

Support services for students with disability and additional requirements

Hear

to help

Guidance notes for deaf and hard of hearing
students and their tutors
2003-2004

Deafness and hearing loss affect people's methods of study in different ways, so these notes are very general and we suggest that you experiment to find the strategies that suit you best. These guidelines do not claim to be fully comprehensive, but care has been taken to ensure that they reflect a range of ideas that are particularly suited to the task of studying for a student who is deaf or hard of hearing.

Many Open University disabled students are now eligible for financial assistance from Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs). These are government grants to help students in higher education with extra study costs that arise because of their disability. A wide range of support is available from DSAs, and students are strongly advised to find out if they are eligible. DSAs are covered in more detail in Section 3, and you should make initial enquiries to your Regional Centre.

The University has its own range of support schemes and these are introduced in the following pages. More information can be found in the publications *Meeting your needs*, *Meeting your residential school needs* and *Meeting your examination needs*, from your Regional Centre and on the Learner's Guide website, www.open.ac.uk/learners-guide/disability

This publication has been prepared by Disabled Student Services and produced by the Student Services Communications Team. It is available also in electronic format, in Braille and on audio-cassette – please contact the Office for Students with Disabilities.

While every effort is made to ensure accuracy, the information in this publication may change in the light of altered regulations or policy, or because of financial or other constraints.

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1 Introduction

The Open University (OU) has always had a commitment to meeting the needs of its deaf and hard of hearing students. Approximately 740 such students are currently studying with the OU.

The RNID, formerly known as the Royal National Institute for Deaf People, estimates that in 2003 there are about 9 million people in the United Kingdom who are deaf or deafened, or have some sort of hearing loss. Of these, there are about 70,000 people who use British Sign Language (BSL) as their first or preferred language.

Research into deaf and hard of hearing students in supported open learning is relatively new. This publication therefore does not claim to be the definitive body of work in this area. Rather, it is intended as a resource for students and for tutors (associate lecturers), course teams and Student Services staff in their day-to-day support of deaf and hard of hearing students.

Definitions

There are two main approaches to describing deafness.

- **The medical model** defines deafness in terms of a sensory deficit which is measured by how much someone's hearing deviates from the norm.
- **The cultural or social model** sees the 'difficulties' of deafness as lying not in deafness itself, but in other people's lack of knowledge about how to communicate with people who have a hearing loss. Some people define deafness as a positive way of experiencing the world visually. This model sees sign language users as a distinct linguistic and cultural group. People who see themselves as belonging to this group will often describe themselves as Deaf (with a capital D).

Different students will have different preferences about terms such as 'deaf', 'Deaf' and 'hard of hearing'. These preferences should be respected. For the purposes of this document, 'deaf' will be used to refer to all people who have some kind of hearing loss.

Some effects of hearing loss

It is important to remember that each deaf learner is an individual, and what follows are generalizations that might not be true for all people with the same hearing loss.

People with mild deafness may experience some difficulty understanding speech, especially in noisy situations. They may not be able to hear people whispering. They may benefit from using a hearing aid, and may also use lipreading to supplement aural information.

People with moderate deafness may miss out on many speech sounds. Some will use a hearing aid to access speech, and will also use lipreading. The use of hearing aids is a matter of personal choice for the deaf learner, and for various reasons some will choose not to use hearing aids.

People with severe deafness may find it difficult to understand speech even with a hearing aid. They will rely more on lipreading and on information being presented visually (e.g. in writing). They may find it difficult to use a voice telephone even with powerful amplification, and may use a textphone or videophone. They may use sign language. They may not hear noises such as those made by lorries.

People with profound deafness may find hearing aids of little or no benefit. They will rely heavily on lipreading, and on information being presented visually (e.g. in writing). They may use sign language. People who use a signing language, such as BSL, as their first language may have difficulty reading and writing

in English. This is because BSL has its own syntax/structure that is quite different from English. Unconventional grammatical structure is therefore not an indicator of a person's intelligence. People with profound deafness may be unable to use a voice telephone, even with amplification, and may use a textphone or videophone. They may not hear sounds such as that made by a pneumatic drill.

People with monaural deafness have a hearing loss in one ear. They will need to position themselves where they can make best use of their hearing in one ear. Sometimes they may find it difficult to judge which direction a sound is coming from, as the brain usually relies on information from both ears to do this.

Tinnitus is a condition that affects both deaf and hearing people. Hair cells in the inner ear are overstimulated or damaged, causing them to send a confused stream of messages to the brain. This results in people 'hearing' sounds which have no external cause. These sounds can be a constant buzzing, hissing, whistling or ringing, and can interfere with the ability to communicate.

