

Presentations

Often the whole focus of group work is a presentation.

A deaf student is as capable of presenting as anyone else and should be as involved as the other members of the group.

It is important that everyone takes responsibility for presentations and that all members of the group make the most of their strong points and are supported by each other with their weaker ones. This applies equally whether students are deaf or hearing.

If a deaf sign language user is presenting, their contribution may be voiced over by an interpreter and the interpreter will also sign everyone else's part.

The interpreter should have received a copy of the presentation notes in order for them to be fully prepared for this. It is very useful for the interpreter, especially if technical language is involved or specific issues will be discussed, to know what is going to be said. With enough time to be familiar with the presentation, the interpreter will work between the two languages at speed and with little or no interruption.

But be warned, if you are vague, muddled or if you waffle – the interpreter will too!

If you are presenting to other students who are deaf, remember that visual information is the key. Use lots of OHPs and handouts and leave plenty of time for them to be read before you start to speak.

Please contact us for further information

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Student and Academic Services
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Group Work

A guide to working with deaf students



This information can be made available
in other formats. Please contact us for details.

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General introduction

During your time at University, you will have to work as part of a group. This guide includes information about working in a group with deaf students to ensure all group members can fully participate. Clear communication and involvement by all members are the key to successful group work and it is no different when there are deaf group members. This guide should help you to get the most out of working together.

Good communication guidelines

The following guidelines will give you some basics about good communication. Deaf students have as much responsibility as you to enable clear communication. Here are some guidelines to consider

- 1 Choose a well lit room to work in. Good lighting will allow your faces to be clearly visible and your lips to be read.
- 2 Position yourselves so that all your faces can be seen. A circle is best, move the furniture if necessary. If you are asked to do group work in a lecture theatre where the seats are fixed in rows, ask the lecturer if your group can work in a different location.
- 3 Try to work in quiet areas. Background noise can be a big problem to students who wear hearing aids (as well as to communication staff working with students). Hearing aids amplify **all** sounds so some busy places such as the study areas of the Learning Centre or the Cutting Edge for example may not be a practical choice of location (check what the students and communication staff think).
- 4 Try not to move around too much. Your face needs to be visible to deaf students at all times. It is important that you don't walk around and talk at the same time.
- 5 Make sure only one person speaks at a time. Deaf people can only follow the conversation of the person they are looking at. It may be useful to have a 'chair' to indicate who will speak next and ensure the deaf person is looking the right way.
- 6 Do not chew gum or eat and speak as it can be very distracting and distort your lip-pattern, which will make lip-reading more difficult.
- 7 Write notes of what goes on in your meetings, especially any important information such as deadlines and instructions.
- 8 If you are using handouts or written material, you need to allow extra time for deaf students to read it **before** you start speaking. They can only look at one thing at a time so they will either watch you speaking, or read.

- 9 Speak at a normal pace. If you are going a bit fast it is their responsibility (or that of the interpreter or note-taker) to stop you politely, and ask you to slow down. If you talk too slowly, it can make it difficult to follow the conversation.

- 10 Any communication issues or other uncertainties should be discussed as a group.

Contacting each other

Clear communication of information is crucial to successful group-work. Below is a list of possible communication methods

SMS and E-mail – Both very popular ways for deaf students to contact people and arrange meetings etc.

Text-Direct/Typetalk – This is a relay system that enables deaf people to use the phone. The deaf person will use a text phone. Their typed message will go to an operator who will read it out to you. You will reply and the operator will type your message and the deaf person will read your message on their text phone. If you want to phone a deaf person, you can dial 18002 followed by their number and the operator will type your message for the deaf person to read on their text phone and read out their response to you.

Notes – It is always very useful, especially if communication is difficult, to write information down. Deaf people are used to this and it is a good way to communicate.

The English language

It is important to note that some deaf students have difficulty with English. For profoundly deaf, sign language users, English is likely to be their second language. Deafness can be a barrier to learning correct grammar and spelling so written work and access to written materials can be affected.

If written work is produced by the group including material written by a deaf student, the deaf student's contribution may contain spelling or grammatical errors and the work may need to be edited. This can be done in one of two ways

- 1 The work can be taken by the deaf student to the language specialists in the Deaf Service Team for modification.
- 2 The group can agree to edit the work themselves.

It is the responsibility of the deaf student to decide which of these options is most appropriate.

Communication staff – interpreters and note-takers

If a member of the communication staff attends your group sessions with a deaf student, the following general points are worth remembering

- 1 It is the responsibility of the deaf student to book and cancel communication staff. To make the most of the communication service, information about **when** meetings will take place, **where** and for **how long** needs to be discussed while the deaf student is present.
- 2 The communication staff will attend group meetings as professionals and as such will not 'help' the deaf student with their work, they will simply enable effective communication. As such, communication staff are there for everyone's benefit and it is everyone's responsibility to be clear about what they want to say.
- 3 Communication staff will not take part in the discussion or offer advice and should not be asked questions or asked for their views.
- 4 Communication staff will not be able to do their job if more than one person is talking at once. To begin with, groups will need to be reminded but it will become quite natural to take turns more strictly than usual when speaking.

Interpreters – will work between two languages (British Sign Language and English) in both directions. They will voice over signed contributions from the deaf student and will sign the spoken contributions to the deaf student. Interpreters will not add anything, they will try not to miss information out and they will relay the message in the same way as it was originally said (eg sarcastically, as a joke, lazily etc).

Note-takers – will write as much as possible of what is said. They may have to rearrange information to write it down fast enough but they will not add to it or alter the meaning of it.

All of the above staff are qualified to do these jobs to a very high standard. They should be treated with respect and it should be remembered that they are there for the benefit of the whole group.

Communication staff will require clarification of what has been said from time to time. They may also ask you to slow down, speak up or to rephrase something. All group members can rely on the support of the communication staff to ensure a successful meeting and the most important way to make the most of the situation is to **allow more time**.

Equipment – some deaf students may bring audio equipment to group meetings. This is likely to be a radio aid. Radio aids transmit sound directly into a hearing aid and cut out background noise.