

# Create a Talking Head Video

This user guide explains how to plan, record and produce a video in which the presenter is the focus – commonly known as a **talking head video**.

A talking head shot is usually a medium close-up or a portrait close-up. The presenter can either speak directly to the camera, or can be looking slightly off camera in what is called a  $\frac{3}{4}$  profile. It's one of the most common shots in video production and used frequently for online presenting.

The University supported software for recording video is **Panopto**, which is integrated with MyAberdeen and can be used to host and record content for your students. We will therefore focus on how to edit your video using Panopto, although other video editors are available. Detailed guidance about operating Panopto can be found in our [Panopto](#) resource.

Most sections of this guide have a short companion video which you'll find in the video carousel – look for **Video References** to direct you to the correct video. You can work through this guide step-by-step, from start to finish, or if you're struggling with one particular aspect, you can skip to the relevant section.

## Contents

Pre-production .....	2
Storyboarding .....	2
Scripting .....	3
Film Environment .....	4
Lighting .....	4
Camera .....	5
Microphone .....	5
Environment and clothing .....	6
Delivery .....	6
Post-Production in Panopto (editing) .....	7
Trimming and Timeline .....	7
Removing Errors .....	7
University Branding .....	7
Adding ASR (automatic speech recognition) Captions .....	8
Accessibility .....	8
Captions and Subtitles .....	8
Transcript .....	8
Colour contrast .....	9
Font choices .....	9
Signposting and Support .....	10
Panopto .....	10
eLearning .....	10
Accessibility .....	10

# Pre-production

## Storyboarding

To create a high-quality video, it is essential to plan out what content you want to cover so that you can source any images, clips or presentations before you begin. This stage of the process is called 'storyboarding'.

You don't need to be good at art to create a storyboard – you simply need to indicate whom or what will be on-screen at given points. Here are a couple of approaches, both of which do the job perfectly.