Language choices - spoken language and sign language

People with mild or moderate hearing loss are likely to use spoken language. People with severe or profound deafness are more likely to use sign language. However, language choice is not determined purely by degree of hearing loss. Some severely or profoundly deaf people will choose to use spoken language, and some people with a lesser hearing loss may use sign language.

Language choice also depends on *when* a person became deaf.

- A person who is born hearing, acquires spoken language, and then loses their hearing as an adult, is more likely to continue to use spoken language whatever the degree of their hearing loss.
- A person who is born deaf is more likely to use sign language.

Language choice may also depend on context. For example, some students may use sign language to participate in tutorials and lectures, and spoken English in one-to-one conversations with other students at break times. Other students may prefer to use sign language in both contexts. Sign language users will always be bilingual to some degree, using sign language and English (spoken or written) for different purposes.

Two different kinds of sign language

British Sign Language (BSL)

This is the language of the British Deaf Community. It is a visual-gestural language, that is, it is perceived visually and produced by bodily gestures. BSL is a distinct language, with its own grammar and vocabulary (and was formally recognized as such by the British Government in March 2003). For people who have BSL as a first or preferred language, working with written English may be equivalent to reading and writing in a second language, to which they have not had aural access. Some BSL users may therefore experience difficulties in accessing written texts, and in expressing their ideas in conventional grammar. These difficulties result from the complications of working between two languages in two different modes.

Sign Supported English (SSE)

This involves speaking English, and signing some of the words at the same time. It is not a distinct language like BSL, but a way of representing some aspects of English visually. Some deaf people prefer this. SSE may also be used in situations where there are both sign users and non-signers, so that everyone can understand what is being said.

Language choice and support

Students will require support tailored to their language choices.

In face-to-face contact at tutorials and day schools, for example:

- spoken language users with some useful hearing will need favourable listening and lipreading conditions;
- spoken language users with no useful hearing will need favourable lipreading conditions and visual presentation of information, and they may also need a lipspeaker;
- BSL/SSE users will require an interpreter.

A notetaker may also be necessary, because deaf students may not be able to take notes themselves while lipreading, or while watching a lipspeaker/interpreter.

2 General communication support

Support should aim to develop an inclusive setting for the deaf learner. This will often mean preparation and planning with the deaf learner, and it is highly recommended that this happens before the course starts. Some methods of support are listed below.

Support from other people

Lipreading

Only 40 per cent of sounds are visible on the lips, and some letters are phonetically very similar (e.g. 'p', 'b' and 'm'). So lipreading involves a certain amount of guesswork. It is difficult to lipread new or unfamiliar words, and sudden changes of topic can be difficult to follow. Lipreaders need to see the speaker's face clearly at all times. It is difficult to lipread in group conversations, because changes of speaker are difficult to follow – by the time the lipreader has located the new speaker, they have missed the first few words.

Lipspeakers

Lipspeakers convey a speaker's message to people who use lipreading. They produce clearly the shape of the words and the flow, rhythm and phrasing of natural speech, and repeat the stress used by the speaker. Facial expression and natural gesture are also used. They do not ask questions or get involved on the lipreader's behalf.

Interpreters

Interpreters are fluent in English and BSL, and quite often in SSE. They voice what a deaf person is signing and sign what a hearing person is saying. They will not become involved in the interaction.

Communication support workers

A growing number of deaf people will now opt for a communication support worker in an educational situation. Their role is very similar to that of an interpreter. They may, however, be more versatile in that they may use a whole range of support strategies, e.g. they may do notetaking as well.

Notetakers

Notetakers take notes on what is said, and give these to the deaf person at the end of the session. Notes can be handwritten or typed.

Speech-to-text reporters (palantypists)

Speech-to-text reporters record speech on a special shorthand machine via a keyboard. The words are displayed on a screen.

Equipment

A variety of equipment is available to improve listening conditions or amplify sounds.

Hearing aids

Hearing aids can be very useful, but they do not restore normal hearing. They amplify all sounds equally, so background noise can be very distracting. Background noise can include passing traffic, other people talking, and people shuffling papers. People who use hearing aids will often supplement their understanding with lipreading. This means that they need good lipreading conditions as well as good listening conditions.

Loop systems

In a room loop system, a small microphone picks up sound from a particular source (e.g. lecturer or TV) and feeds it to a wire loop running round a room. The hearing aid user sits within this loop and switches their hearing aid to 'T', which enables it to pick up sound only from the loop, thus reducing much of the background noise.

Personal loops (or radio aids) are equivalent but smaller systems where the loop is more personal to the user, e.g. around their neck or built into a folder.

More details can be obtained from the Office for Students with Disabilities and organizations such as the RNID.

