Deaf or Hard of Hearing

A person who is hard of hearing can have mild to severe hearing loss. Profoundly deaf people may communicate using Irish Sign Language (ISL) or lip reading. Some deaf people have hearing aids which allows for some level of oral communication.

What difficulties might be experienced by a student who is deaf or hard of hearing?

- Depending on the level of impairment and the student's preference the student may use a Speed-text operator, ISL Interpreter, note-taker or radio aid.
- Difficulty with written work if ISL is first language.
- Difficulty in lectures where student may have to simultaneously concentrate on presentation slides, lecturer (for lip-reading), speed-text operator or ISL interpreter and their own notes.
- Difficulty following class discussion in tutorials.
- May experience feelings of isolation.
- Difficulty socially integrating within the class.

What can you do to support these students?

- Provide the student with lecture notes and other materials in advance of the class. This will allow the student to prepare and help them to establish what the lecture is about. This is essential as deaf or hard of hearing students may not hear all the information provided in the lecture.
- Address and look directly at the deaf person, not the interpreter.
- Ensure all essential information is available in written format and provide the deaf student (and ISL interpreter or speed-text operator) with a glossary of terminology to help the student understand the lecture content. The interpreter may not know the sign for some subject specific terms, if you provide these in advance the interpreter and student can agree on a sign they will use.
- Face the class at all times to allow the student to lip-read.
- If other students contribute to the class it is helpful to repeat their questions or comments for the benefit of the deaf or hard of hearing student who will usually be sitting at the front of the class.
- It is helpful to supply a list of topics for discussion in advance of tutorials. This gives the students the opportunity to prepare and understand the context of the conversation taking place.

Useful Resources
- www.deafhear.ie