

Deaf or Hard of Hearing Fact Sheet

What does 'deaf' or 'hard of hearing' mean?

- A person who is hard of hearing can have mild to severe hearing loss.
- People who are profoundly deaf may communicate with Irish Sign Language (ISL) or lip reading.
- Some deaf people use hearing aids or cochlear implants which allow for some level of verbal communication.
- Some hearing aid users can receive a signal from a Loop System which amplifies sound sources in large rooms such as lecture theatres or reception areas. The following symbol indicates the presence of a Loop System.



How is a student's college experience impacted by being deaf or hard of hearing?

Difficulty	Possible impact in college
Accessibility of teaching and learning material & environment	• Difficulty keeping up with aurally presented material (e.g. lectures in the spoken word). • Difficulty in lectures where students may have to simultaneously concentrate on presentation slides, lecturer (for lip-reading), speed-text operator or ISL interpreter and their own notes. • Difficulty reviewing lecture notes with minimal or no written content included (e.g. images only). • Difficulty with completing written work, particularly if ISL is considered their first language. • Difficulty completing assignments and exams due to difficulties with written expression, reading comprehension and possibly misinterpreting ambiguous information.
Communication	• Difficulty following class discussion in tutorials. • Difficulty communicating within a group work setting. • Difficulty with oral presentations. • Difficulty socially integrating with the class and may experience feelings of isolation.
Other	• Managing the use of an ISL interpreter/speed-text operator/note-taker/radio aid if this is required. • Students who have been recently diagnosed may experience emotional difficulties and/or difficulties with practical tasks.

To find out more, please visit:

[Inclusive Teaching Strategies](#)

How can you support a student who is deaf or hard of hearing?

1. Student-Centred Approach:

- If you are in doubt about how to support a student at any time, **ask the student** – they are the experts of their own needs!
- Create a space for students to **feel comfortable approaching you with any issues** (e.g. provide contact and student office hour details etc.).
- Implement any [classroom](#) and [exam](#) accommodations which were determined at the **student's Needs Assessment**.

2. Teaching and Learning:

- Be guided by [Universal Design principles](#) when designing coursework.
- Ensure all **essential information is available in written format**. Write out new vocabulary on the board with an explanation.
- **Provide the student with lecture notes and other materials in advance of class**. They can prepare for the class and establish what the lecture is about, as deaf or hard of hearing students may not hear all the information provided in the lecture.
- Provide the student (and the ISL interpreter or speed-text operator, if applicable) with a **glossary of terminology** to help the student understand the content. This allows the student and ISL interpreter to decide on a sign for a term which does not have one.
- **Provide a list of topics for discussion in advance of tutorials** to give the student an opportunity to prepare and understand the discussion taking place.
- **Permit the student to use Assistive Technology** in the classroom.
- Consider the **exam needs of the student for in-class or mid-semester exams** (e.g. does the student require assistive technology? Is the environment noisy?).
- Encourage students to **speak one at a time during group work**.

3. Communication:

- **Address and look directly at the deaf person**, not the interpreter.
- **Face the class when presenting** to allow the student to lip-read (do not stand under a light as this will create a shadow, making it difficult to lip-read).
- **Repeat any questions or comments** made in class by other students for the benefit of students who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- **Always ask the student if they require assistance** before doing so.