3 Support for students

The OU adheres to the principles set out in the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) Part IV. Within the Act, educational institutions are required to not discriminate against disabled current or prospective learners by treating them less favourably

than others for reasons relating to their disability. In addition, certain types of reasonable adjustments must be made by the institutions in situations where a disabled student might otherwise be substantially disadvantaged. The OU will be deemed to have discriminated against a disabled student if it fails to make reasonable adjustments so that a student is placed, or is likely to be placed, at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with a person who is not disabled.

Support from the Regional Centres

Support to students is arranged primarily through the OU Regional Centres. Each Regional Centre, in addition to voice telephones, may have textphones so that students with speech or language difficulties can make contact.

Advice and guidance

Student Services assistants and managers are available to offer advice about course choice and programmes of study. If a student requires specialist careers advice, an appointment can be made by contacting the Regional Centre beforehand. Students will need to state their communication needs and enquire whether aids such as loop systems are in place.

Informing the University of support needs

Each student who informs the University of an additional requirement or disability will be asked to complete a Facility Request Form. This will enable staff at the Regional Centres and at Walton Hall to make provision and offer support to students in relation to their studies. Support and provision may include:

- providing course materials in different formats (such as transcriptions of audio materials);

- organizing communication support in the form of an interpreter, lipspeaker or notetaker;
- the adaptation of tutorial venues to accommodate an individual student's needs;
- the loan of a range of equipment, e.g. personal loops, textphones and subtitle recorders/decoders.

In particular, please note the following points.

- It is the student's responsibility to tell the University about any additional requirement or disability.
- Unless it is informed at an early stage, the University will not be able to provide support.
- The Facility Request Form FRF1 (available in print in *Meeting your needs* or online at www.open.ac.uk/learners-guide/disability/request-services.htm – click on 'download a copy of the form to print') is the most efficient way of informing the University about support needs.
- A student may telephone a Regional Centre directly to inform them about an additional requirement or disability.
- If the Regional Centre does not know about a student's disability or additional requirements, that student will not be able to apply for DSAs or be offered the wide range of support that the OU can provide.
- A student may tell their tutor about a disability or additional requirement. The tutor will then seek the student's permission to inform the disability team in the Regional Centre.

Other forms of support

Support may also include allowing extra time to submit assignments (within University timescales) and additional academic sessions. These are one-to-one sessions, usually conducted over the telephone but occasionally in the student's

own home or other agreed venue. More detailed information regarding support and equipment available from the OU or via Disabled Students' Allowances (see below) is available in the OU publications *Meeting your needs*, *Meeting your residential school needs* and *Meeting your examination needs*, and in the Learner's Guide on the OU website: www.open.ac.uk/learners-guide/disability.

Written materials, assignments and exams

Most OU courses include a substantial amount of written material. Like all students, deaf students will approach their reading with varying degrees of confidence, which may also be affected by when they became deaf. Students who have become deaf in later life, after schooling, may feel that they have sound reading and writing skills. Students who were born deaf may (but not necessarily) have experienced more difficulties with written English. As noted earlier, BSL users may effectively be reading and writing in a second language. Some students may, therefore, need support to express their ideas in standard English.

Depending on a student's needs, the following may be possible in exams:

- extra time;
- interpreters to translate the exam questions into BSL/SSE.

For further information on examinations please refer to Section 7.

Cassettes and CDs

Students may benefit from transcriptions of audio material. If cassettes and CDs are used in tutorials, students will need to be provided with the transcript to read beforehand, and lipspeakers and interpreters will also need to listen to the material beforehand in order to be able to relay it accurately.

Videos

Videos can be difficult to understand for deaf students who are using lipreading.

- There may be sound interference, e.g. background music or noise during speech.
- People may speak 'off screen'.
- There may be voice-overs or dubbing where people are seen talking but the sound does not match the faces.
- They may introduce unfamiliar or technical vocabulary which can be difficult to lipread.
- They may include flashbacks or other 'interruptions', making it hard to follow a sequence of events.

Students will need a subtitled version, or a transcript to read before watching the video. The Office for Students with Disabilities will usually be able to provide these for your course.

If videos are used in tutorials, lipspeakers and interpreters will need to watch them beforehand in order to be able to relay them accurately. It is also helpful for notetakers to watch videos beforehand.

Disabled Students' Allowances

Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) are grants to assist students in higher education with the extra costs of study arising from a disability or specific learning difficulty. Disabled part-time OU students taking courses for a first degree, taught postgraduate degree or research degree can be considered for DSAs if they

- meet the OU definition of part-time study (i.e. are taking courses for a first degree or taught postgraduate degree which are worth a total of at least 60 points in any one academic year, or undertaking a part-time research degree);

- provide satisfactory documentary proof of their disability;
- satisfy certain government requirements relating to country of residence;
- can demonstrate, through a needs assessment, that they have learning support needs arising directly from their disability that will incur additional costs.

