08

**Fall**

Podcasting

**Engaging disabled and dyslexic students in the creative arts through the medium of podcasting**

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# *Cover Photograph Pixmax/Marin Conic*1. Context and background to study

University for the Creative Arts (UCA) Rochester previously undertook a couple of small-scale pilots using podcasting to support the student induction process and learning and teaching. Both pilots proved successful however the ad hoc approach left lots of questions unanswered, and raised many others, particularly around the collection of materials, storage and usage of podcasts and the management of the whole process.

This project research question was: "Do disabled and dyslexic students feel that podcasting helps them to engage with learning and teaching in Art and Design? And how?"

There were a number of reasons for the focus on disabled and dyslexic students. Firstly, there have been a growing number of dyslexic and disabled students at the Rochester campus over the past few years, therefore, a growing number of these students were accessing support equipment such as Dictaphones with which they would make their own recordings. Secondly, course tutors were also trying to adapt their teaching in response to this growing number of dyslexic and disabled students and had approached all the team members of this research project to find a way of recording there lectures. While we focused on this group of students, it was anticipated that what helped disabled and dyslexic students would help all students engage with learning and teaching.

Additionally the research looked at the practical requirements in terms of recording, storage of lectures, accessibility for students as well as the potential benefits for students’ learning. The reason for this was that we wanted to ensure that any processes that came out of the research project were easy for teaching staff to access and make use of. We did not want the technology of recording and storing the recordings to become a barrier to making use of podcasts in their teaching and learning.

The project involved the provision of access to a podcast of each lecture in a series. The Time Machine lecture series (CGAA/CATF/DBM/MM courses) was identified to participate in this research.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Course** | **Number of Students** |
| BA (Hons) Creative Arts for Theatre & Film | 30 |
| BA (Hons) Modelmaking | 16 |
| BA (Hons) CG Arts & Animation | 35 |
| BA (Hons) Design, Branding & Marketing | 16 |
| **Total** | **97** |

All students attending these lectures were able to access the lecture podcasts via the unit materials on myUCA. The lecture series was chosen because of the mixed cohort from four courses and it was a lecture series presented by a number of lecturers.

The research was conducted by a multi disciplinary team across Student Development Services, LLRC and Central resources. The staff conducting the research were Lucy Hannaford, Faculty Librarian, Phil Marsh Resources Coordinator and Clare Matysova, Disability Support Services Manager. The research was sponsored by the UCA Teaching and Learning research team and took place at UCA Rochester during Semester 2 of 0910 academic year.

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# 2. Definitions

As this project was about investigating podcasting as potentially inclusive tool for students with dyslexia and/or a disability, a necessary starting point was to look at what is meant by disability, specific learning difficulties (or differences) and inclusion.

### Disability

The definition of Disability under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 includes people with:

* Physical or sensory impairments
* Mental health difficulties, such as depression
* Specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia
* Health conditions, such as Alzheimer’s, HIV, epilepsy, arthritis and cancer.

The impairment must have:

* A substantial, adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities
* Lasted for at least 12 months, or be likely to last for 12 months or more. (Understanding the Disability Discrimination Act, 2006: 18)

To gain a fuller understanding of disability, however, for the purposes of this research project, it was also important to look at the medical and social models of disability. The distinction between these models is helpful to understand what is meant by inclusion and consequently had an impact on the approach of this research project.

While the medical model looks at disability in terms of what is “wrong” with the individual, at what their impairment is; the social model of disability looks at the societal attitudes and systems, which are tailored to the majority; they often acting as disabling factors and barriers preventing participation of minority groups. An example of a medical model approach would be the view that a student is unable to access a building because of their impairment and their need to use a wheelchair; a social model would look at the stairs as being disabling rather than the wheelchair. The social model raises the issue of defining difference and what is “normal”. By understanding the term difference as a relational comparator rather than that one individual is different to the norm reasons that a difference is due to the relationship or social perceptions and institutions. This moves the disabling cause from the person who is “different” to society and the issue from being about “accommodating difference” to being about “transforming” approaches so that there is no longer any single “normal” or “standard” model.

The University of Leicester provides a relevant example of the distinction between the medical and social model approach:

### Medical model approach:

* A member of staff who refuses to make available a copy of a PowerPoint presentation before a lecture. This creates a barrier to learning for the dyslexic students in the group who are likely to have slower processing and writing speed and who will struggle to understand and record the key points

### Social model approach:

* A member of staff who makes PowerPoint presentations available on Blackboard to all members of the group before a lecture. This allows dyslexic students to look up unfamiliar terminology before the lecture, and gives them an idea of the structure that will be followed. This “framing” helps students to understand and retain the information (University of Leicester, The social and medical model of disability)

With the social model in mind, consequently, the Disability Discrimination Act places a duty on educational establishments to be “anticipatory”; “this means that organisations should continually anticipate the general requirements of disabled people with a wide range of impairments and health conditions rather than simply waiting until a disabled person requests a particular adjustment.” (Understanding the Disability Discrimination Act, 2006: 24)

### What is a specific learning difficulty (SPLD) such as Dyslexia?

A specific learning difficulty does not reflect intellectual ability and can occur at any level of ability; rather it relates to how someone learns and specific difficulties they experience. Of students with a specific learning difficulty, dyslexics are the largest sub group. Generally, dyslexia causes difficulties in learning to read, write and spell. The following may also be affected: short-term memory, concentration, personal organisation and sequencing. A diagnosis of dyslexia normally states whether it can be described as mild, moderate or severe, depending upon the individual’s experience.

Dyslexia usually arises from a weakness in the processing of language based information. It is biological in origin and tends to run in families, however, environmental factors can also contribute. Dyslexia is not due to poor motivation, emotional disturbance, sensory impairment or lack of opportunities, although these may also occur alongside dyslexia.

### Inclusion

Following on from the above social model of disability, an inclusive approach to teaching and learning recognises the varied learning needs of a diverse group of students; in terms of disabilities but also English as an additional language, ethnic background and caring responsibilities. Open University guidelines describe inclusive teaching as follows: “Inclusive teaching avoids pigeonholing students into specific groups with predictable and fixed approaches to learning. Inclusive teaching takes a coherent approach, which is anticipatory and proactive,” (Making your teaching inclusive, Open University) Therefore, inclusion is not about changing the student but about education accommodating diverse groups of students.

