



Podcast Policy

Podcast vs. Livestream vs. Hybrid/Online Course

The term *podcast* usually denotes a “digital audio file of speech, music, broadcast material, etc.” (OED online, July 2023). However, in what follows, the term will be used to refer to recordings that also include an image track (e.g. slides and/or a video of the speaker).

The term *livestream*, by contrast, refers to a “live broadcast of an event, etc., over the internet” (OED online, July 2023). Generally speaking, students who attend a course via livestream will have to expect that they cannot join in classroom activities (i.e. this format will usually not allow them to interact with other participants and/or the instructors).

In this, livestreams differ from *hybrid* as well as from *online courses*, both of which are designed with a remote audience in mind. In other words, the online participants of a hybrid or online course can expect to be able to participate actively in all or most classroom activities (e.g. asking questions or joining discussions).

Note: A lecture that is streamed live may, but does not have to be podcast, i.e. it may or may not be made available for asynchronous viewing.

Survey on Podcasts: The Students’ Perspective

During the spring semester 2023, the UZH English Department conducted a survey on lecture courses that included a range of questions concerning podcasts. The vast majority of the over 110 respondents were in favor of the department providing podcasts for all lecture courses (though not necessarily for discussion-based formats like seminars). Most of the respondents also expressed a desire that these podcasts be made available without any time restrictions, i.e. until the module in question has been completed.

Even so, many respondents were willing to concede that there may be reasons why podcasts or livestreams will not always be provided. At the same time, they stressed that students with a chronic illness and/or disability should be given access to podcasts if this is required by their official accommodation measures (*nachteilsausgleichende Massnahmen*; NTA).

Additional Considerations: Collective Learning and Instructors’ Well-Being

The UZH English Department recognizes that the experience of the lockdowns of 2020 and 2021, combined with technological and infrastructural changes, has affected the way we think about learning, studying, and teaching. At the same time, we strongly believe that the ‘collective learning experience’ – gathering in one space, talking to fellow students, and meeting instructors in person – remains a vital part of one’s studies. In addition, we must be mindful of instructors’ well-being, as many members of staff have found teaching in almost empty lecture halls or in front of blank screens extremely draining and demoralizing – in part because such setups leave them feeling entirely disconnected from their students.



Podcast Policy of the UZH English Department: Seven Core Principles

In light of the above considerations, the UZH English Department has decided to adopt the following policies concerning podcasts and/or livestreams:

1. Except where explicitly noted in the official course catalog, courses offered by the UZH English Department take place on site.
2. There is no general right for students to be given access to podcasts or livestreams, nor are students allowed to make their own recordings without instructors' prior consent. Where podcasts or livestreams are available, the following caveats apply:
 - a. "Due to the possibility of technical malfunctions, individual lectures may fail to be recorded or not be available as a livestream. Therefore, should students decide not to attend a lecture or take their own notes, they do so at their own risk.
 - b. For technical reasons, permanent availability of the recordings cannot be guaranteed.
 - c. In the event of contradictions in content, lecture notes or other material declared as relevant for examinations take precedence over podcasts and livestreams. Should there be any uncertainty or questions, the instructor should be contacted immediately." (quoted from: UZH Fact Sheet "Podcasts and Livestreaming at UZH: Information for Teaching Staff and Organizers of Public Events," 31 January 2024)
 - d. Even if a podcast or livestream is made available, students will have to bear in mind that the course in question was very likely designed with an onsite audience in mind (i.e. that there will be a make-do or 'second-best' quality to most such podcasts or livestreams).
3. It is pedagogical considerations, rather than technical feasibility, that will determine whether podcasts and/or livestreams are offered in any given module. These pedagogical considerations will vary, depending on the module content and the desired learning outcomes.
4. Based on pedagogical considerations and empirical findings, the UZH English Department has decided not to offer podcasts for lectures in mandatory modules.
5. The UZH English Department does not usually provide podcasts or livestreams for seminars, colloquia, and other discussion-based formats.
6. Acknowledging students' need for flexibility, the UZH English Department will aim to offer elective lectures that can be attended fully online on occasion (via livestream, podcast, or both). In such lectures, exams will also be conducted online, during the weekly time slot indicated in the UZH course catalog.
7. In line with the current policy of the UZH Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, no podcasts not already listed in the course catalog will be offered based on NTAs.