

Tips for Working with Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Individual letters of accommodation (LOAs) are provided to students to deliver to their faculty members that outline the accommodations approved for that student by the DRC. The following list contains suggested instructional tips in addition to possible approved accommodations.

Interpreters in the Classroom

Interpreters are trained professionals bound by a code of ethics. Interpreters have no knowledge of the student's classroom performance or the etiology of their deafness. In addition to the suggested modifications listed, the following suggestions are helpful for working with an interpreter.

1. Speak directly to the student who is deaf. Don't ask the interpreter to "Tell him ..."
2. Look at the deaf student, not the interpreter. The interpreter will sign whatever you say and voice whatever the student signs. The interpreters are not permitted to voice their own personal opinions or enter the conversation.
3. Speak at a normal rate. The interpreter will ask you to slow down or repeat if the delivery is too fast.
4. Allow the interpreter to sit or stand near you. The interpreter and the instructor should work out the best place for the interpreter to work. The closer the interpreter is to the speaker, the easier it is for the student to see the interpreter, the instructor and any visual aids.
5. Remember that the interpreter will be a few words behind the speaker. Allow the interpreter time to finish so that the student may ask questions or join the discussion.
6. Provide the interpreter with extra copies of materials being discussed in class. This allows the interpreter to study pertinent vocabulary and be prepared for the class.
7. Interpreters are paid professionals and skilled interpreters are in great demand. This makes it important to inform students of any class cancellations or changes as early as possible so they can make arrangements with their interpreters.

1. Initially, an interpreter's presence may be distracting to the instructor and other students. However, the initial curiosity will subside and it should be a comfortable situation for all concerned.

Instructional Tips

1. The deaf or hard of hearing student may need a notetaker so that he/she can give full attention to watching the speaker or interpreter. Please refer to the student's LOA for additional information
2. Many students with hearing loss need to receive assignments in written form in order to ensure a proper understanding of the requirements.
3. The speaker should face the class as much as possible and speak clearly and audibly.
4. Students will need to sit close to the speaker for maximum intake of visual cues.
5. Avoid covering your mouth or standing with a light source behind you when speaking.
6. The instructor should keep a minimum amount of lighting on when presenting audiovisual information so the instructor or interpreter can be seen at all times. It is helpful to supply the student with a written explanation of a demonstration in advance.
7. Videotapes or movies should be open or closed-captioned.
8. Refrain from speaking while writing on a chalkboard or while turned away from the student.
9. The use of visual aids (chalkboards, overhead projectors, diagrams, charts, etc.) greatly assists students with hearing impairments.
10. In a group discussion, ensure that one person is speaking at a time. Point to the speaker or have speakers raise their hands. It may be necessary to repeat questions or comments so the student can keep up with the discussion.
11. Allow extra time when referring to written material, since the student with a hearing disability must look at the material and then return his attention to the classroom to keep up with the discussion.