King (2003) suggests that HEIs that are fully inclusive are those that have the most flexible admission policies, but more significantly they have also changed teaching methods, course design and assessment to take account of different student profile. (D’Andrea & Gosling, 2005: 98)

This approach is not merely about fair access to an HEI in their admission processes; it is also about addressing matters of course content, teaching and learning and the culture of the HEI. With UCA, the recently reformed Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) Working Group is tasked to act as a forum, within which inclusive practices across the University are reviewed, in accordance with the SENDA Act and the emerging guidance from the QAA on support for disabled students / staff who fall within the remit of protected characteristics and the requirements of the new Equality Bill (April 2009).

### Disability Statistics at UCA

Statistics on the percentage of students with disabilities / SPLDs at UCA taken from 0910 Disability team annual monitoring report are detailed below.

The number of students who declared a disability at UCA in 0910 has risen and was 1221 / 17.4% (1145, 16% in 0809 and 1187 / 16.5% in 0708) of the student population. Overall, this is significantly higher than the national average of 7.3% (Equality in Higher Education, Statistical Report 2009, Equality Challenge Unit, page 50)

During 09/10, 972 students were in contact with the Disability support team. The following charts provide an analysis of disabilities, contact and the type of support across the five campuses for 0910.

***Chart 1: Those in contact with the disability support team by disability***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of Disability** | **Not in contact** | **In contact** |
| A Disability not listed | 47% | 53% |
| Blind/partial sight | 36% | 64% |
| Deaf or serious hearing impairment | 40% | 60% |
| Long standing illness or health condition | 54% | 46% |
| Mental health condition | 40% | 60% |
| Other disability, impairment or medical condition | 28% | 72% |
| Physical impairment or mobility issues | 0% | 100% |
| Social/Communication impairment | 13% | 88% |
| Specific learning difficulty | 21% | 79% |
| Two or more impairments or disabling conditions | 11% | 89% |
| Unseen disability | 39% | 61% |
| Wheelchair/mobility | 15% | 85% |

***Chart 2: Type of Disability as % of total number of students with a disability***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Type of Disability** | **% of students with a disability** |
| A Disability not listed | 2% |
| Blind/partial sight | 1% |
| Deaf or serious hearing impairment | 2% |
| Long standing illness or health condition | 5% |
| Mental health condition | 7% |
| Other disability, impairment or medical condition | 4% |
| Physical impairment or mobility issues | 0% |
| Social/Communication impairment | 3% |
| Specific learning difficulty | 69% |
| Two or more impairments or disabling conditions | 4% |
| Unseen disability | 2% |
| Wheelchair/mobility | 1% |


# 3. Literature review

The audio recording of lectures for access outside the lecture theatre has regularly been recognised as being of benefit to students (Bligh, 1998; Laurillard, 1993; Biggs, 2003), however little research has been conducted into the benefits that podcasting lectures may bring specifically to students with dyslexia or disabilities. The most notable research identified by the project team is outlined below.

The University of Western Australia conducted a research project (Williams and Fardon, 2006) in order to gain a better understanding of the benefits of podcasting lectures for disabled and dyslexic students. The research methodologies used were a combination of an anonymous printed / online survey of UWA students who had acknowledged a disability or medical condition, and follow-up focus groups, in parallel with a campus-wide online survey, and focus groups of all UWA students’ usage of the in-house lecture recording service Lectopia. The survey findings confirmed overwhelming support for the service, with 98.1% of students with disabilities and medical conditions rating it as either an ‘essential’ or ‘useful’ learning resource (sample size 130). The most popular recording delivery format was ‘download’, for the flexibility offered, and both student surveys revealed students were using the lecture recordings for revision purposes and to review concepts as we would expect. Students who were unable for reasons of disability to take notes during the lecture itself used the recordings to manage the note-taking process, allowing fuller focus of attention during the live lecture.

Numerous comments revealed a strong preference for recordings to capture the presenter’s lecture slides in addition to the audio: this is particularly relevant to our own research, as lectures in art and design subjects are highly visual and would require the presented images to be synchronised to the audio for maximum benefit.

The UWA research methodology was effective in gathering useful feedback and comment from users and the focus group approach will be used in this study, for the discussion opportunities that the informal setting brings.

Katherine Deibel (2008) at the University of Washington used the illustrative case study method to explore the current state of inclusive practices in computing education. She interviewed four students on a one-to-one basis, then analysed the data gathered using a grounded-theory approach. For the purposes of our research her findings on podcasting are the most relevant. The students interviewed reported that the podcast lectures were ‘so helpful’, enabling a student with hearing difficulties to recap on things he may have missed, and a student with short-term memory and writing difficulties (majoring in visual arts and studying computer animation) to listen again at a time and location of his choice. The issue of visuals accompanying the audio was raised again in this study, as tutors often talk while referring to slides.

The case study method does not provide a very broad picture of the learning experiences of students with disabilities due to the small number of students interviewed, but even so the themes emerging from the research are important. Deibel herself states that ‘further research on the potential benefits of podcasting for students with disabilities is warranted’. From our point of view the fact that one of the students was majoring in visual arts and studying computer animation was relevant, as we planned to include UCA students on the CG Arts and Animation course in our focus group.

Barton, Penny and Riordan (2007) of the Institute of Art, Design and Technology, Dun Laoghaire, conducted a study to show the pedagogical benefits of using podcasts compared to the traditional face to face method of lecture delivery for students with dyslexia. A control group was presented with learning material in the normal face to face classroom scenario: lecture format and handout. The experimental group received exactly the same learning material via an audio mp3 file: the podcast. A third of the students participating were dyslexic. A scored questionnaire was used to test recall of the content of the learning material, followed by a brief discussion on the technology used and the experience in general in order to gather issues encountered, both good and bad. The scored results showed no significant difference between the dyslexic and non-dyslexic groups in their ability to recall the information.

The research report concludes that audio delivery of material would allow student control over the pace of delivery, empowering them to have control over their own learning and therefore enhancing confidence and self-esteem. The authors do concede that a larger study over a longer period is required, particularly as this 2007 study was conducted in a laboratory setting.

