

Some Considerations for Teaching Adults with

## Hearing Impairment and Deafness

People who have a post-lingual hearing loss generally acquired their hearing loss later in life. They may or may not benefit from listening devices. Some may learn sign language as a means to diversify access to communication. It is important to assess the needs of each individual before implementing any reasonable adjustments. This is because the requirements of each individual can be diverse.

Students with a hearing loss may require accommodations and assistive devices to have the best access to education. Accommodations may be as simple as preferential seating or as complex as wireless assistive listening devices in the classroom. Each learner with a hearing loss should be assessed individually and accommodations should be implemented based on the unique needs of each student.

### Impact of Hearing Loss

The learning processes of students with a hearing loss may be affected in the following ways:

- Deaf and hard of hearing students can sometimes prefer visual learning strategies. This can be a challenge in an environment where much essential information is delivered exclusively by word of mouth.
- Students with a hearing loss may need to use assistive technology to participate in class. This assistive technology can be the laptop where software such as Skype can be used to deliver interpreters or captioning. For some it will be in the form of listening devices. For others it will be a combination of technology that includes both listening devices and computer based software.
- The impact of hearing loss can cause delays in receiving learning material. This needs to be considered in terms of developing suitable timelines for the completion of work for each student.
- Students with hearing loss may appear isolated in the learning environment. The possibility for social contact and interaction with other students is often limited, and this isolation or separateness may have an impact on learning.
- Participation and interaction may be limited. Students who cannot hear the flow and nuances of rapid verbal exchange will be at a disadvantage.

### Teaching Strategies

There is a range of inclusive teaching strategies that can assist **all** students to learn but there are some specific strategies that are useful in teaching a group that includes students with a hearing impairment:

- Encourage students with a hearing loss to seat themselves toward the front of the room where they will have an unobstructed line of vision. This is particularly important if the student is lip-reading, relying on visual clues or using a hearing aid which has a limited range. Be aware that some students may not be comfortable with this suggestion or have alternate strategies. Respect their choices.
- Hearing aids may include transmitter/receiver systems with a clip-on microphone for the lecturer. If using such a microphone, it is not necessary to change your speaking or teaching style.
- Ensure that any background noise is minimised.
- Repeat clearly any questions asked by students in the lecture or class before giving a response.
- Do not speak when facing the screen. Be aware that moustaches, beards, hands, books or microphones in front of your face can add to the difficulties of lip-readers. Students who lip-read cannot function in darkened rooms. You may need to adjust the lighting in your teaching environment.
- It is important that all information should also be available as handouts.
- Provide written materials to supplement all lectures, tutorials and laboratory sessions. Announcements made regarding class times, activities, field work, industry visits etc, should be given in writing as well as verbally.
- Allow students to record lectures or, preferably, make available copies of your lecture notes. Flexible delivery of teaching materials via electronic media is also particularly helpful for students who have difficulty accessing information in the usual ways. For students with a hearing loss, new technology - and the internet in particular - can be used to bridge many gaps.
- Ensure that lists of the subject-specific jargon and technical terms which students will need to acquire are made available early in the course.
- Any videos or films used should, where possible, be captioned. When this is not possible, you will need to consider alternative ways for students with hearing impairment to access the information.
- Assist students who lip-read by having the student sit directly opposite you and ensure, if possible, that they can see all other participants. Control the discussion so that only one person is speaking at a time.
- In some cases, providing reading lists well before the start of a course for students with a hearing loss can be beneficial. Consider tailoring these reading lists when necessary, and provide guidance to key texts.