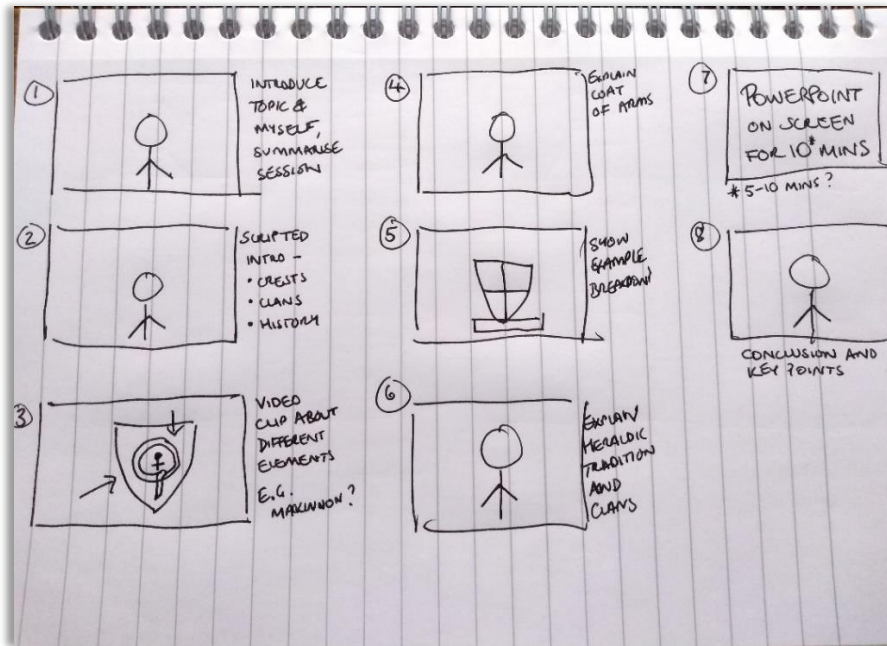


Figure 1: Simple, hand-drawn storyboard

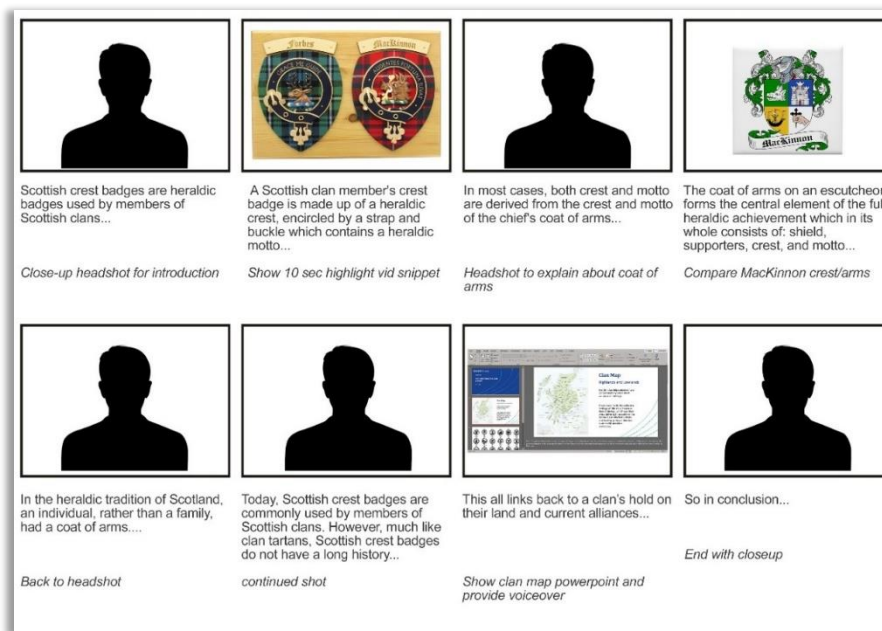


Figure 2: Storyboard created in layout software, e.g. PowerPoint

Panopto can capture slides, camera, microphone and computer screen so you might want to think at this point about which of these functions you want to use, and at what points during your recording.

We recommend keeping videos to around ten minutes long so that the viewer remains engaged and the information is easy to digest. It is also a good idea to think about breaking up your content into smaller sections. Not only is this more likely to keep the viewer engaged, it also brings new energy to the start of each section.

## Scripting

The script can be written before, during or after you create your storyboard and you can use it to structure your video and make it more accessible.

The average person speaks at somewhere between 125 and 150 words per minute, so if you're speaking for around ten minutes, your total word count will be between 1250 and 1500 words.

You might choose to read your script verbatim. We wouldn't normally recommend this as it can come across as reading rather than presenting, however there are some circumstances where it might be necessary. In such cases, consider using a teleprompter to display the script so that you don't have to look down. You can use a simple solution to display the script – for example, a second monitor, or even handwritten notes taped to the wall. There are also more expensive solutions such as teleprompter apps and projectors.

As an alternative to a wholly scripted presentation, we recommend using flashcards or bullet points as a quick reference guide for your recording. This has several advantages:

- You won't have to try to remember the entire script
- You won't be distracted by attempting to read the information word-for-word
- You can present in a more natural way, allowing you to add your own insights and personality
- You can focus on the most important part of presenting – your energy and enthusiasm

Your delivery is equally as important as the content. You're much more likely to hold the viewers' attention if your presentation is engaging and delivered with confidence. You'll find further guidance in our section on **Error! Reference source not found.** below.

If you *do* decide to use bullet points or flashcards to prompt you, these can easily be displayed on a second monitor, handwritten poster, or even a whiteboard.