Our research collected qualitative data through focus groups as well as quantitative data, as we were interested to discover student attitudes and responses to their use of podcasts as part of their learning at UCA. There was scope to analyse student attainment following the use of podcasts, through the assessment process, however this is not within the remit of our current project.

A study at the University of Southampton (Copley, 2007) reveals students’ enthusiasm for podcast recording of lectures for use in revision and preparation for assessments. Audio and video podcasts for marine science students were made available via Blackboard, so statistical information could be gathered on patterns of access, and this was followed-up with an anonymous online survey. More than 80% (sample size 482) of students downloaded the podcasts, with peak downloads directly after the podcasts were made available then again immediately before exams or assessments. Podcasts were mostly played on PCs, and students rated their usefulness at 4.4 out of 5. Again, the qualitative data is of interest to us: most students said they used the podcasts for revision or preparation for assessments. 93% of respondents said they would like more materials to be made available in podcast form, and only 12% of respondents said that access to the podcasts would increase their likelihood of not attending lectures (sample size 84).

This study author specifically mentions that it provides limited data to explore the benefits of video and audio podcasts for dyslexic students with dyslexia or other learning difficulties. Six survey respondents disclosed specific leaning needs, and four of these used the podcasts and rated them as ‘more useful than traditional handouts’ or ‘very useful’. Their responses also indicated that they were using the podcasts ‘to enable note taking at their own pace’.

These projects with their varied approaches have informed decisions regarding our own research methodology, and have provided valuable background data on the potential obstacles we may have encountered and the benefits we hoped to observe through our own study.

# 4. Description of the Podcast System

The decision was taken to use digital voice recorders to make lecture recordings. The digital voice recorder has some advantages over other types of recording devices, including portability, ease of use, durability and cost. These features combine to make the technology invisible allowing the content to be at the forefront. (Ash, 2009)

The “Olympus LS-10 Linear PCM recorder” was used to record the lecture series. This device had several useful features. It allowed for recording direct to the ubiquitous MP3 (MPEG-1, Layer 3) format, which avoided the extra step of file conversion. It also had the ability to manually adjust the microphone level and utilized a “low cut” filter which reduced the low frequency sounds allowing for the clearer recording of voices.

**Recording lectures**

In use the lecturer was provided with a lapel microphone that was attached to clothing around the chest area. The recorder was simple to use having previously been set to the correct settings and format before the lecture by the technician. The lecturer was then instructed to press the single red record button in order to start recording the session. Although ultimately the lecture recording was used for podcasts, the lectures were initially be recorded at the high quality 256kbps mp3 format and converted to a lower quality, higher compression format for podcast delivery. By doing this a high quality copy could be kept for archiving in the university library. Once a lecture had been recorded the file was converted using “MAX” to the higher compression format of 96kbps. This was considered to be a good compromise between quality and file size and falls between the British Broadcast Company (BBC) guidelines for speech and music. (BBC - Future Media Standards & Guidelines, 2010) This resulted in file sizes of around 40MB for a 1-hour lecture.

**Delivery**

The intended method for delivery was the podcast. This, as opposed to downloading audio files, involves the routine addition of new content and the ability to subscribe to the content for automatic downloads. (Brittain, 2006)

The delivery mechanism for distributing the recordings was through an rss (remote syndicate subscription) feed. This allowed for sequential addition of recordings as the course progressed. The rss feed exists as a link within the unit area of the UCA virtual learning environment (VLE). Files are uploaded through the VLE system using the rss feed tool. Within this tool is the ability to add supporting files such as transcriptions, slideshows and documents.

The podcast files could also be individually downloaded or played from within the VLE through the myUCA time machine course content page.

**Tracking Statistics**

The podcast user statistics were tracked for the individual files. A “hit” was recorded every time a user requested the file either to play or download. Unfortunately it was not possible to track the “hits” on the RSS feed.

# 5. Methodology

The emphasis of this project was to look at the perceived effectiveness of podcasting at UCA (being an Art and Design institution) for students with disabilities and/or SPLD and the practical requirements needed if this system is to be introduced. The action research approach was adopted for this project. This approach is often undertaken by practitioners and as Bell , 2005 and Cohen and Manion,1994 explain is appropriate when “specific knowledge is required for a specific problem in a specific situation, or when a new approach is to be grafted on to an existing system” (Bell, 2005: 8). This is because action research is a cyclical process of implementation, evaluation and further implementation with relevant changes to processes being made on an ongoing basis. The introduction of the availability and use of podcasts as a teaching and learning method acts as a starting point to this research project.

A further aspect of action research, in addition to reflection, is that it involves stakeholder feedback, for example, consultation with students. O’Hanlon in her work on Educational Inclusion as Action research points out that action research is important to develop inclusive practices; for “Inclusive practice requires an investigation of its effectiveness, developed through a democratic discursive process that attempts to include all relevant participants in institutional contexts. The process aims to gives its contributors and participants a voice in the investigation.” (O'Hanlon, 2003: 37) The research involved monitoring the use of these lectures, in terms of practical issues of accessibility, ease of use for academics and most importantly in terms of students” perception of their usefulness; i.e. the students voice.

The action research approach was therefore felt to be particularly relevant approach for this project. With this in mind, the approach included mixed methods including both quantitative and qualitative with an emphasis on reflection and feedback.

## 5.1 Data collection

The Time Machine lecture series (CGAA/CATF/DBM/MM courses) was identified. This enabled us to gather a number of lecturers feedback on the podcast project so as to be more representative of lecturers and students views and, therefore, to enable the transfer of relevance to other lectures. Additionally, the lead lecturer had previously expressed an interest and could potentially act as a “champion” for podcasting with other academics if found successful. A further lecture series on the FE courses in Rochester were to be included in the project, however, due to concerns of some of the lecturers this was not possible. The limitations of only recording one lecture series was that it reduced the potential feedback that would be made available, however, in practice this was more realistic in terms of staying within timescales and objectives of the project.

All students attending these lectures were able to access the podcasts of the lectures via the unit materials on myUCA. All students who accessed the podcasts were asked to complete a very short anonymous survey asking for feedback.