There are three main allowances within the DSA.

Specialist equipment. This covers the purchase of items such as textphones, subtitle recorders/decoders and personal loops. (The maximum amount of the award is in the region of £4500 for the period of study to complete a degree or other qualification.)

Non-medical helper's allowance. This is for specialist human support such as interpreters and notetakers. (The maximum amount is in the region of £5600 for students studying a 60-point course. This may increase depending on the total number of points.)

General allowance. This is for miscellaneous expenses such as computer disks and printer cartridges. (The maximum amount is in the region of £750 for students studying a 60-point course. This may increase depending on the total number of points.)

Additionally, students who cannot use public transport because of their disability can be considered for help with extra travel costs.

The OU is responsible for administering DSA applications and awards for its own students. This is currently done by a central DSA Office at the OU, which can be contacted as follows.

The DSA Office

The Open University

Milton Keynes

MK7 6ZN

Tel. 01908 654136

Fax 01908 659956

Textphone 01908 659955

E-mail dsa-queries@open.ac.uk

Information on DSAs is also available on the Learner's Guide website at

www.open.ac.uk/learners-guide/disability

There are different arrangements for students based in Scotland, and some of the above information may not apply. Students resident in Scotland should contact the Regional Centre in Scotland or the Student Awards Agency for Scotland for details of the administrative arrangements and the policies and guidelines which apply there.

The Open University in Scotland

10 Drumsheugh Gardens

Edinburgh

EH3 7QJ

Tel. 0131 226 3851

Fax 0141 220 6730

E-mail scotland@open.ac.uk

Student Awards Agency for Scotland

Gyleview House

3 Redheughs Rigg

Edinburgh

EH12 9HH

Tel. 0845 111 1711

Fax 0131 244 5887

E-mail saas.geu@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Website www.student-support-saas.gov.uk

4 Support from tutors

Contact with tutors

Tutors and students may meet at tutorials, day schools and residential schools, but much student support is done over the telephone. This can be difficult for students with varying degrees of hearing loss. BT, other telephone companies and specialist manufacturers of products for deaf people offer a range of telephones that may be beneficial depending on the nature of hearing loss. More detailed information about these can be found in the RNID Sound Advantage *Solutions* catalogue. Two examples of adapted telephones are given in Appendix 3.

Students who are profoundly deaf may use textphones (also known as minicomms). A textphone has a QWERTY keyboard and a screen, and is linked to the telephone network. People have a conversation by exchanging typed messages which appear on the screen in real time.

If one person has a textphone and the other a voice telephone, they can communicate via the RNID Typetalk telephone relay service: an operator types what the hearing person has said, and reads aloud what the deaf person has typed. (See Appendix 5 for contact details.)

Some students may have to concentrate hard to understand what is said on the telephone, and may find this tiring. And although textphones do not rely on speech, the typing is very fast, so reading it can also be tiring. With the Typetalk relay service, both student and tutor may be unwilling to share sensitive information via an operator.

For telephone tutorials, all students will benefit from having a written outline in advance, with changes of topic signalled clearly in the actual conversation.

Some students may prefer other means of contact such as fax and e-mail. A growing number of deaf people use short message service (SMS) text messaging as a means of communication (see the RNID website, www.rnid.org, for further information). This can help when tutors want to send short messages. Tutors should discuss individual preferences with their students.

Guidelines for face-to-face contact at tutorials, day schools and residential schools

Tutors should discuss with individual students the best way to ensure full access to all information, as different students will have different preferred strategies.

Students who are using spoken language will need good conditions for listening and lipreading, as explained below.

Some students will use specialist equipment to enable them to access tutorials.

Guidelines for students

- Do not assume that the tutor and other students are aware of your needs. If the class set-up/tutorial is not conducive to your learning, please make your concerns and views known.
- Try and position yourself in the place where you can see the tutor best.
- Do not wait until the end of a session before asking questions.
- Ask for any available handouts before the start of a session, to give you a feel of what it will contain.

Listening

To create favourable listening conditions, tutors should follow the guidelines below.

- Reduce unwanted external noise (e.g. heavy traffic, noise from passing feet and voices).
- Reduce noise within the room – hard floors, high ceilings, large windows and breezeblock walls all reflect sound and prolong reverberation. Sound-absorbent materials (e.g. carpets, soft furnishings, curtains) cut down these unwanted noises.
- Turn off fans, OHPs, etc., when not in use.
- Use loop systems when possible – your Regional Centre will be able to advise on whether tutorial venues have these.

