1. Lectures

Lectures are a common and generally productive medium of teaching within a university context. As a predominantly verbal medium, however, deaf or hearing impaired students may find the lecture format difficult. In lectures deaf students (and deaf students with note-takers) may need to juggle up to four aspects of a lecture – the board, the lecturer (for lip reading), the note-taker and their own notes. This can be very challenging.

- Where appropriate use a microphone to enable deaf and hearing impaired students to access as much spoken information as possible. If the microphone system or induction loop is broken always report this to the Learning and Teaching Spaces Technology (LTST) 0131 650 4097 or email ltst@ed.ac.uk

- Always wear the additional transmitter or amplification equipment provided by the student.

- Lecture notes, summaries or handouts in advance should be given as this will help students establish what the basic content of each lecture is. This is important since deaf or hearing impaired students may not hear all of the information in a lecture.

- Always provide important information in written form and provide a glossary of terminology to assist students in understanding the lecture content.

- Try not to speak with your back turned to the class (whilst writing on a board for instance) or walk behind the students. Students who lip read will not be able to see what you are saying.

- If students make contributions to discussions, please ensure that questions or comments are repeated or paraphrased by the lecturer in a clear voice.

- Always ensure that guest speakers are informed of their need to wear microphones, where appropriate.

2. Tutorials
Tutorials are an essential space for student contribution and discussion. As a verbal medium of communication however deaf and hearing impaired students may have difficulties accessing all aspects of the discussion. Tutors should be aware that students who lip read, for instance, understand about 30% of words spoken. Much of the information gleaned from speech therefore is contextual.

- Provide students with an outline of the topics of discussion in advance. This allows deaf or hearing impaired students to prepare and understand more of the context of the discussion.

- Always face the student so that your lips can be read as easily as possible.

- Speak at a normal pace but speak as clear as you can. Do not whisper and do not shout.

- Avoid walking around or covering your mouth whilst talking.

- Ensure seating arrangements are suitable. A circle or semi-circle is best, as the student can then see all members of the group. Remember students who lip read will have to see other student’s faces to understand all discussion.

- Use short sentences rather than single words. Always provide new terms or new concepts in written form.

- Ask open-ended questions, not those that require a yes/no response. This will enable you to check that the student has understood the question.

- If a student is having difficulty understanding, consider re-wording rather than repeating what you have said.

- Allow only one student to speak at a time.

- Encourage other students to speak clearly and not to whisper or cover their mouths.

- Indicate which student is speaking and repeat or re-phrase comments or questions from students.

- Don’t single out students with a hearing impairment or discuss their requirements in front of a group.

- Splitting the class into small groups can cause difficulties. There can often be too much background noise and voices have to be kept quite low to avoid disturbing others.

3. Working with electronic note-takers or British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters.
Some students will use an electronic note-taker (real time typist) or BSL sign language interpreter. Specialist note takers need to take breaks during long lectures and it is important to discuss this, and the use of other aids, before a teaching session. Give the note taker an opportunity to clarify items if necessary, and remember to leave any complex or specialised information you display, such as numbers, formulas or specialised terms, on show for longer.

- Avoid jargon and abbreviations.

- Allow plenty of time when using visual aids as it will not be possible for the BSL user to study visual aids and to watch the interpreter at the same time.

- The deaf or hearing impaired student needs time to comprehend and reproduce in English what has been signed in BSL and vice versa, so expect short time delays as this happens. This is especially important during questions or discussions.

- Ensure that lighting is good enough for the interpreter to be seen.

- Check the positioning of any equipment that is being used, such as overhead or digital projector, so that it can be seen clearly by all.

4. Room Bookings

- When booking lecture and tutorial rooms please make sure the rooms have an induction loop.

- It would also be useful to consider if the room has space to allow a semi circle pattern of desks. If this is not possible deaf or hearing impaired students will miss significant parts of the discussion.

- Avoid rearranging classes - what might be considered reasonable notice for the average university student, might be rather short notice to arrange notetaking cover/BSL interpreter.

5. Assessed work

- Having a hearing impairment increases the time and effort students spend on many daily activities, as well as on activities related to their studies. Be aware of this if a student is making a request such as extra time for the completion of essays and worksheets.

- For BSL users it is important to note that English is their second language and that can bring difficulties with written English. Those born deaf have never heard the spoken word and cannot relate easily to
spoken English. Consequently they may struggle to understand written English.

- Students can often read around subjects that are covered in tutorials or lectures because they have missed a significant amount of verbal information. Some general guidance regarding reading materials and focused reading would be useful.

6. Placements

- The Student Disability Service had produced Good Practice Guidelines for placements and this should also be consulted.

- Knowing placements in advance and giving deaf or hearing impaired students a prior visit can be very helpful. This allows them to assess any barriers to work and gives an opportunity for support to be discussed and put in place as early as possible.

- Give placement providers advance information regarding students. Sending a copy of the student’s Learning Profile (available from the Disability Office) may be helpful.

- Ensure all team members in the placement know that the student has a hearing impairment, with the student’s permission.

- Offer opportunities to record information where possible. Although some information cannot be recorded because of confidentiality issues getting access to verbal information is vital for a student’s success on placements.

7. General

Any administrative information should be written down e.g. changes to assignment deadlines, clarifications, changes to rooms.

- This guide can be forwarded to other students working in a group with a deaf student.

- Check if the hearing impaired student has a favoured side when talking to them. For example, they may be deliberately trying to position their good side towards you.

For further information, please contact:

The University of Edinburgh
Student Disability Service
Third Floor
The Main Library Building
George Square