Additionally, an invitation was sent to all students on the above courses requesting voluntary participation in the research project. Participation involved downloading and listening to at least one podcast and at the end of the lecture series attending a focus group interview to discuss the benefits and / or disadvantages of podcasting.

### Quantitative data:

All students attending these lectures were able to access the podcasts of the lectures via the unit materials on myUCA and students who did access the podcasts were be asked to complete a very short survey asking for feedback. (See Appendix 1)

Data on the actual use of podcasts was analysed as well as and the brief survey completed by all students accessing the podcasts.

### Qualitative data:

Students were contacted to request voluntary participation in the research project. Participation involved downloading and listening to at least one podcast and at the end of the lecture series attending a focus group interview to discuss the benefits and / or disadvantages of podcasting.

The research team had originally planned to specifically targeted students with a disability and / or a specific learning difficulty, such as dyslexia, in order to gain their feedback on the benefits of podcasting as a way of making their course material more accessible. All students were also asked for their feedback in order to make comparisons between different groups of students via a survey and focus groups were initially planned to include disabled / SPLD students only. However, it became apparent that separating the groups of students did not seem appropriate or comfortable in terms of separating out a group of students. It was therefore decided that all students would be invited to the focus groups.

Project members and participating lecturers were also invited to interviews to evaluate the potential systems and processes required to ensure the sustainability and scalability of podcasting across the University. The focus group interviews were recorded so as to be collected and analysed for the purposes of the research. Research summaries were anonymous. Recordings will be destroyed following completion of the research project.

The focus group interviews for both students and staff involved semi structured interviews using open-ended but consistent questions both to keep interview focused and to allow some comparisons between more than one focus group.

Additionally, the process of creating, storing and managing podcasting was recorded by means of a project blog to provide input to the final report.

# 6. Ethics

The completed ethical protocol form was made available to all researchers and lectures involved with the research project. Participation was voluntary, as stated in the participant consent form together with an explanation that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point should they wish. There were small incentives to attend focus group interviews such as free lunch. Following completion of the research project; outcome of the project research will be made available to participants through the final project report. As the lecture podcasts were accessible to all students attending the lecture series, there was no obvious advantage between the group for focus interviews and all other students.

In order to consider and take account of the potential power dynamics within the focus groups, for example, participants might feel obliged to give us “socially acceptable” answers to our questions, we explained to all participants that we wanted them to be as honest and open as possible and by asking about the positive and negative experiences or considerations with regards to the podcasts.

# 7. Analysis and Findings

## 7.1 Download Statistics

The lecture series ran from 4th February to 18th March 2010 on Thursday mornings at 11:00.

The numbers of hits were tracked for each individual lecture download. Although, as indicated earlier, the rss feed was not tracked, it was found through the focus groups that all students downloaded files individually rather than by subscribing.

*Time machine 1 = 737 hits*

*Time Machine 2 = 416 hits*

*Time Machine 3 = 400 hits*

*Time Machine 4 = 325 hits*

*Time Machine 5 = 69 hits*

Although there is a reduction of hits for the sequence of recordings, this was to be expected; later lectures left less time available for downloading.

The hourly, daily and monthly hits were also recorded. In order to analyse the distribution of hits the data from the 5 lectures was combined.

Days of the week

 Number of hits

Figure - Daily hit distribution

The daily distribution shows a peak on Thursdays corresponding with the day of the lecture indicating the likelihood that students retrieved the material whilst it was still "fresh”. There were fewer hits during the weekends with Saturday being the most unpopular day to download the files. The hourly rate shows a fairly uniform distribution across between 09:00 and 23:00. However, there are peaks at around 11:00, 13:00-14:00 and then again at 19:00. The first two peaks occur at points in the day when students are on breaks or have lunch. The peak at 19:00 probably occurs when student would be expected to have returned home.

Time of day

 Number of hits

Figure - 24 hour hit distribution

Number of hits

Date

Figure - Monthly distribution (Only 1 lecture shown for clarity)

The monthly distribution figure, for all 5 lectures, exhibits a peak around the 28th of April. This correlates with “hand-in” date of 30th April and suggest that students revisited the lectures whilst writing up essays.

## 7.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was accessible online through myUCA from the start of the Time Machine unit in February until the end of May, and was promoted to students using the announcements facility on myUCA, and verbally in the lecture theatres before lectures began.

25 students out of 97 completed the questionnaire, which represents 25.7% of the cohort.

#### Section 1: Background information about yourself

The participants in this project were all first year undergraduate students at UCA.

24% of respondents to the questionnaire (6 students) stated they considered themselves to have either a disability, long term medical condition or specific learning disability such as dyslexia, and of these, four students had previously shared this information with UCA.

#### Section 2: The lectures

This section aimed to establish the methods students currently use to enhance their own learning during lectures, and the usefulness of these methods as assessed by the students themselves.

**taking your own notes**

100% of respondents took their own notes during lectures, and the majority found this to be either essential (32%) or useful (68%). Only one respondent stated they found note-taking to be “not useful”.

The six students with a disability or SPLD were equally split, with three finding note taking “essential” and three finding it to be “useful”.

**lecture handouts**

88% of respondents (22 students) used lecture handouts to assist their learning, and of these 11 found them to be “essential” and another 11 to be “useful”.

The six students with a disability or SPLD all used lecture handouts: four found them to be “essential” and two “useful”.

**making your own recording, e.g. on a Dictaphone**

20% (five students) of the respondents made their own recordings of lectures, three of these stating they found it “essential”, two stating it was “useful”.

Three of the six students with a disability or SPLD made their own recordings with one finding it to be “essential” and two finding it to be “useful”.

**other methods**

While we didn’t specify what these other methods were, five students responded that they used them, one finding them to be “essential” and three “useful” (one “n/a”).

Of the six students with a disability or SPLD only one used an “other” method, which was assessed as “essential”.

These results show a selection of the various methods students use to enhance their learning in lectures, and their perceived effectiveness. Understandably note-taking is the most common method, but some students have adopted alternative approaches such as recording the lecture for future re-use, which perhaps allows a greater degree of concentration during the lecture itself.