Lipreading

To create favourable lipreading conditions, tutors should follow the guidelines below.

- Speak normally – shouting, over-enunciation and speaking very slowly all distort normal lip patterns and make lipreading more difficult.
- Try to stand in front of a plain background – a highly-patterned background distracts attention from your face.
- Keep your mouth free – no chewing gum or pencils.
- Position yourself so that all the students can see your face – if you wander around, the deaf student will find lipreading difficult.
- Make sure that the room is well lit.
- Make sure that light falls on your face from in front – do not stand in front of a window or bright light, or your face will be in shadow.

- Talk only when you are facing the class – students will not be able to lipread if you are writing on the board or looking down at a book or at an OHP.
- Avoid pointing at things some distance from your face, as students will take time to look away, and may miss what you say next – if you need to point at something, allow time for the student to look away from your face and then back again.
- Always signal for attention before giving general information or instructions.
- Signal changes in what you are talking about, or different sections of the lessons or activity, e.g. indicate the different sections of a tutorial on the board or OHP.
- Remember that about 60% of lipreading is guesswork.
- Introduce new vocabulary in writing.
- Try to use clear, simple English; avoid long complicated sentences.
- Remember that lipreading is tiring; avoid long periods of unsupported listening; keep listening times down to short stretches; support information with visual materials such as diagrams, concept maps and key words.
- Students who are lipreading cannot read handouts and join in a discussion at the same time. Tutors should allow students time to read handouts, or, better still, supply copies of handouts for students to read in advance.

Group discussions

These can be difficult for a student who is lipreading. The following may help.

- Arrange the seating in a circle or semi-circle, so that it is easier for the deaf student to see all the participants.

- Make sure that only one person talks at a time – and make sure that the deaf student is watching the person who is talking.
- Ask participants to raise a hand before they start talking, so that the deaf student knows where to look.

Support workers

Some BSL users will use an **interpreter/support worker**. The following points about working with support workers are based on information taken from the RNID factsheet *Teaching strategies to use with deaf and hard of hearing students, 2002*. These points are equally applicable to **lipspeakers**.

- Remember to talk to the deaf student and not to the support worker.
- Everything you say will be interpreted, so you do not need to give instructions to the support worker or face him or her when speaking – it is the student's responsibility to seek clarification if he or she does not understand.
- Speak at your normal rate – the support worker will tell you if you need to slow down, pause or repeat a sentence. You may be asked to spell a name or unfamiliar word.
- The support worker or the student may not understand acronyms, so it is helpful to explain them the first time they are used.
- The support worker needs to know the format of the session in advance as well as the subject and key vocabulary that you will be using – try to provide beforehand any notes, handouts or videos that you intend to use.
- The support worker should sit or stand close to the speaker and near any visual material being used, so that the deaf student can face the same way as everyone else – you should

let the support worker and the student work out the most suitable positions. It may be useful to prepare a pack containing a lesson plan, handouts and names of other students for the support worker.

- Good overhead lighting and a plain background will help the deaf student to watch the support worker without distraction.
- Interpreting is very demanding – the support worker will need a break after about 30 minutes. If the lecture programme is intensive, you may need two support workers or to restructure the session so that there is a short break part way through. There is a national shortage of support workers, so it is important to plan ahead and to be aware that last-minute changes might mean that a support worker is not available.
- It is your responsibility to acknowledge questions from students, and the support worker will try to identify to the deaf student who is about to speak.
- It is possible to interpret only one speaker at a time, and it helps if the other students realize this so that they can avoid talking over one another – it is your responsibility to make sure that this does not happen.
- Remember that the deaf student will receive a question slightly after the rest of the group because of the time the interpretation takes, and he or she needs to be given time to answer.
- Students who are watching a support worker will not be able to read handouts at the same time.

Lipspeakers

Some students will prefer to use the services of a professional lipspeaker in tutorials and/or day schools – the latter last much longer than tutorials, making lipreading especially difficult/tiring.

A lipspeaker repeats everything a lecturer says, but in very clear patterns that the student can pick up.

A lecturer should bear the following in mind.

- Time should be allowed for the deaf student to absorb the information from the lipspeaker, since the information has to pass from the lecturer to the lipspeaker and then to the student.
- As with other support workers, give the lipspeaker a copy of any handouts etc. in advance.
- Liaise with the lipspeaker and deaf student about the timing of rest breaks.

5 Course-specific information

Many students experiencing distance learning for the first time find it a difficult concept to get used to. Most of the learning is carried out at home, and contact with tutors and Regional Centre staff is usually over the telephone or by e-mail. The presence of any degree of hearing loss should not prevent people from studying with the OU; however, some caution is advised before choosing certain courses or programmes.

