



# Supporting Students with Hearing Impairment

Student Services

**DISABILITY AND  
DYSLEXIA SUPPORT**



Learning and  
Professional  
Development Centre

Keele  
UNIVERSITY



**Hearing Loss** covers any impairment in hearing, including **mild** (where individuals may have difficulty following speech in noisy situations), **moderate** (where individuals may have difficulty following speech without hearing aids) and **severe hearing loss** or **profound deafness** where individuals may need to lip-read or use sign language (Action on Hearing Loss).

## 1) How might hearing loss affect someone at university?

- The biggest challenge for students with hearing loss at university is hearing what goes on in teaching sessions, including what teachers are saying, group discussions and accessing audio visual teaching materials.
- Limited access to spoken language inhibits the assimilation of language and forms of expression. This means that students with more severe hearing loss may need more time to assimilate new language within their subject.
- **Don't make any assumptions** about students in advance. Remember that students with hearing impairments will experience different degrees of hearing loss and will utilize different support strategies and assistive technologies. Be prepared to meet with students before teaching commences to get to know their individual needs.

## 2) Suggested teaching and learning adjustments

### Teaching resources/materials

- Dyslexia and Disability Support (DDS) work with a number of specialist services (including Autism and Sensory Support in Staffordshire, ASSIST) to support students with sensory disabilities, including the conversion of teaching resources into accessible formats (e.g. subtitles or transcription for audio visual materials which may be required students to participate fully).

## Disability Support and Inclusive Teaching and Assessment at Keele

- **Give students and their support workers time to prepare** by providing presentation slides (PowerPoint, Google slides, Keynote etc.), videos/AV materials, handouts and other resources in advance of class sessions (i.e. upload to the KLE and send email reminders). This will allow students plenty of time to access, print and read materials.
- **Provide reading lists as far in advance as possible**, clearly highlighting and emphasising key chapters and articles as well as core from secondary readings, enabling students to prioritise.
- **Space things out** avoiding the use of long, dense paragraphs and cramming material on to pages or slides. Use sub-headings, bullet points, numbering, 1.5-line spacing, limit slides to small numbers of key points and highlight key words/phrases in bold.
- **Support students to revisit and revise lecture content** by using lecture capture technology or allowing audio recording of lectures. If students have a reasonable adjustment in place to allow audio recording of lectures, this must be permitted.

### Classroom set-up and teaching practice

- Teaching sessions may need to be scheduled in rooms which have microphones for teachers and **induction hearing loop systems**.
- Students may have a communication support worker/**British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter** with them during classes, as well as another support worker.
- **Create an accessible environment in the classroom:**
  - Students may need to **sit at the front of class** with extra space for their support worker and/or BSL interpreter. Always ensure that the student has a **clear view of their interpreter** where appropriate.
  - Ensure **sufficient lighting at all times**, using natural light where possible and **avoid standing in front of windows** which will cast your face in shadow.
  - Be aware that turning lights down to view on-screen presentations will limit students' ability to lip-read.
  - Try to **minimise background noise**, e.g. by closing doors and turning off noisy background equipment.
  - Seating should be arranged in a way that **students can see each other** to facilitate lip reading (e.g. a horse-shoe or circle shape).

## Disability Support and Inclusive Teaching and Assessment at Keele

- **Facilitate lip-reading and hearing during group discussions:**
  - **Face the class** when speaking so that your lips can be seen at all times.
  - Use an audible and clear presentation style, using **plain language, normal lip movements and facial expressions**, but avoid speaking artificially slowly, exaggerating your lips or shouting.
  - If a question is asked or comments made from the audience which a student is unable to perceive, **repeat the comments before responding**.
  - To enable students to participate in discussions only **one person should be speaking at any time during group work** and it is helpful to explicitly identify when the speaker has changed to a new person.
  - It is not possible for students to read text and lip-read at the same time. Thus, allow students to read handouts before class prior to any discussion about them.
- **Provide clarity and structure:**
  - **Recap key themes** of the previous teaching session at the start of class.
  - **Provide a clear overview** for each session and what will be covered.
  - **Explicitly outline Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)** and revisit ILOs at the end of each session.
  - A document provided in advance of classes with key arguments, concepts and new/difficult vocabulary is ideal, as is a glossary of concepts for each module.
  - Provide examples and clarify language when introducing new topics and pause regularly to summarise key themes.
- Additional adjustments may be required to support students in outdoor field trip settings and suitable options should be discussed with the student in advance.

## Assessment and feedback

- As appropriate, provide assessment questions, details and deadlines **as far in advance as possible** using specific instructions and concise/simple language.
- Always use **clearly defined assessment criteria** which link to the module ILOs.
- **Notify changes** to assessments or deadlines in plenty of time, preferably via email.
- All comments on assignments will **need to be accessible** to the student. If using audio feedback be aware of the students hearing loss and whether they will be able to access the feedback.
- Consideration will need to be given if using **audio visual based assignments**, e.g. the creation of videos, to ensure that students are able to participate and engage fully.
- Students may **require specific adjustments for exams and other assessments**, including the **provision of alternative forms of assessment** where necessary (e.g. students with little spoken language may not be able to give oral presentations). Discuss requirements with your local Disability Liaison Officer (DLO), examinations officer and as required, contact Disability and Dyslexia Support (DDS) for advice.

## 3) Bibliography and additional reading

- [Action on Hearing Loss](#) website
- University of Sheffield: [Supporting Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students](#) guidance
- Oxford Brooks University: [Supporting students who are deaf or hard of hearing](#) guidance

*This resource was produced in 2018, updated January 2022*

*Disability and Dyslexia Support*