This is interesting for the purposes of our research, as it indicates that some students are comfortable experimenting with different ways of helping themselves to get the most out of the lecture experience. In some cases students may have purchased their own recording devices at some expense. Offering a centralised repository of the lecture recordings and accompanying slides would create a more equitable situation, so all students will have the option of using them if they feel they would be helpful.

**Do you ever find it difficult to attend lectures?**

The majority (68%, 17 students including five of those with a disability or SPLD) of our sample said they never found it difficult to attend lectures. Eight students stated they regularly, occasionally or rarely had difficulties attending. Of the six students who gave reasons for their difficulties, two stated that this was due to a medical condition, two cited occasional illness, one had work commitments and one had care responsibility for younger siblings.

There are many reasons why students may not be able to attend a timetabled lecture, including financial, family and health issues. These students may share fellow-students’ notes or use lecture handouts to catch up with what was missed. While a recording and slides couldn’t replicate the experience of being in the original lecture, a student would almost certainly find it beneficial to be able to access the content as it was delivered.

#### Section 3: the podcasts

**How easy was it to find the podcast on myUCA?**

The majority of respondents had no problems locating the podcasts in the “Time Machine” course area on myUCA: 48% (12 students) found it very easy, and 44% (11 students) found it easy. Those with a disability or SPLD all found it easy. Only two students encountered difficulties, but they did not specify why.

Chart 1: How easy was it to find the podcast on myUCA?

**How easy was it to download and listen to the podcast?**

Again the majority of respondents found it very easy (32%, 8 students) or easy (52%, 13 students)

Chart 2: How easy was it to download and listen to the podcast?

Three students (two of whom had a disability or SPLD), found it difficult, and one very difficult. One student reported having a slow internet connection which was problematic, and other students found they weren’t able to make the download.

On looking at the layout of the podcasts on myUCA it seems that it may not be clear how to download and save the recordings for future reuse offline or away from the computer, although there is a “subscribe via iTunes” option at the top of the page. In future some guidance notes might be a useful addition to clarify methods of access.

**How do you expect the podcast to help you with your studies?**

Students were invited to select one of more options from: with notetaking, with recapping, due to having missed a lecture (in relation to a disability / medical condition), due to having missed a lecture (other reason) and with writing the essay.

Table 3 below shows the most common ways in which students expect the podcasts to be of benefit, and table 3a focuses on the responses from those students with a disability or SPLD.

Number of students

Ways podcasts may help

Chart 3: How do you expect the podcast to help with your studies? (All respondents)

Students’ responses match the research team’s expectation that all students, whether they have a disability or SPLD or not, would anticipate finding the recordings most useful for notetaking and recapping at their own convenience. It will be interesting to find out more about this when we conduct focus groups with the students to find out exactly how they used the recordings over the course of the unit.

Number of students

Ways podcasts may help

Chart 3a: How do you expect the podcast to help with your studies? (Respondents with a disability or SPLD)

**How interested would you be in using podcasting in other parts of your course?**

Chart 4: How interested would you be in using podcasting in other parts of your course?

The majority of questionnaire respondents have a positive attitude towards the use of podcasting as an aid to their learning at UCA. When asked why they would be interested in extending podcasting to other areas of their university experience a variety of responses were received: these are quoted verbatim below.

* “It is often difficult to take notes as well as respond and pay attention. Listening back to podcasting would help in all lectures and briefings”
* “Don't see where podcasting could be used as part of my course however if there are demos etc. that are vitally important then maybe podcasting would be good.”
* “Makes it easier to recap over things you didn't understand or missed”
* “I find it hard to write notes and keep listening to further information - I have a tendency to struggle keeping up with the lecturers when writing my own notes. Podcasts are very helpful”
* “because I forget easily and need a reminder sometimes (especially if its boring subject)”\*
* “If you forgot what the tutor said, you can find it out at your own leisure.”
* “This would be helpful in recapping.”\*
* “would be useful”\*
* “Some aspects, such as key lectures, may need reiterating, however others not so much.”
* “Very interested because of the above reasons mentioned in number 6.” (The student had stated s/he would expect the podcast to help with notetaking, recapping, essay writing and catching-up on a missed lecture)

\* = comments from students with a disability or SPLD.

Again, these comments give a very useful insight into students’ experience in the lecture situation, some of the difficulties faced and their openness to using alternative approaches if it can be provided in a reliable and accessible way.

The questionnaire finally asked for any additional comments, and these are quoted below:

* “I have noticed that, by having the podcasts, people are not bothering to go into lectures, because they can just listen to it.”
* “I wish and hope that this system could be introduced to every single university and lecture. In this way, the students can gain MORE out of their studies, which secures a great success in number of students graduating at a higher level.”
* “I used the podcasts that are available for research and recapping on our lecture; they are helpful and seem to be good quality.”
* “I had difficulty in hearing the podcast, it was too quiet”
* “Using podcasts will make the university more technologically advanced although for some students it could be used as an excuse to miss lectures”
* “The podcast is a brilliant idea!!!”

These comments raise one of the concerns already identified by the research team, notably the effect on attendance figures if lecture recordings are made available. However research currently suggests that the provision of podcasts does not have a negative impact on lecture attendance (see “Review of podcasting research” published by University of Sussex, linked here (<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/tldu/resources/rustle>)

## 7.3 Focus group analysis - Students

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Focus group 1 | Students | 7 (2 students with disability / dyslexia) |
| Focus group 2 | Students | 4 (1 student with disability / dyslexia) |
| Focus group 3 | Academics | 3 teaching staff (plus one via email) |

All students attending both focus groups had listened to the podcasts, some more than once; one student had listened to one lecture four times.

When asked for the reasons that they had listened to the podcasts, we received the following responses:

* “because I missed the first lecture”
* “just to recap, taking notes and listening, you cant do both”
* “Specific areas that you weren’t sure like you didn’t understand it properly”
* “Also you could quote our lectures in essays from myUCA so it was an additional resource for quotes”

When we asked if at the start of the unit when we announced that we were recording the lectures, whether they thought it would be useful or not, and whether the podcasts met their expectations, we received the following responses:

* “I didn’t think I’d use it as much as I did, it was really helpful”
* “it was also really good knowing it was there in case I needed it”

When asked if they accessed some lectures more than others, the following were some of the responses:

* “Yes the difficult ones”
* “The confusing ones”
* “Psychoanalysis one came in very handy”

When asked when they had accessed the lectures, most explained that they had accessed the podcasts most when writing the essay

* “Several weeks after when you couldn’t remember exactly what was said, basic outline of things like the psychoanalysis one”
* “Listening while typing essay.”
* “For notes”
* “Yeah and gives a base to research from”

Most of the participants had accessed the podcasts at home and had looked at the slides at the same time as listening.

