DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS AND INTERPRETERS IN THE CLASSROOM

A Guide for Teaching Faculty

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Introduction
This document is designed to offer guidance and assistance to faculty who are teaching Deaf/deaf or hard of hearing students and who are working with interpreters in the classroom.

The objective of Services to Students with Disabilities is to facilitate the full and self-directed participation of all individuals in post-secondary education. This objective is founded on the belief that students will achieve their best in an environment that is accessible and ensures full access to all information and communication.

Communication needs of deaf and hard of hearing individuals vary significantly. Some may rely on speech reading skills and/or hearing aids, some use the services of CART reporters and many prefer the services of a signed language or oral interpreter.

Role of the Interpreter
The fundamental role of the interpreter is to facilitate communication between the teaching faculty member, the Deaf/hard of hearing student and other students in the classroom. This is accomplished by rendering spoken language to signed language and vice versa. The interpreter is required to interpret all information s/he receives aurally and visually including the subtleties and nuances that the speaker conveys.

The interpreter will interpret lectures, labs, seminars, tutorials, meetings, group projects, demonstrations, films and videos, and off-campus assignments and classes when appropriate.

Interpreters are trained professionals and are governed by a stringent Code of Ethics that demands confidentiality, impartiality and integrity. The interpreter cannot personally participate in the classroom discussion and cannot offer opinions or advice.

Definition of Terms
Hard of hearing: term used for individuals with a hearing loss to an extent that makes the understanding of speech difficult through the ear alone, with or without a hearing aid.

Deaf: the audiological term applied to individuals with a severe to profound hearing loss that cannot understand speech through the ear alone, with or without a hearing aid. The term also applies to the communities of Deaf individuals who share a common culture and society based on American Sign Language.

American Sign Language (ASL): the chosen language of the North American Deaf community. ASL is a visual-gestural language composed of specific hand shapes and movements. The syntax and grammatical structure of ASL is significantly different from that of the English language.

Finger spelling: specific hand formations that represent the letters of the alphabet.

Oral Interpreter: facilitates communication between hearing and deaf or hard of hearing individuals using natural lip movements, facial expression and gestures.

Signed Language Interpreter: facilitates communication between hearing and D/deaf or hard of hearing individuals by rendering spoken language to signed language and vice versa. S/he also uses gestures and facial expression to convey a message.
Suggestions for Teaching Faculty

• Many D/deaf and hard of hearing people absorb information more readily when it is presented visually. Use visual aids such as PowerPoint presentations, diagrams, charts and other visual media wherever possible.

• Provide the interpreter with course content preparation material ahead of time to allow her/him to become familiar with it and, thereby, produce a more refined interpretation.

• Due to the interpreting process, the D/deaf or hard of hearing student will receive the information a few seconds behind the rest of the class. Consider this lag time during classroom discussions, and question and answer periods.

• During discussions and question periods, ensure that all participants speak clearly and one at a time so that the interpreter and D/deaf or hard of hearing student may follow.

• When addressing the D/deaf or hard of hearing student, speak to him or her directly and not to the interpreter.

• New technical terms and proper names need to be fingerspelled to the student. Consequently, it would be helpful to have these terms or names displayed or spelled aloud by the speaker to ensure interpretation accuracy.

• The D/deaf or hard of hearing student cannot receive spoken instructions while reading, writing or doing manual work as can students who are able to hear. Allow the student to complete one task before giving instructions for the next.

• Avoid obstructing the D/deaf or hard of hearing student’s view of the interpreter and the interpreter’s view of the D/deaf or hard of hearing student and teaching faculty member.

• Remember that the interpreter is required to interpret everything that s/he hears and sees. Do not say anything in the presence of the interpreter that you do not want interpreted.

• Whenever possible, advise the interpreter within 48 hours of any class cancellations or schedule changes.

• Wherever possible, select captioned audio-visual materials to ease access to this information for D/deaf and hard of hearing students.

• Know that the interpreter will wait for the arrival of the D/deaf or hard of hearing student for 15 minutes after the start of a 50-minute class, 20 minutes after the start of a 90-minute class and 30 minutes for classes running longer than 90 minutes.

Note takers
As it is difficult for the D/deaf or hard of hearing student to watch the interpreter and take notes at the same time, note takers are usually required for each class. To take notes on his/her behalf, the D/deaf or hard of hearing student will often request teaching faculty assistance to recruit two volunteers from the class. The D/deaf or hard of hearing student will supply the volunteers with NCR paper, which makes two copies. The
volunteer note taker will keep one copy and give the second copy to the D/deaf or hard of hearing student. Two note takers are preferred to ensure consistency and accuracy, and to provide the student with as comprehensive information as possible.

**Team Interpreting**
Interpreting requires great concentration and attention to detail; it is mentally and physically demanding. Due to the length and complexity of some situations, two interpreters may be required. This ensures that the interpretation is accurate and comprehensive and minimizes the chance of the interpreter(s) incurring Repetitive Strain Injury (or Overuse Syndrome).

The team will periodically alternate interpreting. The interpreter who is not interpreting is still processing the information communicated so that s/he is prepared to assist and/or relieve her/his partner if required.

**FM System**
Some hard of hearing students may ask the teaching faculty to wear a small, wireless microphone that transmits his/her voice to the student’s hearing aid. The student can adjust the volume accordingly.

**Contacting a Deaf or Hard of Hearing Student by Telephone**
D/deaf and hard of hearing people may also be contacted by telephone using video relay. This service is confidential and free of charge. If you prefer to contact the D/deaf or hard of hearing student via video relay, please consult with the student for further information and details on how to utilize the service.

Generally, it is more efficient to contact D/deaf and hard of hearing people by email.

**Conclusion**
At first, the interpreting process may be distracting to people in the classroom. Students who are not familiar with signed language and/or signed language interpretation may be inclined to pay more attention to the interpreter(s); however, the novelty soon wears off and the interpreter role blends in with the regular class function.

*If you have any questions or concerns about instructing a D/deaf or hard of hearing student or about the role of an interpreter, please contact SSD at ssd@macewan.ca.*