



Guidelines: Unit Taken for Audit

Academic Year 2020-21

Introduction

1. Students of Spurgeon's College can take selected units either 'for credit' or 'for audit.' If an individual audits a unit, they take it for no credit and do not do either the formative or summative assignment. Students auditing a unit can attend class, learn from the lecturers and have access to textbooks,¹ have access to tutors during lectures and access to learning materials for the unit.
2. Students may wish to audit a unit for a number of reasons, such as general interest, or to broaden their learning as part of, for example, continuing ministerial or professional development. Auditing a course is an ideal opportunity for anyone who may have had a break from formal education to get a taste of what higher education is like without the pressure of meeting assignment deadlines.
3. The cost of taking a unit 'for audit' is significantly less than taking a unit 'for credit'. This reflects that access to tutors is limited to planned classes and that students taking a unit for audit will not have one-to-one conversations with tutors on the range of assignments set for each unit, feedback on formative assignments or have a summative assignment marked by a tutor.
4. Spurgeon's College has a reputation for academic excellence and as a result we expect everyone taking a unit, either 'for credit' or 'for audit' to take their commitment to the unit very seriously. These guidelines will assist anyone auditing a unit to get the most from their study.

Definition

5. An auditor is someone who attends a series of taught classes for a designated unit of study but who will not have work assessed and will not receive any academic credits for any unit audited.

Key Points

6. Units taken on an audit basis will not earn credit.
7. Students auditing a unit will not normally be permitted to subsequently take that same unit for credit.
8. Individuals wishing to audit a unit please see the College website for more details.
9. There are no academic entry requirements to audit a unit. Prospective students, however, are encouraged to note that undergraduate and postgraduate units are benchmarked against higher education criteria and are as consequence, demanding.
10. Auditors must commit to attending all agreed classes.

¹ Students taking a unit for audit will have access to e-resources and the College library when on campus. Students auditing a course may borrow up to three books from the College library.

11. Auditors must respect that the needs of the registered students taking the unit for credit come first. We welcome auditors who enrich the student experience through positive engagement; diminishing the experience will not be tolerated (including by dominating discussions).

Zoom and Netiquette²

12. The College has been successfully utilising Zoom as an interactive platform during the academic year 2020-2021. These guidelines are written specifically to provide best practice guidelines when using Zoom although many of the principles herewith can be applied to other platforms.

Best practice for staff

13. It is essential for staff to have a good grasp of Zoom so they can provide the best possible learning experience for students and assist them with the technology where necessary. Staff should follow these guidelines when delivering a lecture or tutorial via Zoom.

Pre-session

- Send invitations (including dial-in details)
 - Give notification of any advanced work students need to complete before the session
- Prepare lecture content
- Create optimal space for teaching via Zoom
 - Use somewhere quiet, comfortable and uncluttered
 - The space should be well-lit but not too bright
 - Use a plain background where possible
- Consider appropriate attire
- Position camera carefully (head and shoulders where possible)
- Carefully consider use of virtual background
- Test connection in advance (see section 3)
- Test technical elements in advance (audio, video, content etc.)

In-session

- Begin session early to allow for troubleshooting
- Start recording (where appropriate)
- Outline expectations (see below)
- Provide an explanation of the intended learning outcomes for the session
- Use varied content
- Provide interactivity/engagement via chat, breakout rooms, polling etc.
- Mute participants unless they are speaking

² This section is taken from the College's *Digital Education Framework*
<https://www.spurgeons.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Documents/Miscellaneous/Digital-Education-Framework.pdf>

- Familiarise with basic troubleshooting in order to provide technical support to students if required
- Plan breaks if needed

Post-session

- Ensure that students know where to find the recording (if appropriate)
- Provide means and opportunity for feedback
- Direct students to additional support for ongoing technical issues

Expectations

14. Here are some suggestions of expectations that you might want to outline at the beginning of the semester/session:

- Be punctual
- Mute your microphones unless you are speaking
- Have your camera on (where possible) so that everyone can see you
- Remove distractions (mute notifications, phones etc.)
- Remain focused (no multitasking during the session!)
- Raise hand to speak (or use hand icon)
- Use chat to ask questions
- Respect your fellow students
- No eating during the session
- No inappropriate clothing or backgrounds
- Do you permit the use of virtual backgrounds?