Arts

Subjects such as history, history of art, philosophy, English language and literature contain a significant amount of reading and writing. Students whose first language is not English may need to know whether course components are available in other formats (e.g. subtitled TV programmes). Some courses, like A103, have a music element, and an alternative strategy for studying that segment may need to be sought. Students with a significant hearing loss are strongly advised to contact their Regional Centre and also to apply for a DSA where possible.

Health and Social Welfare

These courses often contain a vocational element and do not focus on academic knowledge alone. However, it should be noted that the social work and nursing programmes include compulsory practice placements, which students must complete successfully. This will involve a high level of communication with other people, and it is imperative that students with a significant degree of hearing loss apply for a DSA, where possible, to help with support while on placement.

Languages

The OU offers courses in Latin and Greek that do not have an aural component. The courses are based on the transcription and translation of passages into English, and vice versa.

Courses in French, German and Spanish normally contain a listening and speaking component. To gain credit for the course, such aural/oral learning outcomes must be successfully achieved. Students with a significant hearing loss and/or speech difficulties should contact their Regional Centre for advice.

Music

These courses contain a large amount of music theory, composition, appreciation and practice. Students with severe or profound deafness should contact their Regional Centre for advice regarding course requirements.

Sciences

Some courses in the physical sciences, such as physics, contain experiments and assignments involving sound. Prior contact should be made with the course team, via the Regional Centre, so that appropriate action can be considered.

Social Sciences

As with the arts, modules in this area such as sociology, economics, social policy, politics and psychology have a very high written content. Certain courses in psychology have an associated residential school. Experiments are the main components of these residential schools, in which teamwork and verbal communication are necessary. Students who intend to go to these residential schools should inform the Office for Students with Disabilities of their needs so that appropriate support packages can be arranged. A student with a DSA may have an allowance for the use of a non-medical helper (e.g. sign language interpreter, communication support worker, notetaker, etc.) to help for the duration of the school. For further information about residential schools, please refer to Section 6.

Technology

Many technology courses are taught online and do not have the same amount of aural content as arts and social sciences courses.

6 Residential schools

Some OU courses include associated residential schools, which may be compulsory (e.g. to obtain a named degree in science). Attendance at residential schools is not only academically desirable (whether or not it is a formal requirement of the course) but also provides a forum where students from all over the UK and Europe meet and share ideas and experiences. Students who cannot attend a residential school for a reason beyond their control may opt for an alternative to the school (if available) or, for some courses, can seek permission for excusal. It should be noted that some schools do not have an alternative, nor allow excusal – please check attendance requirements before registering for a course.

Note the following.

Disability is not in itself a reason for excusal from a residential school, unless it is impossible to make satisfactory arrangements to meet your needs. The University will do all it reasonably can to enable you to attend, but we may not be able to do so unless you tell us in advance about your requirements.

Meeting your needs, 2003

Choosing your school venue

If you have told us that you have a disability or additional requirements, we shall send you our booklet *Meeting your residential school needs* and Facility Request Form 2 (FRF2).

The booklet is updated annually and includes a description of each residential school site. You should use the information in the booklet, together with the general residential school programme, to select your site. If your course has relatively few students, there may not be a choice of site, but there will be a choice of dates. There may be an additional support week available, with additional members of staff, smaller student groups and professional support on hand.

It should be noted that for all the main summer residential schools there are a number of general assistants for students with disabilities and additional requirements, who are available throughout the period of the school. They are there to work with students and to ensure that students' time at the school is not hampered by a disability or additional requirement. For schools during the rest of the year, assistance will normally be available only if requested in advance.

Professional non-medical help in the form of communication support workers will be provided wherever possible if requested soon enough. Students with DSAs will normally be able to meet the cost of this support from their non-medical helper's allowance.

7 Examinations

Revision

Your revision should start from day one, as it will be impossible to re-read or go over all your notes at the last minute.

You will have very little time for revision at the end of the course, so you will need to plan a revision timetable for the last few weeks. If you have been revising a little all through the year, this last effort will not be too daunting. Here are some tips to help you to revise effectively.

- Plan a timetable so that you do a little revision each day.
- Use your notes and parts of the text that you have highlighted.
- Summarize key points, dates and names on cards that you can carry around with you and use in spare moments.
- Learn the name of an authority which you could quote to support a particular view.
- Work through old exam papers and assignments – copies of exam papers can be obtained through OUSA (see Appendix 5).
- Do self-assessment questions, looking at the answers only when you have done as much as you can.
- Avoid last-minute cramming – it can leave you with partially explored ideas, perhaps obscuring much of what you had learned before.