In terms of difficulties, the only difficulty recorded by one student was that they found one podcast a bit quiet and it was also requested that it would be good to get an indication of when to turn the pages.

When asked if they felt podcasts would replace students’ attendance at the original lecture, the participants made the following responses:

* “No, I don’t think so, if you just listened, you wouldn’t really understand the message of the lecture”
* “I know some used it as an excuse to not go to the lecture but it s not the same as you cant ask questions and cant get any feedback from the lecturer”
* “Also they’re looking at slides and don’t know which are talking about”
* “I had a day off because I was ill and found the podcasts really helpful because getting notes from friends not the same. I know that kind of people that didn’t come in wouldn’t come in anyway”

When asked of any other negative aspects or downsides, participants responded as follows:

* “May be just for the lecturer might be uncomfortable him. For us its completely fine”
* “I know that technology can be a big thing, not everyone is used to it, what about the people that aren’t so computer minded?”
* “Some students don’t own a laptop so they cant access it, maybe another way to access, like something from the library to take home”

And it was suggested that:

* “Yeah DVD would be really good”
* “They could put slides in as well and then could link to audio”

When ask whether recording lectures was something they had come across before, one student responded that:

* “I know my boyfriends uni, Hertfordshire, they do, really big on the whole technology”

When asked how they would normally record lectures, i.e. whether they would you take notes or make their own recording, participants responded as follows;

* “Take notes, but when writing take notes you normally miss things”
* “I normally find that they talk so fast you kind of ahhhh”
* “Any then they move the slide on when you’re half way through a sentence”
* “Some students brought in a Dictaphone but not everyone has a Dictaphone”
* “Usually just the pen and paper method”

We asked the students whether there were any other areas of university where it could help your learning to have podcasts, participants suggested the following:

* “Maybe briefings”
* “Could do a podcast for when we had someone from industry show their portfolio and stuff. Sort of like a lecture, someone speaking with PowerPoint”
* “Student union might, could be interesting, so everyone could access what is happening around the university
* “Photoshop”

The final comment from one participating student was:

* “I think it’s a good idea, like its natural, we need it”

## 7.4 Focus group analysis – Staff

The lecture series included 5 lecturers, three of who participated in the focus group discussion and one who sent his comments to input electronically.

**Q - How easy did you find it to record the lectures and upload to MyUCA? Was the technical support essential? Q – Is there any other support you would need to do this in the future?**

All the lectures were recorded successfully and uploaded onto MyUCA with associated PowerPoint with the exception of one. This confirmed that the process for recording the lectures was assisted by the Resources Coordinator; Phil Marsh who made sure the lead lecturer knew what he was doing and then that was passed onto the other lecturers. After the lecture the recording was passed back to the Resources Coordinator; to upload onto MyUCA.

Feedback on this was that you need to think about dress code in terms of being able to attach the recording device and hold the Dictaphone.

There were mixed feelings about the need for support to upload the lectures. One of the lecturers in particular felt it would be good to have some autonomy over this so that he could upload briefings and lectures as needed. Others felt they would like some support.

Discussion also covered expectations in terms of how long lectures would be kept on MyUCA. It was felt that the materials should only be on MyUCA for the duration of the current academic year. So if for example the same lecture is given the following year, the new current lecture is the uploaded lecture. There should not be an archive of previous lectures on MyUCA as then this would risk things getting out of date.

The issue of being able to ask for certain lectures, in a series, not to be podcasted was also discussed. It was felt that the lecturer should have the choice of saying “no not this lecture”; i.e. that lecturers retain the control of their materials.

***Comments:***

* “Should be a caveat because there is always potential for mistakes and people should have right to say “that one is not ready” whilst appreciating that the newer sessions can have a value for teaching”.
* “Is there a self destruct?”
* “The lectures should always be re-recorded every year.”

The issue of copyright was also raised later in the focus group and it was felt that this should be clarified within UCA. Lectures, which are recorded, and podcast via MyUCA are actually password protected but this is also an issue for students who have their own recording device, for example, because they have dyslexia.

**Q - How did you feel about being recorded?**

Generally the feedback from the lecturers was that they did not mind the feeling of being recorded itself. However, discussion on this area brought up some interesting issues, including the extent of scripting within a lecture and the impact recording may have on this:

***Comments:***

* “when delivering a lecture, you are not necessarily sticking to a script. ….. I think most people would be slightly concerned about the destination of the material. Maybe a question, when downloaded from myUCA, ….. whether we are happy with the quality of it in terms of its distribution.”
* “in a lecture series there is a sense that it is slightly ad hoc, and I wouldn’t want sentences to be extracted where there might have been a lot of iteration, for a lecture like that wouldn’t want to be scripted. If not completely scripted, wouldn’t want people using as if it was scripted.”
* “(a lecture) doesn’t represent a definitive stance. Also you are giving a beginning of something and then the student goes away and chase a definitive, your job is to make it accessible …”
* “you are not giving all that infrastructure of referencing as you would if you were publishing, might be represented in your slides but not in the sound recording. Quite a lot of materials that I was talking about I have published so I might want to finish lectures saying if you would like to quote me, please refer to my publications.”

**Q - How do you think the recordings impacted on students learning?**

In terms of direct impact, it was felt that it was difficult to define and indeed we had decided at the beginning of the research project that we would not look at attainment figures as an area to be too large an area to research effectively and scientifically within the remit of this project. Generally, it was felt that the podcasts could only have had a positive impact:

* “I am sure that being able to engage with (podcasts), can only have a positive impact.”

Indeed this had been considered when developing the project and felt outside the scope of this research project.

However, the discussion did raise some interesting pedagogic issues, including the skill of notetaking, whether this is innate or can or should be taught, the value of notetaking depending on learning style and the impact of podcasting on attendance.

