

KNOW YOUR STUDENT

FACT SHEETS TO GUIDE THE
LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT
OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC NEEDS



Deaf or hard of hearing (teaching, learning assessment and workplace communication)

This factsheet is one of three relating to people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. It should be read in conjunction with the other two fact sheets:

- Support personnel and technology; and
- Working with Auslan interpreters.

Definitions

Person who is hard of hearing

- People who identify as hearing impaired or hard of hearing have some degree and type of hearing loss. They may use hearing augmentation such as assistive listening devices, hearing aids and/or cochlear implants to develop and maintain auditory verbal communication.

Deaf

- 'People who identify themselves as Deaf refers to a group of people who are linked by a sense of community and share a culture both of which are strongly unified by the use of sign language' (Deaf Services Queensland 2007). The use of an upper case 'D' is common practice to distinguish the word 'deaf', an audiological condition, from 'Deaf', a socio-cultural identifier.
- People who are Deaf prefer to communicate by sign language and may or may not use hearing augmentation devices. Communication is best conveyed via a sign language interpreter. Information given in a visual format and/or interpreted into Auslan is preferable.
- ***The language a person uses to identify themselves is a personal decision and reflects more than their audiological status.***

Auslan (Australian Sign Language)

- Deaf people in Australia use English as a second language (ESL) with Auslan being regarded as a first language.
- Auslan is a visual-spatial language which conveys meaning through the use of handshapes, movement and location in space, facial expressions and body movements. It has its own grammar, syntax and idioms which are quite different from that of English. Auslan can be used in conjunction with fingerspelling which is the representation of English words via the manual alphabet.

- Auslan is a community language recognised by Australia's Language and Literacy Policy (1991).

Delivery and assessment strategies

The following strategies are suggestions. Each student who is hard of hearing or Deaf will have their own individual support and learning needs and it's recommended as a first step, that you ask them and/or their family or support network (if such a network is present and accessible) what the best ways to support their learning is.

When liaising with anyone other than the student directly, ensure you maintain confidentiality, as per TAFE Queensland Privacy Policy.

Setting up the environment

- Reduce and absorb background noise and reverberation e.g. use a smaller room with curtains / carpet / mats, avoid rooms close to main roads, building sites or similar.
- Arrange seating so that as many faces as possible are visible to the person who is deaf / hard of hearing.
- For people who are hard of hearing, consider that they may wish to sit at the front of the room, or on a particular side of the room (e.g. if they have unilateral hearing loss).
- Auslan users need personal space for signing (approx. 2 meters). The interpreter will also need space and be positioned near the speaker and any visual presentation.

Presenting and communicating information

- Always use plain English for verbal, print and visual information.
- Provide copies of notes, overheads, PowerPoints and a glossary of new terms, technical language or acronyms prior to meetings / training sessions.
- Use visual presentations as much as possible e.g. diagrams, writing definitions / key words / formulas on a whiteboard.
- A person who is Deaf cannot look at you, the interpreter and written information at the same time. When handing out materials or providing visual information give people who are Deaf / hard of hearing time to read before starting discussion.
- Only use captioned film, video, TV or DVD presentations (people who are Deaf or hard of hearing may also need access to the presentation so that they can replay sections).
- Where an Auslan interpreter is used, ensure they can be clearly seen when dimming lights for media presentations.

Verbal communication

- Ensure your mouth is not obscured when speaking e.g. face the participants, keep your hands away from your face.
- Facial expression and non-verbal communication may assist the person who is Deaf or hard of hearing to understand the context e.g. importance of a point, emotion.
- There is no need to use exaggerated lip movements or talk loudly.
- Avoid standing with your back to a window i.e. bright light behind you (particularly important for people who lip read).
- Minimise walking around while talking.
- Repeat, rephrase and clarify to facilitate understanding.
- Encourage only one speaker at a time during discussions.
- Be aware of gaining the attention of people who are Deaf or hard of hearing when beginning new dialogue.
- Talk directly to the person who is Deaf and not to the interpreter.

