



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Student Disability Service

Students who are deaf/have a hearing loss: group discussions good practice

1. Face-to-face sessions

If possible, have a quiet discussion with the student to check what particular strategies work for them. This may include advice on any **microphone** requirements (see **Appendix** below)

Acoustics

Background noise is always an issue. Be aware that breaking into small groups in the same room can cause particular background noise difficulties.

Managing inclusion

Group discussions can be quick-fired and hard to follow. Deaf students can lag behind because it's hard to know who is speaking. People frequently interrupt each other and talk over the top of each other, which makes the situation doubly hard.

Use techniques to include the student without drawing unnecessary attention to them:

- Use horseshoe or circle so that student can see faces of all contributors.
- Allow only one speaker at a time (e.g. put hand up or 'pass the conch'). It can feel slow and stilted at first, but it actually benefits everyone.
- Use microphones appropriately (see **Appendix** below)
- Clearly repeat contributions which may have been missed (trying not to draw attention to the student).
- Summarise key points.
- Put important information, such as room/time changes, key information about assignments etc in writing – especially at the end of sessions where there is a lot of background noise.
- Explain jokes or asides you have seen go by quickly, if this can be done naturally.
- Be aware that it's particularly difficult to lipread someone with a beard which covers their mouth.

2. Online sessions

In advance

Check how the student will be following the discussion (for example: live captions; lipreading; amplified listening; BSL/English interpreting). That will help you to plan strategies for their inclusion.

Managing inclusion

Group discussions can be quick-fired and hard to follow. Deaf students may be using any combination of: lipreading; amplified listening; live captions; and BSL/English interpreters. This can cause lagging behind/inaccuracies and make it hard to join in discussion confidently. People frequently interrupt each other and talk over the top of each other, which makes the situation doubly hard.

Use techniques to include the student without drawing unnecessary attention to them:

- Encourage all contributors to speak clearly so that they can all follow the conversation. Allow only one speaker at a time (e.g. use 'hands up' function). It can feel slow and stilted at first, but it actually benefits everyone.
- Ask all contributors to say in the chat box if they have missed what was said
- Ask contributors to say their name when they start to speak. This is because the student may not be able to distinguish voices, may be watching captions, or accessing via an interpreter.
- The tutor should clearly repeat contributions which may have been missed
- The tutor should use high quality 'helicopter-style' headset, with clear sight of lips, and have optimal wifi connectivity and plain background.
- The tutor should try to manage discussion to give a natural space for the student to contribute to discussion, because of the lagging behind mentioned above.
- Summarise key points verbally and in chat function
- Put important information, such as room/time changes and key information about assignments, in chat box and consider emailing afterwards.

Appendix: microphone use in classroom groupwork: good practice guide

The student may have a personal 'FM system' to maximise their ability to hear what is said (usually alongside lipreading). They will explain how it will work for them. Set-ups vary, but there may be a lapel mic for the group leader and/or there may another type of mic for other contributors.

Good practice with clip mics



- The mic should be about 8 inches below the mouth in central position
- Make sure there is no interference from jewellery etc.
- Make sure the mic is not pointing into clothing, because rubbing will also cause interference.

Some common examples of mics for amplifying other contributors

Student may provide a directional '**conference mic**', placed centrally to automatically amplify speech of the person who is talking

<https://www.ihear.co.uk/collections/phonak-roger-microphones/products/phonak-roger-select>



Student may provide a '**Roger Pen**' **directional mic**, which they will manually point towards the person speaking

<https://www.ihear.co.uk/collections/phonak-roger-microphones/products/phonak-roger-pen>



Student or Student Disability Service may request a '**Catchbox**' microphone. See this video on how to use the Catchbox mic:

https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/1_s3lvi3o4