SCRIPT	PROMPTS
<p>Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur. Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt mollit anim id est laborum.</p> <p>Suspendisse potenti. Vivamus nec volutpat leo. Nulla quis pulvinar dui. Aenean vehicula leo tellus, vel pharetra dui pulvinar eu. Curabitur feugiat libero ac diam dictum, aliquam mattis ante dignissim. Donec placerat placerat arcu et egestas. Sed vel libero eu mi interdum mollis consequat et magna.</p> <p>Proin feugiat neque tellus. Nullam rhoncus nulla imperdiet, blandit mauris in, pretium dolor. Etiam et interdum eros. Proin convallis metus vestibulum ultrices semper. Donec euismod, nisi vel vehicula pellentesque, tellus tellus, lacus lacus, et vestibulum dolor ipsum ut amet arcu. Morbi ac lacus ut amet turpis tristique vehicula.</p> <p>In sed augue et leo congue convallis et nec diam. Mauris non lacinia urna. Cras a eros ut nunc blandit inculcitur in ac dolor. Sed vehicula dolor non turpis tulum consequat. Donec accumsan, leo in facilisis tristique, justo mi cursus turpis, eu luctusque mi nisi sed orci. Aenean quis ante ac lorem commodo lacus et id odio. Duis semper, ipsum sed vehicula vehicula, velit nunc bibendum massa, ut malesuada nibh ex eu dolor. Duis et dignissim massa. Duis eu est, aliquet et orci id feugiat consequat lorem. Ut vel fermentum risus. Vestibulum id tortor diam. Etiam semper velit non orci maximus aliquet vel vol orci.</p> <p>Suspendisse id elementum ex. Suspendisse sodales in orci vel elementum. Vestibulum ante ipsum primis in faucibus orci luctus et ultrices posuere cubilia curae; Suspendisse efficit pharetra euismod. Sed fella fella, ultramcorper or ultrices vitae, portitor id nisl. Phasellus orci arcu, suscipit et quam eget, lacus pulvinar nulla. Proin seductor tortor et amet suscipit ex egestas. Orci varius natoque penatibus et magnis dis parturient montes, nascetur ridiculus mus. Proin tellus tellus mauris in, quis tristique interdum congue et. Pellentesque commodo est et amet egest accumsan sodales. Phasellus dictum dignissim tortor, vitae semper nulla volutpat ac.</p> <p>Curabitur condimentum dictum dui non lacinia. Donec mollis aliquam nulla, mollis sodales arcu maximus molestie. Nullam eget neque metus. Aenean sapien lacus, ultramcorper id tristique in, dignissim et orci. Nam vel euismod lacus, quis ultramcorper leo. Cras sed turpis, condimentum nec tellus in, luctus accumsan vari. Pellentesque pretium facilisis nulla. Aliquam lectus justo, accumsan non risa ac, condimentum pellentesque diam.</p> <p>Quisque pulvinar augue et egestas metus. Cras ipsum ante, portitor eget enim et, lobortis feugiat dolor. Integer nec consequat sem, eget ultrices libero. Suspendisse ornare libero a volutpat interdum. Sed vel lacus, ornare lacus accumsan, pellentesque pharetra sapien. Phasellus non lacus mauris. Vestibulum ante ipsum primis in faucibus orci luctus et ultrices posuere cubilia curae; Nulla placet et lacus et amet malesuada. Integer a dictum est, seductor semper mauris. Phasellus accumsan ante a bibendum sagittis.</p> <p>Maeenas eros peris, vestibulum nec est id, sodales eleifend mauris. Interdum et malesuada fames ac ante ipsum primis in faucibus. Aliquam tortor arcu, cursus eu aliquet quis, lobortis et nulla. Duis sed dapibus sapien. Proin tristique ultramcorper diam, a mattis metus. Phasellus volutpat vari id, eget lacus dolor portitor ultrices. Donec ante quam, tristique quis sed, molestie hendrerit orci. Integer vel elementum libero.</p> <p>In egestas eget ligula vitae commodo. In mollis, nulla eu placerat malesuada, mi augue blandit mauris, a tempus neque risus quis urna. Pellentesque aliquet lorem consoctetur est maximus, eu ornare lorem tempus.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna <b>[aliqua]</b></li><li>• Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt mollit anim id est laborum.</li><li>• Suspendisse potenti. Vivamus nec volutpat leo. Nulla quis pulvinar dui. Aenean vehicula leo tellus, vel pharetra dui pulvinar eu...</li><li>• Proin feugiat neque tellus. Nullam rhoncus nulla imperdiet, blandit mauris in, pretium dolor. Etiam et interdum eros...</li><li>• In sed augue ut leo congue convallis et nec diam. Mauris non lacinia urna. <b>[aliqua]</b></li><li>• Suspendisse id elementum ex. Suspendisse sodales in eros vel elementum. Vestibulum ante ipsum primis in faucibus orci luctus et ultrices posuere cubilia curae; 1, 2, 3</li><li>• Curabitur condimentum dictum dui non lacinia. Donec mollis aliquam nulla, mollis sodales arcu maximus molestie.</li><li>• Quisque pulvinar augue et egestas metus - cras ipsum ante, portitor eget enim et, lobortis feugiat dolor. Integer nec consequat sem, eget ultrices libero.</li><li>• Maeenas eros peris, vestibulum nec est id, sodales eleifend mauris. <b>[aliqua]</b></li><li>• In egestas eget ligula vitae commodo. In mollis, nulla eu placerat malesuada, mi augue blandit mauris, a tempus neque risus quis urna. Pellentesque aliquet lorem consoctetur est maximus, eu ornare lorem tempus.</li></ul>