Arrangements for your examination

Every care is taken to ensure that students are not disadvantaged during an examination. The booklet *Meeting your examination needs* sets out examination arrangements available, and completion of an FRF3 form (which is sent out with the booklet) enables discussion of support arrangements. For students in

receipt of DSAs, the Needs Assessment Report will normally be used as the basis for discussion of arrangements. The University will discuss any additional time needed, or other arrangements necessary for accessing the question papers or for recording answers. Interpreters may be used by deaf people for the purpose of translating the exam questions into BSL (or other modes of sign language).

In the examination

This advice is very similar to that given to all students.

- Read all the questions first, and think carefully about which you could answer best. Allow at least five minutes for this.
- Spend five minutes planning how you are going to answer a question before you start working. Scribble or note on your PC or tape your main points, dates and names of people to quote.
- An exam answer, though much shorter, should still be planned like your assignments, with introduction, body and conclusion.
- Allocate time to each question according to the marks it carries. Add on any extra time that you have been granted, but do not include your rest breaks. Allow time for reading through your answers and making corrections.
- You can add extra material at the end of an answer, but you should also explain where in your answer you want the examiner to read the extra points. If you are writing your answers, you can do this with an arrow.
- If you are using up too much time on one question, consider moving on to another, and return to the original one at the end if you have time. It is probable that you will gain more marks by starting a new question than you will get by trying to finish one on which you have already spent a long time.
- Do not say the same thing more than once – it wastes time and does not earn more marks.

- Keep reviewing the question to make sure that you are answering what is asked. You can draft your answer first, and do not cross out your draft until you have completed the question – the outline will gain you some marks if you do not have time to complete the answer.

Appendix 1: Myths about deafness

Deaf people can't hear. Only very few deaf people have no residual hearing at all. Even those with a severe hearing loss can pick up certain ranges of sound via hearing aids or other equipment. However, hearing aids do not restore the full range of hearing, and some deaf people choose not to use them.

Deaf people can't speak. Many deaf people have been exposed to some sort of oral/aural education in which speech development was of primary importance. Those with a mild to severe hearing loss and those who have become deaf later in life are very likely to be able to communicate effectively via speech.

All deaf people use sign language. Sign language is most likely to be used by people with a severe to profound hearing loss, with BSL being considered their preferred first language. Those with a mild hearing loss and those who have become deaf are most likely to prefer the use of a spoken language.

All deaf people can lipread. Although this is a skill that many deaf people employ, it should be noted that it is not an accurate means of deciphering speech, as about 60% of lipreading is guesswork. It is a skill that some people may not be able to master.

Deaf people are not clever enough to do university courses. A significant number of deaf people have completed university courses. The difficulties that deaf people experience have very little to do with their overall intelligence. Difficulties arise when not enough consideration is given to their communication and language needs.

Appendix 2: Deafness and associated syndromes

There are a number of syndromes where deafness forms part of the overall presentation. Within higher education the number of students with deafness and associated syndromes tends to be very low, but it is useful to be aware of the difficulties that such conditions may present in relation to distance learning.

Ménière's disease. The symptoms of Ménière's disease are similar to those of tinnitus, but the disease is caused by a build up of pressure in the inner ear. Additional symptoms such as dizziness and nausea may also be present. This may be aggravated by stressful situations and therefore have an impact on study.

Tinnitus. This may occur due to damage in the inner ear caused by exposure to excessive noise or by an accident. It can also be a genetic condition. It is the constant noise that causes hearing impairment – the more pronounced the tinnitus, the more severe the hearing loss. This may be aggravated by stressful situations. Students may have their own coping strategies; if not, you may like to refer them to the RNID website.

Usher's syndrome. This is sometimes known as deaf-blindness, i.e. profound hearing loss together with varying degrees of visual impairment. It is a progressive condition; on rare occasions, it might lead to total hearing and vision loss.

Appendix 3: Technical equipment

Telephones

- **The CL100** is a telephone that is beneficial to those who have a high-frequency hearing loss. People who have slight to severe hearing loss may also find this device useful. It contains an induction loop system in the receiver as well as good volume and tone control.
- **The Clearsound telephone** has a special handset that incorporates a vibrating earpiece. Instead of holding the handset to your ear, you gently press it against the bone behind your ear. The incoming speech travels via vibrations through the bone to the cochlea. Although higher frequencies are accentuated, speech can still be understood. This particular telephone will benefit people with a conductive hearing loss up to 90 decibels (severe hearing loss). It contains an induction loop system, a handset amplifier and a volume slide switch.

Technological support

Students may prefer to not use a lipspeaker or support worker, but rely on technology instead. There are a number of aids that can be used in classrooms and group situations. Most of the following devices can be found in the RNID *Sound advantage Solutions* catalogue.

