

# Closed Captions for Collaborate Recordings

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## Introduction

RCSI University of Medicine & Health Sciences, uses Class Collaborate (formerly Blackboard Collaborate) for live online lectures and lecture recordings. Students had enquired about the availability of closed captions for Collaborate recordings. Closed captions are an international standard when it comes to video accessibility and support the implementation of Universal Design for Learning principles. A project to explore, and ultimately introduce, closed captions was commenced.

## Initiative

In the 2022-23 academic year, over 5,000 hours of lecture recordings were delivered through Class Collaborate. Although undergraduate students are primarily returning to campus, Collaborate is expected to still be widely used to record face-to-face lectures and delay-release the recordings to students for further study and review.

Students had inquired into the availability of closed captions for RCSI's recorded lectures. The IT Department engaged with academic staff, in addition to the teams from CoMPPAS (the Centre for Mastery: Personal, Professional and Academic Success) and Student Services to further understand the needs in this area. It became apparent that students with a variety of needs could benefit from closed captions. This included some international students, hard of hearing students, some with sensory processing disorder and some neurodivergent students.

In line with Universal Design for Learning principles (What's good for the few, is good for the many), a business case for enabling this feature on Class Collaborate recordings was developed and reviewed by IT management and procurement. It was considered that the increased accessibility and inclusion presented by the feature justified the potential costs arising. Closed captions are now available for all recordings in the English language, for sessions delivered through the Collaborate external tool.

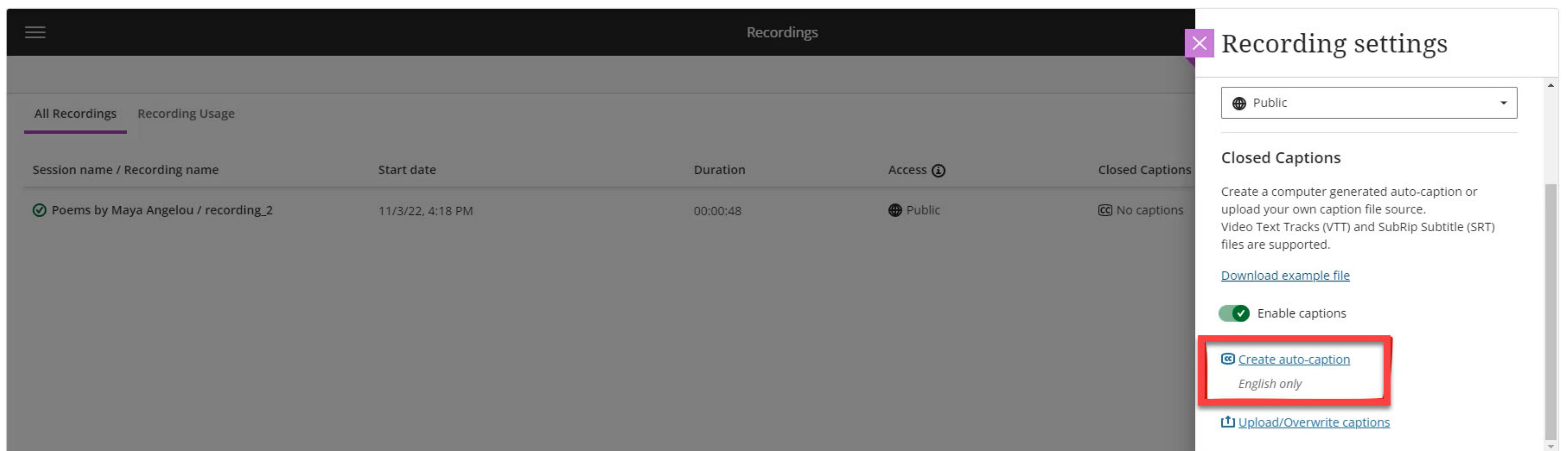


Figure 1. Screenshot demonstrating how to enable closed captions in Class Collaborate

## Outcomes

Closed captions can not only support students who are hard of hearing or have learning differences, but they can also improve comprehension, help compensate for poor audio quality or background noise in a recording and allow the video to be used with the sound off (for example, in the library or in shared study spaces).

In the first academic year that RCSI enabled this feature, 9,000 minutes of recordings were captioned. This means that RCSI students have benefited from 150 hours of accessible recordings, potentially making their educational journey easier and more efficient.

There is still room to caption more recordings. Closed captions are not an automated feature of Collaborate. Therefore, lecturers or administrators must manually turn it on for each recording, once the recording becomes available.