Figure 3: Example of Script and Prompt card

---

## Film Environment

Regardless of the type of camera you use, make sure that it is close to you and that your head and shoulders are in-shot. Your eyes should be in the top one third of the frame, and your head in the centre. If you are using a Windows computer, the default 'Camera' app provides a framing grid within the settings cog that you can use to align yourself.

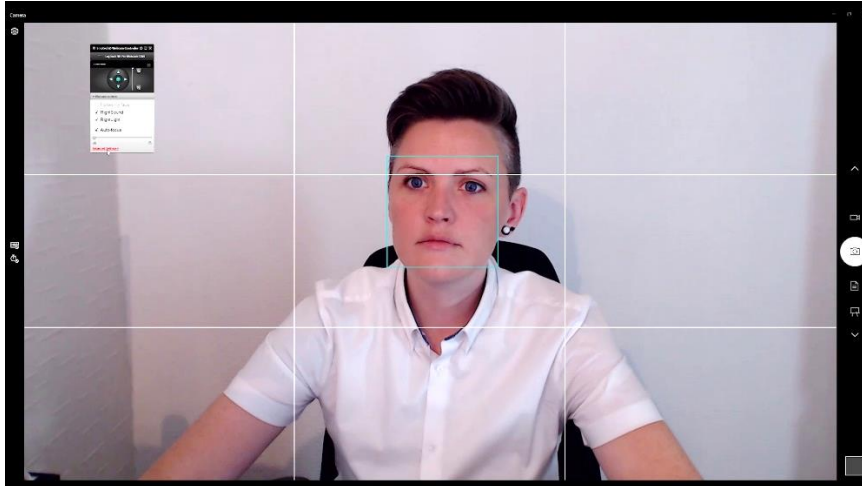


Figure 4: Framing yourself on screen

Filling the space on screen will project confidence; *you* are the main focus for the viewer, so make sure you can be seen clearly and are an appropriate distance from the camera. Also, consider your posture. Different postures convey different moods, so remember to match your physical behaviour to the subject matter. You may even prefer to stand up during your presentation to avoid slouching over time.

Ideally, your background should not be too distracting. We recommend using a solid colour such as a plain wall, or something that adds to the theme of the presentation without looking too cluttered.

**Video Reference:** For a walkthrough of this process, please see video #1.

## Lighting

Good lighting is extremely important, but you don't need expensive equipment to achieve this. Often the best place in your home or office for filming is the spot with the most convenient lighting – for example, the window is a good natural light source.

Use as much light as possible. If you look overexposed, or the shadows seem too harsh, try placing a white sheet over the window or opening/closing/angling blinds and curtains to control the light entering the room. Or if your image appears dim, add an additional desk lamp to your set. Note that lamps with positional necks create a softer light when focussed upwards at the wall rather than directly on the presenter.

Avoid positioning yourself in front of a light source, such as a window or lamp. You may appear in silhouette and this can make it more difficult for viewers to see your facial expressions, which are so essential to effective communication. Additionally, viewers who are deaf or hard of hearing rely on lip reading (in addition to closed captions), and viewers with sensitivity to light may experience discomfort from the harsh lighting.

For best results, make sure the light source is coming from the same direction as the camera or slightly off to the side.

**Video Reference:** For examples and tips about lighting, please see video #2.

---

## Camera

You can use any video camera to film a talking head, including a tablet or smartphone. However, these will need to be stabilised during filming, so you might consider using a tripod or stand. Make sure your device is in landscape mode so that the recording is the right aspect ratio for editing or watching.