* “one (concern) is that students will not take full notes in the lecture? And there is something about the discipline (of notetaking) that represents the fullness of a lecture, reduce, practice, a really useful process, will they not do that because they don’t have to”

This in turn led to a discussion on how notetaking is learnt and whether this should be incorporated within the course/unit.

* “possible way is to make notes people take used to represent the research, representation of the notes, …. there is that possibility that peoples notes, full set of lecture notes could form part of the marks. Can still write them later using the podcast. ….It starts to feel like something that needs to go hand in hand with this?”
* “I think there needs to be lecture etiquette in terms of notetaking? I think we could say at the beginning this is what we expect? Most people would have a basis on which to do this.”
* “I find it difficult to understand that some people find it easier to understand verbally than seeing on a piece of paper.”

With regards to attendance, while this was raised as a potential concern, the lecture series within this research was well attended. There was a level of expectation with regards to notetaking as a skill that students should come with, however, when asked about support for students with dyslexia or disabilities, responses were quite different.

**Q - In terms of support for students with dyslexia / disabilities is there anything you would normally do?**

* “Lecture on CD – a personal thing on my part, I am sure it helps.”
* “Dyslexia – nowadays, using PowerPoint, you almost always capture you slides, makes easier for dyslexic students and international students.”

It was understood as normal practice to provide students with dyslexia with the PowerPoint demonstrating an understanding that handouts can help a dyslexic students learning; i.e. providing them with a framework which helps understand and retain during the lecture and also enables annotation of key or interesting points. However, there was the suggestion that all other students should notetake and be able to. This raises a couple of interesting issues in terms of inclusion and the skill of notetaking that should perhaps be considered further. Students with or without dyslexia should ideally all be able to develop the skill of notetaking in some format although with varying amounts of input, if this is not an innate skills does there need to be more focus on teaching this as a skill for all students. As highlighted at the beginning of this paper, providing handouts and podcasts can be an anticipatory means of making provision for different learning styles regardless of whether someone has a label, of “dyslexia” for example.

A couple of other issues raised on support for students with disabilities. Firstly, lecturers would need to consider profoundly deaf students who would not be able to benefit from podcasts; would transcription or video footage be an option. Secondly, assistive technology was raised by the interviewer and there was a lack of awareness of the software available, such as text to speech software. This was discussion on how tutors could make use of the software for turning briefs into spoken mp3 files and students could be encouraged by tutors to make use of the software, for example for reading, research, proofreading their essays if the tutors were more aware of what the software can do.

**Q - Have any experience of podcasting at other universities – either as a lecturer or a student? Do you think we are playing catch up?**

It was felt that we may be slightly behind other universities in terms of using technology such as podcasts but that face to face attendance is highly valued and there was a strong feeling that podcasting should in no way replace the face to face learning experience.

* “always resisted giving students a pack of stuff, never been any sympathy for that approach. Always tried to keep the human face to face thing going.”
* “I don’t think we should view ourselves as being slow, I think face to face human contact is important, a priority to us, this is an adjunct and not a replacement.”

**Q - Do you have any other ideas of where audio or visual recordings could be useful?**

It was felt that podcasts could be useful for guest lectures and briefings. In particular for briefings, it would pick up on the examples and questions rather than just the document.

It was noted that the entire CG Maya curriculum is videoed in terms of the desktop is recorded and the mouse movements which is accompanied by written tutorials. If this was accompanied with a podcast, it was felt that the verbal instructions would need to be very clear and scripted so as to avoid the fluidity, which is beneficial in lectures.

**Q - How likely would you be to podcast again in the future?**

The response to this question was that the lecturers would like to use podcasting again although clarification on storage, copyright and technical support would be required.

* “We will be using them especially as it is a digital course, it is a no brainer not to engage with these.”

8. Analysis and Conclusions

* The podcasts were agreed to be easy to find and listen to via myUCA
* Students were positive and receptive to the use of podcasts as part of their educational experience and expected the podcasts to be most useful for notetaking and recapping purposes.
* In general the lecturers mirrored the students with regards to continued motivation for attendance and enthusiasm for the idea of podcasting.
* Making materials accessible in different formats is proactive and anticipatory in terms of supporting the learning of students with disclosed and diagnosed learning difficulties and those without.

The discussions did raise a number of issues:

* It was noted that control of recordings is actually higher with podcasting than students own recordings, issues to do with copyright, length of time the podcasts should be stored, misuse of podcasts should all be addressed in a policy. There is a need for clarity on how the podcasts would be used in terms of storage, archiving, appropriate use of the podcasts (e.g. whether it is appropriate to quote from them).
* Process and guidance would be needed to accompany any loan of a Dictaphone from the library i.e. practical instructions on how to use. Back up support from the Resources team would also be important especially initially.
* Consideration of learning styles / skill of notetaking may be useful – should there be further embedding of the teaching of this skill rather than an assumption that students arrive with this skills.
* There is a lack of awareness of accessibility software already available to all students and staff; via LLRC libraries and staff computers.

# 9. Recommendations

* Discussion of notetaking / learning styles
* Research team to disseminate findings of the research possibly through a brochure (as suggested at the T & L workshop) and through a case study.
* A UCA policy on recording (and podcasting) of lectures – copyright, storage and appropriate usage. This would include guidance on appropriate use of podcasts or individual recordings and inappropriate usage as academic misconduct.
* The research team will produce guidance on the storage of equipment in library including cataloguing the dictaphones.
* Research team to feedback to LLRC, SDS, Teaching and Learning and Learning and Development the need to raise awareness of accessibility software available to all students and staff

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# Appendix 1 - Survey

### Welcome

As you are attending the 'Time Machine' lectures, you can listen to podcasts of the lectures. The podcasts are in the "Time Machine" unit on My UCA.
Please would you also complete this very short anonymous survey. It should take about 5 minutes.

**The purpose of this survey...**
We (The research team) want to know if podcasts give you better access to your course material. Your feedback is important to help develop podcasting further at UCA

**The Research Team ....**
.. from LLRC, Central Resources and Student Development Services are:
Lucy Hannaford -- Subject Librarian
Phil March -- Assistant Resources Manager
Clare Matysova -- Disability Support Services Manager

**Returning your survey**
Please complete by 14th May 2010

### Data Protection statement

**What will happen to the information I provide?**
The data you provide will be used only for the purpose of the 'Art of Podcasting' research project. The data will be kept secure and confidential with the research project team. Summaries will be included in the project report to the Teaching and Learning department on completion of the project. If you have any queries or would like a copy of the report, please contact one of the project team: Lucy Hannaford, Philip Marsh or Clare Matysova.

