



Advice guide 15: Information for staff supporting a deaf/hearing-impaired student

There are a number of methods for including your deaf or hearing-impaired student and for helping them to get the most from your lectures and seminar.

Giving your student access to information

Access to information is very important, so keep the following in mind:

- Make sure your student has book/ reading lists well in advance of the beginning of the course. They may rely more heavily on textbooks than lectures.
- A deaf or hearing-impaired student cannot make notes and lip-read or watch an interpreter at the same time. Make information available in advance of taught sessions if possible – by putting PowerPoint slides on Blackboard for students to download in advance, for example. The student may require a note taker (organised via Disability Services).
- During the lecture, you should make it clear if a subject is about to change, or a new concept is being introduced, by writing the topic on the board or holding up an appropriate book or article.
- It is helpful if your lecture follows a logical structure and includes regular opportunities to review the material.

Using visual aids

Visual aids can be a great help to deaf and hearing-impaired students, but they need to be prepared and used appropriately. Keep the following in mind:

- Overhead projectors and PowerPoint slides are useful as they allow the lecturer to face students while working. But some models are noisy and cause problems for students with hearing aids.
- Write important information on the board or PowerPoint slide - for example assignments, deadlines, and room changes.
- Try to provide a new vocabulary list in advance or write words on the board or PowerPoint slide as they come up.





- Viewing PowerPoint slides in a darkened room is a particular problem for deaf or hearing-impaired students. Try to direct a light source on the speaker or interpreter and turn up the lights when commentary is given.
- Use subtitled versions of videos where possible. If not, then try to get hold of a transcript of the commentary or write your student a synopsis before the lecture.
- If you use audio material, your student may need a transcript before the lecture.
- If you give out a handout during your lecture, make it clear whether it is to be read immediately - in which case your student will need time to read it before you continue speaking - or whether it is to be taken away and read in the students' own time.

Working in groups

Group discussions can be difficult for a deaf or hearing-impaired student to follow. There are strategies you can use to help them to participate fully:

- Make sure other students are aware of your student's needs (but do not break confidentiality!) – check with your student what they would like to share and how.
- Aim to have no more than 6 to 10 participants in a group.
- Arrange the group in a circle or horseshoe and try to ensure that nobody is silhouetted against the light.
- Your student may prefer to sit next to the chair of the group, as comments will be directed that way.
- Encourage your student to take a turn in chairing discussions.
- It is particularly important for other students to take turns in speaking and to allow your deaf or hearing-impaired student time to look in their direction before starting to speak.
- Where appropriate, try to summarise contributions from other students, so that your deaf or hearing-impaired student can follow the discussion.
- If a deaf or hearing-impaired student uses a radio microphone system or loop system, all contributors to the discussion will need to speak into the microphone.

Working in practical sessions

These tips should help you in practical sessions with a deaf or hearing-impaired student:

- When you are in practical sessions, do not stand behind your student when they are working. Your student will not know if you are speaking to them and will have to turn away from their activity to find out.
- A deaf or hearing-impaired student cannot lip read you or sign with an interpreter and continue with their work or observations at the same time.





- During a practical demonstration, make sure your student can see both what you are saying and what you are doing.

Timetabling

Considerate timetabling can be of great benefit to a deaf or hearing-impaired student. Where possible, you should consider the following factors:

- Lip reading and using sign language can be very tiring, so try not to fill an entire day with lectures.
- Communication and interpreter services are booked and organised well in advance. If timetables are changed at short notice, suitable support may not be available for your student.
- People who provide communication and interpreter services usually charge a minimum fee regardless of how short a session they are booked. Try to plan sessions to make the most efficient use of their services.

Choosing a suitable room

Choosing a suitable room for your lecture can make a big difference to a deaf or hearing-impaired student. Keep the following in mind:

- Choose a room with good lighting. Ensure the room is quiet. Hard of hearing students are more affected by background noise than their hearing peers.
- Ideally, use a room that has carpets, soft furnishings, and ceiling tiles, all of which help to absorb sound.
- Check which rooms are fitted with hearing support systems for hearing aid users and try to book them.
- Try to avoid rooms with bright or distracting décor as this can make it hard for deaf students to concentrate on a speaker.

