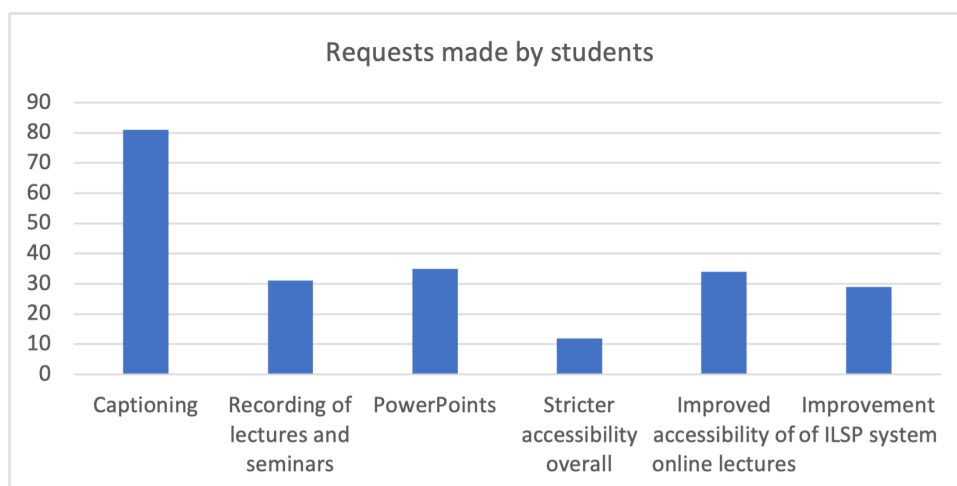


Figure 24: Figure 6: Recorded recommendations split by category

Table 24: **Figure 6 Values:** A table showing the amount of times requests have been made by students in various categories, with 2 columns and 7 rows. The first column show various categories that were mentioned. The second column shows the number of times they were mentioned.

Recommendation	Number of mentions
Captioning	81
Recording of lecturers and seminars	31
PowerPoints	35
Stricter accessibility overall	12
Improved accessibility of online lectures	34
Improvement of ILSP system	29

One of the most common themes in the requests by students was a request for captioning. Thirty-two requested captioning on every online lecture, thirty asked for a written transcript, and twelve mentioned editing the captions in order to make them more accurate. Two students also requested captions in more than one language. Significantly, five students asked for these captions to be uploaded at the same time as lectures, rather than the delayed captions that are currently being provided. Moreover, there are requests for a slower speaking speed and better microphones. Though captioning is a legal requirement, it is clear from these requests that it is not happening across the board, and improvements to the captions need to be made. One student said:

The automated captions on pre-recorded lectures are completely unusable. They're often incorrect & scrolling down to look ahead is practically impossible.

Another said

A lot of the lecturers use automatic captioning. I'm aware they don't have time to manually close caption them but often words come up completely wrong. This is particularly a problem with theorists' names when you need to know the correct spelling.

Another highly requested accommodation was recordings of lectures and seminars (after the return to in-person teaching). This was requested thirty-one times (the second highest request), indicating that there is a significant desire for this to occur. A student asked that:

Everyone should have access to lecture recordings whether or not they have some form of disability or learning plan. Had this been available to me in first year at university, I think I would have done much better.

PowerPoints were also a key issue in the recommendations. Eight asked for PowerPoints to be uploaded as a PowerPoint rather than a PDF, a further eight asked for a standardised accessible format, and twelve asked for these to be provided before a lecture. Twelve students asked for a stricter accessibility policy for lectures overall. There was also a desire for lecturers to include spellings, dates and terms in the PowerPoints (by six students) and one request for lecturers to update the slides each year.

The online delivery of lectures was another issue raised. Nine asked for online lectures to be split into chunks of twenty minutes, thirteen asked for lectures to be put up an ample time before seminars and four asked for the lectures to be time stamped. Furthermore, nine students asked for lectures not to exceed the amount of time that would be timetabled in a normal year, due to concerns about workload. In the question regarding anything further students would like to include, this was also a key issue. Many students shared individual issues with their department, e.g., bunching the workload at the beginning of the week and audio-only lectures.