Cookies, personal data stored by your Web browser, are not used in this survey.

### Podcast questionnaire

Note that once you have clicked on the CONTINUE button your answers are submitted and you can not return to review or amend that page.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Part A - Background Information About Yourself** |  |
| **1.**  Do you consider yourself as having a disability, long term medical condition or a specific learning difficulty, such as dyslexia?  |    |
| Yes   No

|  |
| --- |
| If yes, have you previously shared this information with UCA? Yes   No    |

 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Part B - The Lectures** |  |
| **2.**  Do you normally use the following to assist your learning during lectures?  |    |
|

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|   |     |  **How would you rate the usefulness of this?**   |
|   |  **Yes**    |  **No**   |  **Essential**   |  **Useful**   |  **Not Useful**   |  **Not applicable**   |
|  **a.** Take my own notes  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  **b.** Lecture handouts  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  **c.** Making my own recording (e.g. on a dictaphone)  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  **d.** Other  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  **e.** None  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **3.**  Do you ever find it difficult to attend lectures?  |    |
| Regularly   Occasionally   Rarely   Never

|  |
| --- |
| If you do have difficulties attending lectures, what are reasons for this?  (Optional) Due to disability   Due to medical condition   Other (please specify):    |

 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Part C: The Podcasts** |  |
| **4.**  How easy was it to find the podcast on MyUCA?  |    |
| Very easy   Easy   Difficult   Very difficult

|  |
| --- |
| If you found it 'difficult' or 'very difficult' to find the podcast, please explain why?  (Optional)  |

 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **5.**  How easy was it to download and listen to the podcast?  |    |
| Very easy   Easy   Difficult   Very Difficult

|  |
| --- |
| If you found it 'difficult' or 'very difficult' to download the podcast, please explain why?  (Optional)  |

 |
| **6.**  How do you expect the podcast to help you with your studies? (Select one or more option below)     (select all that apply)  |    |
| With notetaking   With recapping   Due to having missed a lecture (in relation to disability / medical condition)   Due to having missed a lecture (other reason)   With writing the essay   Other (please specify): |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **7.**  How interested would you be in using podcasting in other parts of your course?  |    |
| Very interested   Fairly interested   Not very interested   Not at all interested

|  |
| --- |
| Why?  (Optional)  |

 |
| **8.**  If you have any other comments, please add here:  (Optional)  |    |
|  |

# Appendix 2 – Project Information Sheet

***The Art of Podcasting***

Project Information Sheet

**Aims and objectives of the study**

The project research is focused on the use of podcasting at UCA. The research specifically looks at students with a disability and / or a specific learning difficulty, such as dyslexia, to gain their feedback on the benefits of podcasting as a way of making their course material more accessible.

The research team is::

* Lucy Hannaford, Subject Librarian, 01643 888638, email: lhannaford@ucreative.ac.uk
* Phil Marsh, Assistant Resources Manager 01643 888661, email: pmarsh@ucreative.ac.uk
* Clare Matysova, Disability Support Services Manager01634 888714, email: cmatysova@ucreative.ac.uk

The research is sponsored by the UCA Teaching and Learning research team and will take place at UCA Rochester during Semester 2 of 0910 academic year.

**Methodology**

Lectures in the Time Machine / Modernity and Modernism unit will be recorded and made available via podcast on myUCA. All students attending these lectures will be able to access the podcasts of the lectures via the unit materials on myUCA. ***All students who do access the podcasts will be asked to complete a very short anonymous survey asking for feedback.***

***Additionally***, we will be inviting any students who have a disability and / or SPLD, whether previously disclosed at UCA or not, to give their feedback on the podcasts in more detail at focus groups. ***Students who would like to participate in the focus groups will need to***:

* Contact the project team (above) to confirm they would like to participate
* Download and listen to at least one podcast
* At the end of the lecture series, attend a focus group interview.
* At the focus group, we will ask students about the benefits and / or disadvantages of podcasting as a way of making their course material more accessible.

Participation is voluntary. Focus group interviews will be recorded so they can be analysed for the purposes of the research. Research summaries will be anonymous. Recordings will be destroyed following completion of the research project.

Project members and participating lecturers will also be invited to interviews to evaluate the potential systems and processes required for podcasting across the University. The process of creating, storing and managing podcasting will be recorded by means of a project blog to provide input to the final report together with statistics on the actual use of podcasts made available.

**Findings**

We will be reporting the research findings to the Teaching and Learning department on completion of the project. The intended purpose of the findings will be to inform future development of podcasting at UCA for all students if this is found to be an effective learning and teaching method. We will make the findings available to all participants.

***The Art of Podcasting***

Consent Form

I have read and understood the information sheet about the project and agree with the following statements:

I have been given the opportunity to ask any additional questions that I have about the research project and what I’m expected to do and these questions have been answered by the researcher.

I understand that I will participate in a focus group about the ‘Art of Podcasting’ and that the focus group will take approximately one hour and will be audio-recorded for research purposes.

I understand that any reference to my focus group made in research presentations, reports and articles and so on, personal, organisational and place names will be changed (anonymised) so that I, and any other individuals mentioned, cannot be identified.

I understand that as required under the Data Protection Act (1998) you will not pass on my details to anyone else and information from my focus group will be held securely.

I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and that if I wish to withdraw from the study or to leave, I may do so at any time, and that I do not need to give any reasons or explanations for doing so.

I understand that I will not receive any direct benefit from participating in the study but that my participation will add to current knowledge and may benefit others in the future.

I understand that I will be sent a report on the project findings at the end of the project if I wish.

□ Yes, I do want a copy of the project report

□ No, I would rather not have a copy

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, have read and understood the above

Information and agree to participate in this research project on the ‘Art of Podcasting’ that is being conducted by Lucy Hannaford, Phillip Marsh and Clare Matysova at the University for the Creative Arts.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_