

# KNOW YOUR STUDENT

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



## Deaf or hard of hearing (working with Auslan interpreters)

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:

- Teaching, learning, assessment and workplace communication; and
- Support personnel and technology.

### Definition:

#### Auslan interpreter

- Australian Sign Language (Auslan) is the language of the Australian Deaf community. The Auslan interpreter facilitates communication by translating information between people who use a spoken language and people who are Deaf and use Auslan.
- Interpreters can gain accreditation through the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters Ltd (NAATI). Accredited interpreters are highly skilled, qualified professionals. They are bound by a Code of Ethics which ensures ethical practice i.e. impartiality, confidentiality, accuracy and reliability.
- The role of the interpreter is to:
  - interpret all communication, without addition, deletion or embellishment; and
  - ensure the interpreting process is culturally appropriate.
- It is **not** the interpreter's role to:
  - act in any other capacity whilst engaged as an interpreter (e.g. trainer's aide, notetaker or tutor);
  - add comments or participate in activities;
  - complete work or answer questions unrelated to the interpreting process;
  - be responsible for the learner's or employee's behaviour or progress; nor
  - discuss the learner's or employee's progress.

## Prior to the interpreting session

### Schedules

- Provide the training delivery timetable / workplace schedule as soon as possible to the disability services officer or person booking the interpreter so that interpreters can be booked well in advance.

### Session information

- Provide the following information to interpreters prior to the session:
  - clear detailed directions to the meeting place;
  - information on the purpose of the meeting/ interpreting session;
  - glossary of technical terms, special vocabulary or acronyms that may be used allowing interpreters time to negotiate appropriate signs with the learner or employee;
  - meeting or training outline and lesson notes to assist the interpreter to anticipate the structure of each session;
  - access to any audio / visual materials you will be using so that the interpreter can become familiar with the material; and
  - details of the OHS requirements of the vocational area / workplace e.g. safety boots.
- Be willing to meet with the interpreter and clarify any technical language or concepts to ensure basic understanding of content prior to commencing.

## Presenting and communicating information

### Setting up the environment / workplace

- Interpreters need personal space for signing (approx. 2 meters) and to be positioned near to the speaker and any visual presentation. Care should be taken to ensure there is sufficient space so that passages, doorways etc. are not obstructed and others do not need to walk between the interpreter and the learner or employee who is Deaf when interpreting is being conducted.
- Provide interpreters with chairs that are ergonomically suitable for interpreting. Consult the interpreter about the chairs you have available.
- During the interpreting session interpreters may request clarification from you. This does not mean that they are not very good! More often it means that they are highly conscientious about ensuring accuracy.

### Pace of communication

- Interpretation is always marginally behind the verbal information. Be willing to slow down your speed of speech or pause to ensure the interpreter can keep up.

## OHS for interpreters

- Two interpreters may be required for sessions that are over one hour or where the interpreting is intensive to minimise the risk of Occupational Overuse Syndrome. If two interpreters are required this decision should be made prior to service delivery. It should be based on the content and session style and made in consultation with the interpreter booking agency and / or disability services officer and the speaker / employer.
- Please note: the intensity of the interpreting task is dependent on the total amount of audible activity e.g. facilitator direction, group discussion, audio visual presentation. It is not just related to how much the speaker talks!
- Where two interpreters are used they will alternate. The 'resting' interpreter is not taking a 'break' but still listening and processing information so that they can prompt the active interpreter if necessary and understand the ongoing context of the session.
- Where interpreters are working alone it is helpful to structure delivery to include 'interpreting breaks'. Breaks should be negotiated with the interpreter but as a general rule of thumb, a five minute break after every 20-30 minutes of interpreting, and / or a 15 minute break after every 50 minutes of continuous interpreting is appropriate. These 'breaks' may include any non-audible tasks such as practical work or individual activities.
- The same OHS applies to interpreters working via video remote interpreting.

## Changes to schedules or cancellation of interpreting services

- If cancelled, please notify the interpreter booking agency or person who booked the interpreter as soon as possible so the interpreter and learner / employee can be notified.

## 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.

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- 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): 'Deaf: Working with sign interpreters', 2005
- Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators Incorporated (AUSIT) Code of Ethics
- Australian Sign Language Interpreters Association (ASLIA), 'Occupational Health and Safety Policy' 2006
- The Centre of Excellence for Students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VET Victoria), <http://www.deafconnected.com.au/>
- Disability Resource Kit, DET 2004 'How Do I Support a learner who is Deaf or hearing impaired?'
- Swinburne University of Technology 'Teaching Strategies for Deaf/Hearing Impaired Students, Working with Sign Interpreters for Deaf Students'
- National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters Ltd (NAATI) ANTA 2004 'Working With Diversity'

## Further Resources

- Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET)