

Resources

General

Always ask people who have disabilities what their particular needs are and make reasonable adjustments according to their specific requirements. Two people with the same disability may not have the same needs.

Hearing Impairments

Hearing impairments includes partial or full loss of hearing, as well as conditions such as tinnitus. For some people only high or frequencies are lost, whilst other people experience a deterioration of hearing across all frequencies. Tinnitus is a term used to describe noises people hear in the ear(s): this can include buzzing, whistling, ringing and hissing. This can also affect a person's ability to hear.

Hearing aids work by amplifying sound: however this means that all sounds are amplified, not just the useful ones. This will make it difficult for somebody to hear in a noisy room, even with hearing aids.

It is worth noting that students who have been profoundly deaf since birth may experience difficulties with the difference between English grammar and that used in British Sign Language.

Support

Lectures

- Investigate the availability of hearing loops in lecture theatres, and learn how to use them before you begin classes. There is a portable hearing loop available for one-off short-term loan from the DRC, but this must be booked in advance.
- Minimise background noise and distractions (e.g. by switching off overhead projectors)
- Try to keep seats available at the front of the room – this is especially important for students who lip-read.
- Make sure that your face is clearly visible and avoid talking whilst writing on the board. Where possible, avoid walking around the room and avoid standing in front of a light source such as a window or a bright lamp as that creates shadows on your face and makes it almost impossible to lip-read.
- Ensure that the topic of conversation is clear (e.g. by providing a lesson outline prior to the session or writing it on the board) and if you are likely to use new vocabulary, consider providing a handout before your sessions or writing it on the board.
- Use natural body language (e.g. point to indicate the relevant area on a handout).
- Supplement aural with written information (e.g. write deadlines on the board).
- Use captioning and/or transcripts when showing a video or DVD.
- Lip-reading is a demanding task and it requires a lot of concentration. Hence, it is important that you structure your lecture in a way which allows lip-reading students to have short breaks.

Seminars, Group Work and Conversations

- Use plain language, speak clearly and offer contextual clues to enhance the student's understanding. Maintain the rhythm of speech but slow down slightly.
- Repeat or rephrase sentences if necessary – especially when students ask or answer questions.

- Check that students have understood the content of the discussion. Summarise important points so far.
- Avoid using jargon and double meaning.
- Bear in mind that, in general, individuals who lip-read pick up only 20% of what an individual is saying.
- If you do not understand something that is said, say so. It may help to outline what you have understood and ask for clarification.

Interpreters

- If a deaf student requires the use of an interpreter, make sure that both of them receive lecture outlines and a list of subject-specific terminology well in advance of each session. This is an important element of signing.
- Allow plenty of time for the interpreter to explain complex terminology.
- It is important that the interpreter has frequent breaks because translating English into British Sign Language requires a high level of concentration.

Speech Impairments

- Some speech impairments are affected by a person's emotional state. Hence, it is best if the atmosphere is relaxed and informal.
- If possible, remove time pressures and/or give the person a few minutes extra to complete a task.
- Group work and tutorials can be challenging for people with communication impairments. Hence, students may need time to gain confidence before joining in.
- Encourage students with speech impairments to speak in class – without compelling them.
- Do not correct or speak for people with speech impairments. Wait while they talk and do not finish their sentences or interrupt.

Source: 1) WATERFIELD, J. and WEST, B., eds., 2002. **SENDA Compliance in Higher Education**. Plymouth: The University of Plymouth. 2) Handout provided by Jane Godwin from the Royal West of England Residential School for the Deaf Exeter during deaf awareness training for the School of Education at the University of Exeter on Thursday 12th January 2006. 3) http://www.shef.ac.uk/disability/teaching/speech/3_teaching.html

For more information, see
 RNID <http://www.rnid.org.uk>
 Communications Forum <http://www.communicationsforum.org.uk/>

Sensitive Responses to Disability

Think about the words you use.

Avoid	Use instead
the handicapped	disabled people
the disabled	disabled people
Cripple, invalid	disabled person
Spastic	person who has cerebral palsy
afflicted by, suffers from, victim of...	has or with... (the condition or impairment)
mentally handicapped, retarded, subnormal	learning impaired
confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair-bound	wheelchair user
able-bodied	non-disabled
disabled toilet*	accessible toilet*

Source: www.scope.org.uk (*not on the scope list)