Best practice for students

15. We strongly recommend that students sign up for a free Zoom account: <https://zoom.us/signup>. However, students do not need to have a Zoom account in order to participate in a class. Here is a useful tutorial which explains how to join a Zoom session: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362193-Joining-a-Meeting>.

16. Students can practice in advance by joining a test meeting via this link: <https://zoom.us/test>

17. Tutors will send to students an invitation for each lecture via email. Alternatively students may receive one invitation for the whole series of Zoom lectures if lectures are recurring. Students should store the details somewhere safely (e.g., on electronic calendars).

18. Students without a web camera can choose to join by audio only. Alternatively, students can dial-in from a mobile or landline using the instructions provided in the invitation. NB dial-in calls are charged at the local rate but are included in most call allowances.

19. More information and resources can be found on the Zoom website: <https://zoom.us/docs/en-us/covid19.html#resources>

General tips for students

- (i) **Setting**
Try to choose a quiet, comfortable setting, where you will not be disturbed if possible. The space should be well-lit but not too bright.
- (ii) **Appearance**
Think about your appearance beforehand – remember that the session may be recorded! Do not wear any inappropriate clothing.
- (iii) **Mute your microphone**
Make sure you mute your microphone when you are not speaking, in order to keep background noise to a minimum.
- (iv) **Be mindful of background noise**
When your microphone is not muted, avoid activities that could create additional noise, such as shuffling papers.
- (v) **Position your camera properly**
If you choose to use a web camera, be sure it is in a stable position and focused at eye level if possible. Doing so helps create a more direct sense of engagement with other participants. Try to frame your head and shoulders in-shot and not sit too close to the camera!
- (vi) **Limit distractions**
Turn off notifications on your device/s, close or minimise other applications, and mute your phone.
- (vii) **Avoid multi-tasking**
Try to focus on the session. Please avoid replying to emails, or text messages, or completing other tasks during the class. You should also avoid eating during class.
- (viii) **Prepare materials in advance**
If you will be sharing content during the session, make sure you have the files and/or links ready before it begins.

Technical tips for all

20. Everyone wants a high-quality video and audio connection to the Zoom session where you can see and hear everyone, and they can see and hear you. However, we all experience temporary (or ongoing) connection issues or bandwidth problems that can affect our ability to participate in a Zoom class.

21. Try the following to improve your connections:

- 1. **Disconnect other devices** on your local network that may be using up bandwidth. Even “uploads” can cause “download” problems. In particular, streaming services (like Netflix) or online gaming via platforms like Xbox Live can have a dramatic impact on Zoom quality, so if you’re sharing an internet

connection with others, ask them to “pause” while you’re participating in your lecture.

2. **Use “Speaker View”** instead of “Gallery View” in your lecture. Having only one video stream on screen at a time reduces the bandwidth needed.
3. **Turn off your video.** Dropping the video during dips in internet bandwidth can help improve your audio.
4. **Quit other applications** on your computer that may be using significant processing power. Having lots of open browser tabs can cause problems.
5. **Use a smartphone** on a mobile (“LTE”) network instead of a laptop on your local network. Use the Zoom app on your phone and look at downloaded materials on a computer. Ask your tutor or meeting host to send materials in advance.
6. **Try calling** into the meeting with your mobile phone or landline. If necessary, ask your tutor or the meeting host to provide a call-in phone number. Local call charges apply.
7. **Use a wired connection** to your home router rather than WIFI if possible.
8. **Check your internet speed** with [speedtest.net](https://www.speedtest.net). Speeds of 600kbps (0.6mbps) are required for Zoom (both download and upload). Speeds of 1.2mbps are required for high quality video. If your speeds are below these values, consider using a smartphone or, if possible, connect to another network. Your internet provider may have options for increasing your bandwidth as well.
9. **Use headphones** whenever possible. Your audio issue may not be related to bandwidth at all. Headphones reduce echo and feedback issues. Those with microphones can reduce background noise.