Pace of communication

- Lip reading and / or watching an interpreter can be exhausting. Consider alternating between discussion and reading / activity for long sessions.
- People who use an interpreter always receive information a few seconds later than you deliver it. Give time for the information to be received and for any necessary clarification before moving on to the next point e.g. a brief pause after asking a question, requiring participants to raise their hands to answer / contribute.
- Take time to engage people who are Deaf or hard of hearing so that they can contribute to discussions.

General communication

- Consider the use of electronic media for communication e.g. email, SMS, online collaboration tools such as chat rooms.

Utilising technology to maximise student engagement

- A reader/scribe can assist learners with reading and writing material.
- Learning materials and information can be converted into formats that are accessible for the learner e.g. audio files (such as MP3 format), Braille (a tactile reading and writing code, which is read using the fingers) or large print.

- Screen reading software such as Job Access With Speech (JAWS) reads electronic material aloud to the user. It provides audible access to electronic information, software applications and the internet.
- Electronic magnification devices are available in portable, transportable, desktop and laptop based forms. They magnify or scan print based materials and objects.
- Magnification software (e.g. Microsoft Magnifier, ZoomText) enlarges the whole computer screen including text and application buttons / navigation.
- Anti-glare screens and reducing the brightness or changing the contrast of computer screens can benefit.
- Connect (also referred to as Desire2Learn) has numerous options to increase accessibility to information provided within Connect. Options such as screen readers, keyboard-only navigation, colour contrast accessibility features and zooming options are all available within Connect. Educators can access information about these options at: <https://connect.tafeqld.edu.au/shared/help/student/content/en/Accessibility.html>.
- Audio recording of training delivery or note taking (a person or digital note taker such as the Neo Notetaker) to assist learners with handwriting difficulties and / or with mishearing and misquoting.
- A Disability Coach or Disability Support Worker can assist the learner with planning and organizing. The benefit to requesting a Disability Coach/Support Worker is that they may be able to look holistically at the support and learning needs of the student and provide some helpful ideas regarding software, or education strategies to help increase the student's understanding, participation and engagement.

All of the delivery strategies may be of assistance for assessment

- *Extra time* – consider providing extra time so that people who are Deaf can check their grammar and syntax in written responses. This may require the use of a computer or dictionary or to have their work proofread.
- *Content focus* – focus on the content rather than English competency, unless English competency is a core requirement of the assessment. Where a written response is not clear due to inappropriate English structure, people who are Deaf could be asked to 'read' their work through an interpreter.
- *Oral testing* – consider oral tests with the assistance of an interpreter.
- *Feedback* – be available to provide feedback on draft work / assignments.

References

- Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET): 'Assistive Technology for Hearing Impaired Students'; 'Communication: Communicating with students with disability'; 'Deaf: Working with sign interpreters'; 'Deaf and hard of hearing – the impact of hearing impairment on learning at university'
- ANTA, 2002, 'A Fair Go in Training for People with a Disability – Meeting your Quality Training Framework obligations'
- Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association (ASLIA) 2007
- Department of Families Community Services and Indigenous Affairs 'Fact Sheet 'Communicating with People who are Deaf or Hearing Impaired' July 2006
- Disability Resource Kit, DET 2004 'How Do I Support a learner who is Deaf or hearing impaired?'
- Deaf Services Queensland 2007
- Swinburne University of Technology 'Teaching Strategies for Deaf/Hearing Impaired Students, Working with Sign Interpreters for Deaf Students'
- Hearing Impairment Department of Education Queensland 1998, 'Teacher Aides Working with Students with Disabilities
- ANTA 2004 'Working With Diversity'

Further Resources

- Auslan sign bank – an online dictionary of Auslan signs, <http://www.auslan.org.au/>
- Deaf Children Australia, <https://deafchildrenaustralia.org.au/>
- Tasmanian Education Department – strategies for working with students who have a hearing impairment, <https://www.education.tas.gov.au/parents-carers/students-with-disability/>
- The Centre of Excellence for Students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VET Victoria), <http://www.deafconnected.com.au/>
- Deaf Services Queensland, <http://www.deafservicesqld.org.au>