- **The Crystal.** This is a pocket-sized lightweight device which is ideal for hearing aid users and others. It has various accessories available, such as a neckloop, a microphone, headphones and tie-clips. It has an adjustable tone and volume gauge, and is ideal for conversations within a two-metre range. The one disadvantage of this product is that it does not discriminate between sounds, and therefore amplifies all sounds in the immediate area, such as the rustling of paper. Although useful in a classroom, it is probably best used in a small room with very few people. It will benefit people who have a mild to severe hearing loss.

- **The Hearit.** This device works in the same way as the Crystal, but is more suited to those who are hard of hearing. It has volume control, but no tone control. The advantages of the Hearit over the Crystal are that it has a directional microphone (and so does not amplify every sound) and is effective within a range of three metres.
- **The Conversor.** Like the Crystal this device can be used with or without a hearing aid, and like the Hearit it has a directional microphone and can discriminate between sounds by moving the microphone in the direction of the sound you want to pick up. It also has a SCART lead, and so can be plugged into most modern audio appliances.
- **Subtitle recorders/decoders.** These are devices that connect to your television or video and allow you to record a programme's subtitles or display hidden subtitles.

Appendix 4: Cochlear implants

A cochlear implant helps to improve the hearing abilities of many profoundly or totally deaf people. It is an electrode which is implanted surgically and carries a tiny electrical current into the cochlea (inner ear), electronically stimulating the auditory nerve. It is particularly beneficial for people who have lost their hearing after acquiring spoken language. The implant does not restore hearing to normal, but it does give the sensation of sounds; intensive training is required after surgery to make these sounds more meaningful.

The largest gain for most people after surgery is being able to hear the human voice. The sound that is heard complements lipreading and facilitates a better understanding of speech.

Not everyone is a suitable candidate for a cochlear implant, and it is not recommended for some types of deafness. It is generally recognized that those who benefit most are people who have not been deaf for a long period of time, as the memory of sound declines.

Appendix 5: Useful contacts and information

Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD)

The Open University

Walton Hall

Milton Keynes

MK7 6AA

Tel. 01908 653745

Fax 01908 655547

Textphone 01908 655978

E-mail osd-wh@open.ac.uk

Website www.open.ac.uk/learners-guide/disability and
www.open.ac.uk/residential-schools

Course Information and Advice Centre

(for all general enquiries)

The Open University

PO Box 724

Milton Keynes

MK7 6ZS

Tel. 01908 653231

Fax 01908 655072

E-mail general-enquiries@open.ac.uk

Website www.open.ac.uk

The Open University Students' Association (OUSA)

provides advice, support and information, and can put you in touch with other OU students. Information can be provided in alternative formats.

OUSA

PO Box 397

Walton Hall

Milton Keynes

MK7 6BE

Tel. 01908 652026

Fax 01908 654326

E-mail ousa@student.open.ac.uk

Website www.open.ac.uk/ousa

Sound Advice (2000)

OU video giving specific teaching strategies for working with students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Available on request from all Regional Centres.

Connevans

(Suppliers of equipment for deaf and hard of hearing people)

54 Albert Road

Reigate

Surrey

RH2 9YR

Tel. 01737 247571

Textphone 01737 243134

E-mail mail@connevans.com

Website www.connevans.com

Defeating Deafness

The Hearing Research Trust

330–332 Gray's Inn Road

London

WC1X 8EE

Tel. 020 7833 1733

Textphone 020 7915 1412

Information service 0800 808 2222

E-mail ddeafness.info@ucl.ac.uk

Website www.defeatingdeafness.org

Hearing Concern

7–11 Armstrong Road

London

W3 7JL

Administration tel. 020 8743 1110

Fax 020 8742 9043

Textphone 020 8742 9151

Helpdesk lo-call 084507 44600 (voice and text)

E-mail info@hearingconcern.com

Website www.hearingconcern.org.uk

National Association for Tertiary Education for Deaf People (NATED)

161 Mount Pleasant

Southcrest

Redditch

Worcestershire

B97 4JJ

Tel. 01527 545 658

Fax 01527 545 688

Textphone 0115 914 6457

E-mail nated@btopenworld.com

RNID

19–23 Featherstone Street

London

EC1Y 8SL

Tel. 0808 808 0123

Fax 020 7 296 8199

Textphone 0808 808 9000

E-mail informationline@rnid.org.uk

Website www.rnid.org

RNID Typetalk

PO Box 284

Liverpool

L69 3UZ

Tel. 0151 709 9494

Fax 0151 709 8119

Voice helpline 0800 7311 888

Text helpline 0800 500 888

Voice relay international +44 151 494 2022

Text relay international +44 151 494 1260

E-mail helpline@rnid-typetalk.org.uk

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