

Guidelines for Supporting Deaf or Hard of Hearing Students

Background

There are many different types of hearing loss, including intermittent hearing, particular frequency loss and profound deafness. The extent of the difficulty depends on the cause and level of hearing loss and the degree to which it can be corrected/assisted by human or technological support.

Most of Royal Holloway's lecture theatres have hearing-loop systems whereby students with hearing loss can tune into the lecturer's microphone by adjusting their hearing aids. Royal Holloway also has Hall of Residence rooms adapted for the hard of hearing (e.g. flashing lights and vibrating pillows linked to the fire alarms, flashing doorbells)

Most students with hearing loss lip-read; some like the lecturer to wear a radio aid; some use sign language. British Sign Language is a language in its own right. It is structured differently to English and the student may have delayed reading, comprehension of English and writing skills due to this difference, particularly with grammar and interpreting language very literally.

Funding and Support

Many deaf or hard of hearing students who are UK residents have extra disability funding from their LEA via the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). This can fund a Student Helper employed through the ESO as a:

- Note-taker
- Typist in lectures
- Sign-language interpreter

The DSA can also fund a specialist to help with:

- study skills for the student (Teacher of the Deaf)
- mentoring sessions – life and study at University can be challenging and often frustrating for deaf and hard of hearing students; sometimes these students need extra personal and psychological support

The DSA can also fund specialist equipment such as:

- Mini-disc recorder

Non-UK residents are eligible to apply for Student Helper support via the College-based fund; the International Students' Disability Support Grant.

Suggested Strategies – General

- Even if student has a Student Helper or sign language interpreter, always communicate directly with the student
- Participating in teaching sessions and completing of assessments required may take longer for a hard of hearing student so allow extra time
- The student will require extra concentration for studying
- Awareness of Health & Safety issues (e.g. can not hear safety warnings and fire alarms)
- Speak clearly but not slowly or loudly

Guidelines for Supporting Deaf or Hard of Hearing Students

- Students should always be in a good position for lip reading with light behind them and falling on the speaker's face
 - Attract the student's attention before giving new information or instructions; if they are not looking at you, they are likely to miss information
 - Do not use exaggerated gestures; they distract from your face
 - Do not block your mouth e.g. with your hand, a pen – beards and moustaches can also be a drawback!
 - Stop talking if you have to turn away
 - Tone of voice cannot be heard therefore it can be difficult to read irony
-

Suggested Strategies – Teaching

- A multi-sensory approach to teaching
- Reinforce spoken information with visual aids (e.g. writing on the board, slides, OHPs)
- Stand in a well-lit place; not directly in front of a window, as your face will be in a shadow
- Speak directly to the class, not to the board or screen
- Keep background noise to a minimum (e.g. buzz from the OHP, clicking of pens, close doors); these can distract those with hearing aids
- Do not wander around the lecture room
- Explain at beginning of lecture what the structure and main points will be; providing a written summary in advance if possible – this will assist the student and note taker
- Summarise regularly and build in regular stopping points to check understanding
- Say if something specific should be noted
- During group discussions and oral sessions have a strict 'one at a time' rule and use names – not being able to pick-up on non-verbal communication makes knowing when it is your turn or when to jump in with a point very difficult
- Awareness if student is expected to give presentations
- If videos are used as teaching aids, the student will need subtitles or a copy of the video well in advance of the lecture viewing to enable the Student Helper to transcribe the video; in addition, the Student Helper might need to attend the lecture viewing and type the narrative
- Be prepared to wear a radio microphone
- Indicate when you are changing topic
- Speak in short, clear statements. Use unambiguous language and avoid jargon, abstract terms and complex structures

Guidelines for Supporting Deaf or Hard of Hearing Students

- Explain new concepts and terms carefully
 - Write new vocabulary on the board
 - Provide subject word lists, glossaries of terms and acronyms
 - Provide lecture notes and copies of OHP slides in advance, preferably in electronic form (via floppy disk, website or email)
 - Repeat contributions and questions from other students
 - It is important to remember that they may occasionally mishear what has been said to them, rephrasing rather than repeating can be helpful
-

Suggested Strategies – Course Materials

- Tell the student which of the recommended reading is 'essential' as early as possible so they can convert it into an accessible format and allow for pre-reading taking longer
-

Suggested Strategies - Assessments

- Extra time in exams; when there is a language and information processing delay
- Invigilator to face the student when giving instructions
- Allow leniency with assignment deadlines
- Written English may be quite basic and grammatically incorrect; it may reflect the order of "signed" language, i.e. the most important idea will come first
- Bear in mind that written course information, instructions, assignment and exam questions should be expressed in clear, straightforward language (time should be allowed for possible scrutiny by a specialist teacher of the deaf, particularly in the case of a student who is pre-lingually deaf)
- Where appropriate, mark for content rather than accuracy of language
- Allow for use of familiar person for aural/oral exams to allow lip-reading to be as easy as possible