Working on field trips or placements

You may need to make specific provision for deaf or hearing-impaired students on field trips or placements. A student who copes well in a lecture may not be able to manage without additional support in the open air or in a noisy workplace. Be prepared to be flexible and discuss possible options with the student well in advance.

Communication checklist





The following checklist will be particularly useful to lecturers who are working with a deaf or hearing-impaired student for the first time, or to use as a reminder before a lecture or term:

- Your student will know where it is best for them to sit: this will often be near the front, slightly to one side of you. Where possible, you should stand or sit facing your student, three to six feet away, at the same level as them.
- Check that the student is looking before you start to speak. Try not to startle the student by coming up to them from behind.
- Face the light: Do not position yourself in front of a bright window or a distracting background.
- If you turn to write on a board or flipchart, remember not to continue speaking as it is impossible to lip-read the back of your head!
- Do not obscure your mouth or eat while you are speaking. Try to keep beards and moustaches trimmed.
- Try to keep bright or light-reflecting jewellery to a minimum.
- Ensure that background noise is kept to a minimum.
- Do not shout. It distorts your voice and lip patterns, so speak clearly, with normal speech rhythms.
- Remember that sentences and phrases are easier to lip read than single words.
- If your student does not understand something, then rephrase, rather than repeating what you said.
- Give your student time to absorb what you have said.
- Avoid exaggerated or misleading facial expressions but use gestures where they are relevant.
- If you change the subject, make sure your student knows.
- Check that your deaf or hearing-impaired student is following what you say.

Communication services

Deaf students may use a range of different communication services to support their studies. You may find yourself working alongside a number of people who provide this support.

Communication support workers (CSWs) support deaf people, generally in an educational setting. They provide help with communication between deaf students and their tutor and other students on the course. The support they offer depends on the individual student's needs. CSWs may take notes, interpret or communicate in BSL or Sign Supported English (SSE), or by lip speaking.

Sign Language Interpreters (SLIs) interpret from one language to another for deaf students. Deaf people whose first or preferred language is **British Sign Language (BSL)** use **BSL/English interpreters**. A BSL/English interpreter can make it easier for a deaf sign language user and a





hearing person to communicate with each other. In the UK, this will usually be from BSL to spoken or written English, or the other way round.

Practical tips for working with CSWs and/or SLIs

If you follow these suggestions, it will make it easier for you, your student and the interpreter:

- Remember to talk to the deaf student and not the interpreter.
- Where possible, the interpreter needs to know the subject and format of the session in advance, as well as any key vocabulary. Try to give the interpreter any notes, handouts or videos you intend to use.
- Confirm rest breaks and with your student and the interpreter. Interpreting is very demanding. The interpreter will need a break after about 30 minutes. If the lecture programme is very intensive, two interpreters may be needed or, if possible, divide the session with a short break. (It may not be possible for two interpreters to be booked for a student as availability of interpreters skilled enough to work in higher education is limited.)
- Everything you say will be interpreted, so you do not need to give instructions to the interpreter or face them when speaking.
- Speak at your normal rate. The interpreter will tell you if you need to slow down, repeat a sentence or spell a name or unfamiliar word.
- You should let the interpreter and the student work out where to sit during the lecture or class. In lecture theatres, a separate chair may need to be provided.
- It is only possible to interpret one speaker at a time and it helps if the other students realise this, so they can avoid talking over one another. (It is possible, without breaking confidentiality, to draw attention to the fact that there will be an interpreter present.)
- Remember that your student will receive the question slightly after the rest of the group because of the time the interpretation takes. They need to be given time to respond.

Note takers

Note takers are trained to take accurate and clear notes for deaf people. They do this in handwritten English or on a laptop computer. If a deaf student is watching a sign language interpreter or lip speaker, it is impossible to take notes at the same time. In these situations, having a note taker means that the student does not miss out on anything.

Electronic note takers

Electronic note takers use a computer to type a summary of what is being said. This information appears on a screen for the deaf student to read. Students can ask for a transcript to help them with their studies. An electronic note taker can be particularly good for a student as the system is interactive, so the student can type questions for the note taker to ask, or add their own notes to





the onscreen transcript. Speech-to-text reporting is preferable if students would like a word-for-word transcript of everything said.

The above information was taken and adapted from the Royal National Institute for Deaf People: www.rnid.org.uk

For more information

W: <https://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/stud/disability>

E: studentlife@tees.ac.uk

T: 01642 342277