Make sure your camera is positioned at face/eye-level and avoid awkward angles that focuses on your nose or forehead.

In many cases you may be using the built-in webcam on your laptop, which is ideal for use with programs such as Panopto. Some standalone webcams have additional options such as zoom, brightness, focus, follow motion, etc., so it's worth checking if you can improve the image quality before you begin.

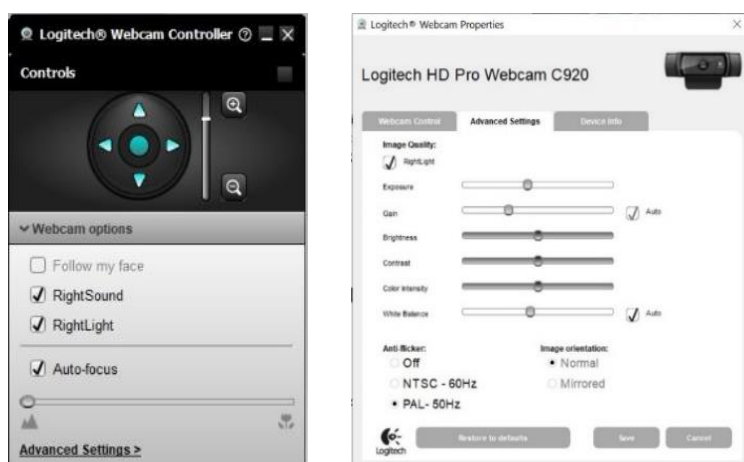


Figure 5: Webcam settings

**Video Reference:** For more information about cameras, please see video #3.

## Microphone

If you have an external microphone you can use for recording, this will always give the highest quality audio and should be your first choice. However, a headset or clip-on mic can also record good quality audio.

The microphone should be close enough to capture crisp audio. If you are wearing a headset, make sure it is positioned slightly below or to the side of your mouth so that it doesn't pick up loud breath sounds. Speak clearly and articulate well for the best possible recording.

Panopto does not have extensive audio production features, so you will not be able to improve the quality much beyond the original recording. Because of this, our best advice is to ensure you are in the quietest environment possible, that windows are closed, and that all computer and phone notifications are silenced. If possible, avoid filming in a room with too many hard surfaces such as a large lounge with hardwood floors as this can create or increase echoes. Smaller rooms with soft furnishings (at least directly in front of the presenter) soak up audio and prevent reverb. And if at any point during the recording you become aware of unwanted sounds such as a doorbell, dog bark, or errant child, simply stop for a moment and continue once the noise has abated.

**Video Reference:** For a walkthrough of this process, please see video #4.

---

## Environment and clothing

Now that your camera, microphone and lights are set up, the final checks should be your filming environment and clothing. The area on-screen around you should be clean, clear and appropriate for filming. Clothing choice is also important as many designs such as stripes, checks and complex patterns appear to 'dance' or strobe on video.

Have a practice run. Record a few paragraphs of your video and use it as a test recording. Check for any lighting issues, sound problems and how you appear on-screen – you can fix any issues now before you record the full version.

## Delivery

Practicing your delivery will also help to put you more at ease as the process will become more familiar.

Business Film Booth recommend a technique called 'Panto Mode' for engaging delivery:

*"To come across as human, genuine and utterly spontaneous in your talking head video then you need to try Panto Mode. This a device which will banish the fear from your eyes and make you look like you've been presenting for years.*

*To pull off Panto Mode, you need to project at 120% of the level you usually would. More expression, more exaggerated body language, longer pauses, basically like you would if you were the lead in a pantomime.*

*To start with it's going to feel very forced and unnatural. The key to getting this right is to film yourself presenting the same line, multiple times with different levels of energy. When you watch the line back, you'll notice just how hard it is to look ridiculous on video. The camera sucks so much life out of us that we've got to put a lot back in."*<sup>1</sup>

Our experienced Media Services team recommend smiling while recording voiceover or video; it warms the voice, improves inflection, and helps to project your voice.