Although feedback has been positive, it is possible that not all staff are currently aware of this feature and its potential positive impact on learners. Further promotion of the closed caption feature is planned, and it is hoped that this will increase its usage. In line with the Universal Design for Learning approach, this case demonstrates that simple changes can make a difference for individual students and that a proactive approach to accessibility and inclusion should be adopted. This has the potential to support many students who may otherwise require individual reasonable accommodations.

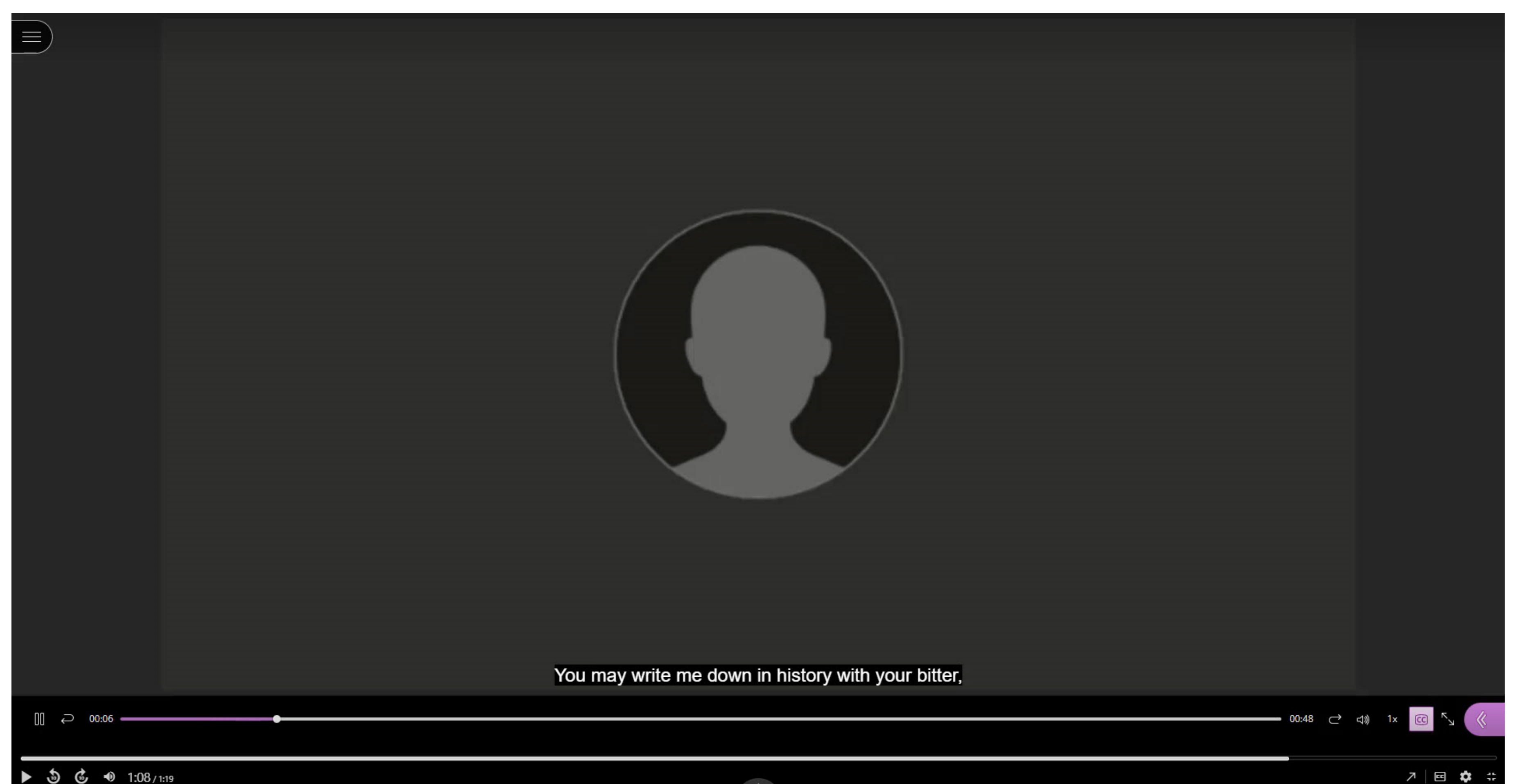


Figure 2. Screenshot showing how a video recording looks with closed captions enabled.