

SUPPORTING DEAF STUDENTS

Best practice for education access providers of d/Deaf and hard of hearing undergraduates and postgraduates

PLAIN TEXT VERSION

This guide was compiled by Deaf, HOH and hearing staff, students and interpreters at the Australian National University in 2024. We urge staff to incorporate these measures into all educational access provisions for d/Deaf and hard of hearing students and researchers and to pass these recommendations on to future education providers. Please use, print and share this guide freely in your university, school, workplace or other institution and ensure you credit Sign on Screen when citing it. For the printable infographic file, visit [this link](#). For any questions or suggestions about this guide, email gemma.king@anu.edu.au.

1. Deaf Cultural Awareness Training

Those working closely with d/Deaf and hard of hearing students should receive Deaf Cultural Awareness training; search for your local Deaf organisation to book a session online or on campus. Every d/Deaf or hard of hearing person's preferences and needs are different; ask what these are and respect them. Acceptable terminology includes deaf (denoting a physical condition), Deaf (denoting a cultural identity) or d/Deaf if you're not sure. The term 'hearing impaired' is often considered a slur.

2. Sign Language Interpreting

Interpreters must be booked for students who need them. Meetings over 15 meetings usually require two interpreters and the d/Deaf person's preferences should be respected. Only professional interpreters with higher education specialisations booked through official organisations are appropriate; book as far ahead as possible as they are a scarce resource. Teachers and hosts should announce protocol at the start of events, asking participants to speak clearly and at a natural pace without interrupting, so the interpreters have time to convey their meaning.

3. Video Conferencing

Not all video conferencing platforms are equally accessible; ask the student's preference. Live captioning should be enabled, though keep in mind that captions can frequently be inaccurate and are an imprecise tool. In a multiparty meeting, use the 'raise hand' function, and state who is speaking before continuing. If using interpreters on Zoom, enable the 'multipin' function so the student/s and interpreter/s can pin each other for

visibility. Following the meeting, circulate a transcript to the student; most platforms can generate these automatically (check how before the meeting).

4. Face-to-face

If a microphone is available, always use it (especially for Q&As), whether or not you know a d/Deaf/HOH student is present. For students using methods other than interpreting (ex. lip reading, hearing aid, cochlear implant, note taker), participants should speak face-to-face, not covering their mouths or looking/turning away. If masks are worn, clear plastic masks are recommended for lip reading. Classes or meetings should not be held in noisy areas and background noise such as music should be reduced. Write unusual names or new terminology on the board (in person) or in the chat (online). This practice benefits many groups.

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LOCAL PROCESSES AND SHARE THIS GUIDE WIDELY

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