Filming a talking head video can be time consuming and labour intensive. Don't worry if it's not right on the first take – most talking head videos rely on multiple takes, or clever editing. If you make a mistake while speaking, simply start that particular sentence again; there is no need to stop recording and start over from the beginning as you can use a video editor to remove your mistake. A good tip is to create a visual indicator that you have made an error, so that it's easy to find and remove when you are editing later. This could be a wave, clap, or a hand over the camera.

**Video Reference:** For an overview of this process, please see video #5.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://businessfilmbooth.com/how-to-make-the-best-talking-head-videos/> Accessed 10.05.20



---

## Post-Production in Panopto (editing)

You can use any video editor – such as Adobe Premiere Pro, Premiere Elements, Windows Video Editor or Apple iMovie – to edit your video; but if you have recorded with Panopto, you can use tools within the program for easy editing.

You can think about trimming your video, deciding where it begins and where it should end. You can edit sections to remove mistakes or gaps in content. You also have the option to zoom in or make small adjustments to the brightness and colour.

### Trimming and Timeline

Play your video from the beginning and pause it right before you'd like it to start. Select the cut tool and click and drag the grey line to trim out the section of the video.

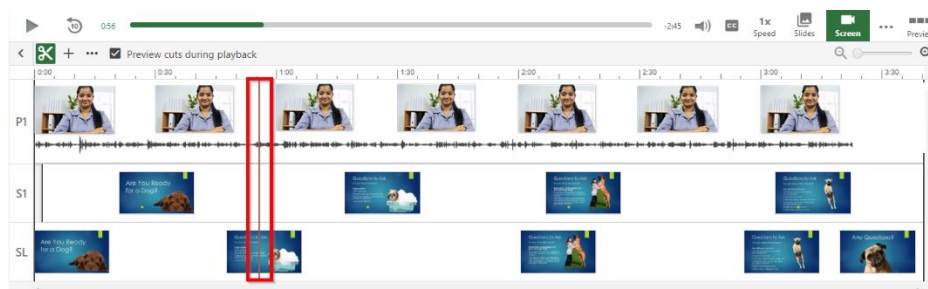


Figure 6: Trimming the timeline in Panopto

**Video Reference:** This process is completed in video #6 on the carousel.

### Removing Errors

To cut a section from the middle of the video, position the cursor over the point you would like to start the edit, click and drag to the right and then let go at the point you want the cut to end. This will remove the highlighted area from the video and add a new handle at each edit point to allow you to fine tune your cut.

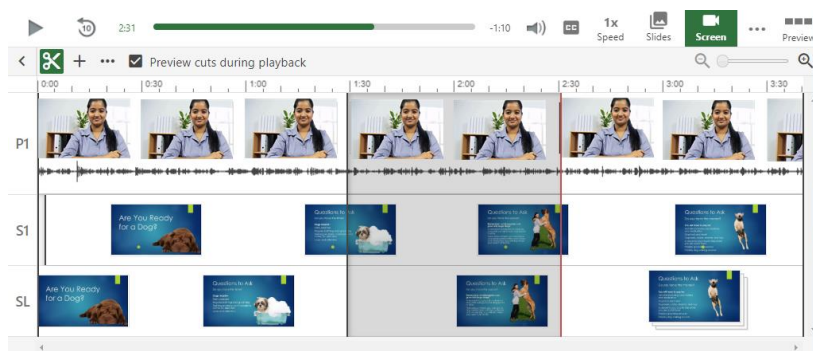


Figure 7: Video cutting in Panopto

**Video Reference:** To see this process in detail, please see video #7 on the carousel.

### University Branding

Video content should be branded with the University's 'standard' video end ident. This is included in the zip file *MediaPack.zip* which you can find in the **Guides** area of this resource.

**Video Reference:** To see how to insert this using Panopto, please see video #8.

---

## Adding ASR (automatic speech recognition) Captions

You can add automatically generated captions to your video.

Note:

- These captions are machine generated so are likely to need edited once created to ensure accuracy.
- After you have made and uploaded a recording, there is a time delay before the option to add captions appears. The delay is dependent on the length of the recording – for example, target completion time for videos of one hour or shorter is 8 hours.