Moreover, there were multiple requests for improvements to the ILSP (Individual Learning Support Plan) system. Seventeen students asked for a stricter policy regarding ILSPs, and as already mentioned, twelve asked for a stricter policy to make lectures more accessible. A particularly upsetting response from a student said:

I think the most important thing... is an openness to listen to and discuss needs so they can be put in place as needed. Rather than the current attitude, which is humiliating and hostile, and deters all efforts to seek an accessible approach. I think most lecturers in the department are thoroughly good people and would be willing to respond to such approaches. However, there is a minority who are unpleasant, and frankly prejudiced, and the system which is there to then deal with that is utterly and wholly inadequate - to the extent that after I formally complained, the department was directly instructed to work with me to implement my ILSP and support, and when they refused to, the only way to gain progress has been to start a whole new complaint afresh.

Combined with the data on the ILSP system already discussed, this shows that students are unhappy with the current system.

Other notable requests include four students asking for Moodle sites to be more standardised, one request for time zones to be considered when providing live content, and the creation of an SpLD coversheet for exams.

Conclusions

From this survey, we have developed a series of recommendations to the University that we would like to see implemented.

We would first like to highlight these results:

- Though 48.21% of respondents considered themselves to have a disability, a chronic illness, a mental health condition or a SpLD, only 38.96% of respondents reported that they had an ILSP. This shows a disparity between students who are suffering with a condition and those who are receiving support from the university.
- 19.7% of students felt that the process to get an ILSP was hard or extremely hard, and a further 16.7% found the process neither easy nor difficult. The process to get an ILSP is therefore not easy to many students.
- As shown in Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.8, there is significant inconsistency in the application of ILSPs by departments. Many students have noted that their department rarely follows their ILSP, and the qualitative data shows that many have had bad experiences when attempting to fix this.

- While almost 53.89% of students stated that they were satisfied or extremely satisfied with the ILSP system, the remaining students responded neutrally or negatively, showing that almost half of the student body are not satisfied by the current system.
- 29 students requested improvement to the ILSP system in an open-box question.
- 81 students (48.22%) responded that they did not know or definitely did not know how to report an accessibility issue.
- More students feel uncomfortable than comfortable with the idea of reporting an accessibility issue.
- Though captioning is a legal requirement, it is not being implemented. We have found that 11% of students are receiving captioning on all online lectures. Despite this, there is great outcry from students requesting that it is used; no less than 81 students requested some form of captioning or transcript should be used on online lectures. Seeing as academics are legally required to use these, this shouldn't be such a significant issue for students.
- Adequate time should be provided between online lectures being uploaded to Moodle and the seminar or workshop taking place. This was rated highly by students when asked about what was useful to them. The University has an official policy of seven days, but this does not seem to be happening across the board and it is clearly an issue that students feel strongly about.
- Recordings of lectures should continue when face-to-face teaching resumes. This was requested 31 times by students in an open-box question and was also rated very highly in utility.
- As it was rated the most highly by students in terms of utility, uploading PowerPoint slides to Moodle in advance of lectures would be beneficial.

From these results, we have developed three recommendations:

1. We request a **university review of the ILSP system**. This recommendation can be implemented through changes such as the following:
 - Greater advertising of the ILSP system to new and existing students, including more clear and detailed information about how this works.
 - Greater training for academics on how to help students with ILSPs.
 - Making the process to get ILSPs easier.
 - Creating clear guidelines for what students should do if an academic or staff member is not following their ILSP.
2. We request a **review of the current system of reporting accessibility issues**. This can be achieved through changes such as these:
 - A review of the current system.
 - More advertising about how to report any accessibility issues.
 - Students to have members of the department who are responsible for dealing with these complaints. Though there is currently a Disability Representative in most departments, their role does not include helping students with disabilities on an individual level.
3. We request certain **changes to academic delivery**. Specifically, we would like to recommend:
 - Regular student surveys to explore whether policy (such as captioning) is being implemented.
 - Considering alternative methods to captioning (for example, hiring students to write/edit captioning or implementing new software) in order to take the strain off academics.
 - Keeping the seven-day period between when online lectures are uploaded and when students have teaching, and using regular surveys or the Academic Rep system to evaluate whether this is happening in each department.

- Making lecture recordings ‘opt-out’ rather than ‘opt-in’ for academics, in order to ensure that as many are uploaded as possible.

Thank you for your consideration of these matters. We hope the time taken by students to create this report emphasises the importance of these recommendations to the student body at Lancaster. If you have any questions about the report, or want to discuss these findings, please contact the Improve Your Learning Campaign through su.disabilitiesofficer@lancaster.ac.uk

Works Cited

Lancaster University. (n.d.). Lancaster Support Processes. Retrieved 13 December 2021 from <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/student-and-education-services/disability/current-students/lancaster-support-processes/>