Find the recording you want to add captions to in the Panopto Editor and click **Edit**.

Select **Captions** from the left side of the editor, and then click the **Import captions** drop-down.

Click **Import automatic captions** to generate captions.

Once the captions have been processed successfully, you can then edit each individual caption by clicking the three dots next to it and choosing **Edit**.

You'll find more guidance about captioning in Panopto in our ['Lecture Capture \(Panopto\)'](#) resource.

**Video Reference:** Video #9 goes through this process.

## Accessibility

Regulations on the [accessibility of websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies](#) came into effect in the UK in September 2018. This means that all new content created in Higher Education Institutions needs to be accessible for all users.

In regard to video, there are a few things you can do to ensure your content is accessible:

### Captions and Subtitles

To ensure that users with an auditory disorder or dyslexia can still utilise your content, you must add captions or subtitles. Although these terms are used interchangeably, they refer to different things:

- **Captions** display all audio information, including sound effects or music. They are always displayed in the same language as the audio and can be 'closed' (turned on or off by the user) or 'open' (always on).
- **Subtitles** only display spoken content and are often in a language different than the language of the audio. They can usually be turned on or off by the user.

These are the general definitions, however it is worth noting that some video editors, including YouTube and Panopto, have used the term 'caption' to describe a 'subtitle' which can be confusing.

You'll find detailed guidance about captioning, and subtitling in our ['Accessibility for Authors/Creators'](#) resource.

### Transcript

A transcript adds another level of accessibility to your video, allowing a person who is blind, has other disabilities, or who otherwise cannot watch the video to get all the information they need in text form.

Transcripts are essentially text-based versions of your video. It includes what is spoken, but also describes anything visually important or meaningful.



---

We recommend using your original script and/or captions as a basis for the transcript, adding additional contextual information where appropriate. Use your judgement about whether leaving out the sound or visual would change the message or experience of your video. You could include descriptions such as:

- Important audio cues or sound effects
- Words written on-screen
- Descriptions of actions or visual characteristics that give context

Once written, you can upload the transcription as a Word file to wherever you host your video.

## Colour contrast

If you show any text on-screen, make sure there is a high level of colour contrast between it and the background as text is much easier to read when where this is the case. Black text on a white background is the de facto standard for both print and web, but you may need to use other colours. We suggest using WebAIM's Colour Contrast Checker to make sure your contrast ratio is acceptable: <https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/>

Bad Examples	Good Examples
Blue on black is bad	Yellow on black is good
Green on orange is bad	Black on orange is good
Red on green is bad	Black on green is good
Grey on purple is bad	White on purple is good

Figure 8: Examples of contrast between text and background - good and bad

## Font choices

Your font choice is important. It can change the tone of your presentation, but more importantly can affect the accessibility of your video. We follow the guidance from WebAIM:

*"It is generally best to use standard fonts that are available on the end user's device. Keep in mind that content with only one, or only a few font faces are usually easier to read. Using too many font faces can create a confusing visual layout, which is bad for all users, but may be especially difficult for users with reading disorders, learning disabilities, or attention deficit disorders."*<sup>2</sup>

Users with dyslexia can sometimes struggle to read 'Serif' fonts such as **Georgia** and **Times New Roman** due to the extra strokes and width variations. The most accessible fonts are 'Sans Serif', which simply means 'without serifs'.

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://webaim.org/techniques/fonts/>. Accessed 01.06.20



*Figure 9: Examples of 'Serif' and 'Sans Serif' fonts*

The University's standard font for digital materials is **Source Sans Pro**, and is ideal for making your content accessible.

## Signposting and Support

### Panopto

For more advice and support using Panopto, you can speak to the University's Media Services Team by [logging a support call](#), use the [Toolkit's Panopto resource](#), or check the [Panopto help site](#).

### eLearning

For information and guidance about eLearning, you can speak to specialists in the University's Centre for Academic Development by [logging a support call](#), or use their [online resources](#)

### Accessibility

For support with accessibility issues please contact the University's [Assistive Technology Team](#), use the Toolkit's [Accessibility for Authors/Creators](#) resource, or check online resources such as [WebAIM](#) and [UK Government guidelines](#).