Deaf students in Scottish Higher Education
Summary of Recommendations
Scottish Funding Council (SFC)
Deaf Students in Scottish Higher Education

A Report for the Scottish Funding Council 2005

Summary of Recommendations

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The full report and this summary of recommendations are both dedicated to the memory of the main author, Dr Mary Brennan, who died on 23 June 2005 after a period of illness.
The Deaf Students in Scottish Higher Education project was funded by the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (now the Scottish Funding Council) to explore the requirements of deaf students and the extent to which they are enabled to be full and active participants within higher education.

The research was carried out in 2002–2003 by a team of researchers within the School of Education at the University of Edinburgh.

In this report, the target population is comprised of students who self-report as being ‘deaf/hearing impaired’. The term ‘deaf’ is used throughout the report to refer to this group. An accurate estimate of their relative participation in Scottish higher education is hard to make, but Higher Education Statistics Agency figures for 2002/03 indicate 2.6 in every 1,000 students.

They are a diverse group, but share characteristic challenges and experiences relating to full linguistic participation in higher education, whether English or British Sign Language (BSL) is used. Hence, the report frames the situation of deaf students in terms of linguistic rights and linguistic access.

There is evidence that, despite much individual effort resulting in examples of good practice, the overall situation of deaf students in higher education does not yet match either their rights or their expectations.

Therefore the report proposes that a specific model of linguistic access provision should be implemented across Scottish higher education institutions in order to guarantee full equality of opportunity and successful participation of deaf students.

This summary distils key recommendations from the report. All numbered references refer to the list of recommendations at the end of the full report.
Key Recommendation: A Centre for Linguistic Access

The main recommendation of the report concerns the need to bring together certain core activities, which can help to provide a stronger, pan-Scottish infrastructure of services for deaf students in higher education institutions. A single central resource and training centre, the Centre for Linguistic Access should be established. The Centre would act as a powerhouse for creating and supporting a radical shift in the access systems in place for deaf students in tertiary education. It would enable the requirements of deaf students to be conceptualised in terms of linguistic choice and preferences. Recommendations 4.1 to 4.4 relate to the establishment of the Centre, whose proposed functions are described below.

Recommended Functions of the Centre for Linguistic

Access Assessments and Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) support:

- Oversee the development of Quality Indicators (QIs) and exemplars for the DSA assessment of deaf students, and for the procedure to establish their implementation (recs 4.5; 7.2).
- Co-ordinate the application of agreed QIs within an ongoing collaborative review process, which will supplement the generic QIs already in existence (rec 4.5).
- Provide training and accreditation for assessors (rec 7.4).
- Co-ordinate the development of QIs for the regular audit of access and support provision within Scottish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and that of external agencies (rec 4.5).
- Be a central access point for DSA information and services (recs 5.2; 5.7).
- Provide consultancy on policy development and implementation regarding admissions and funding issues (5.7).

Transition

- Host residential one-week courses for aspiring and first-year deaf students (recs 4.6; 8.6).
- Design and organise a centralised, integrated Access Course, partly to be delivered centrally and partly in the student’s own institution (rec 8.5).
- Facilitate links between HEIs, Further Education Colleges (FECs), schools and educational services for deaf children and young deaf people (rec 8.7).
Audiological services

- Host a national audiological resource centre that carries out audiological assessments (rec 8.1; 15.6).
- Be a resource centre and focus of expertise for personal and environmental aids, warning systems and processes within tertiary education (recs 8.1; 15.1; 15.6).
- Operate as a lending unit for other types of equipment (e.g. radio aids), in collaboration with existing agencies. (recs 8.1; 15.2).
- Deliver expertise in relation to audiological support in advance of transitions between school, FE and HE (rec 8.2).

Staff training

- Provide core training for note-takers, as well as additional training and educational opportunities for others (e.g. BSL/English interpreters and lipspeakers who work in HE) (rec 12.9).
- Develop new Deaf Awareness curricula and materials which are flexible and specifically geared to all personnel dealing with deaf students in tertiary education – and to hearing peers. Such provision would assume full collaboration with individual deaf students themselves (rec 11.2).
- Directly provide Deaf Awareness training on a regular basis, delivered primarily by deaf staff (rec 11.3).
- Host 'training the trainer' programmes for access services and Deaf Awareness training (eg training of notetaker-trainers, Deaf Awareness tutors etc) (recs 12.7; 12.9; 11.3).
- Co-ordinate training for Tutors of Deaf Students, whose role will be to provide English language tutorial support in collaboration with deaf students themselves and with subject specialists (recs 12.10; 12.11).
- Provide in-service training for speech and language therapists, in relation to working in tertiary education (rec 12.2).
- Develop training and support networks for deaf advisory staff, who will provide direct advice for deaf students, while also being role models (recs 10.2; 10.3).
Student services

- Be a central access point for easily accessible information and guidance, including hosting a deaf student website (recs 14.1; 14.2; 14.4).
- Provide a network of support to new students from former students.
- Host regular national conferences on access for deaf students in HE.

Institution support

- Promote the ongoing development of new access resources and the sharing of good practice.
- Be a resource centre for support and access ICT applications (rec 17.2).
- Undertake the subtitling of videos, sign movies as well as the creation of bilingual (BSL/English) resources (recs 16.1; 17.2; 17.5).

Research and development

- Provide a base for research projects aimed at improving access for deaf students.
- Be a centre of expertise and professional development, which will provide a consultancy service at institutional, local and national levels.
- Host conferences to further developments and share good practice.
Other recommendations relating to both national and HEI levels

Experiences and perspectives of deaf students

• The experiences and perspectives of deaf students and ex-students should play a key role in developing policy and practice in providing access to HE for deaf students (rec 10.1).

A framework of linguistic rights

• There is a general need to work towards the integration of linguistic rights within a linguistic framework of access arrangements (rec 4.1).

Assessment

• Access and support requirements should be clarified as early as possible, established by the beginning of the course and reviewed regularly. All stages should be in full partnership with the student. (recs 7.1; 7.3).

Access and Support Services

• There should be a clear distinction between linguistic access arrangements and strategies to support teaching and learning more generally. These latter should be undertaken by educational staff, who themselves have appropriate education and qualifications (recs 13.1; 5.8; 8.3; 12.9).

• There should be clarification of the roles of all access staff: training, qualifications and quality standards guidelines should fit these roles. (recs 12.5; 12.8).

• More training in professional notetaking (both electronic and manual) should be made available. Past students of specific subject areas should be targeted for recruitment to training courses (rec 12.7).

• A target date should be set for ensuring that all access and support staff have appropriate levels of pay and qualifications; staff monitoring/continuing professional development opportunities should be built into staff contracts (recs 13.2; 13.3; 13.4; 19.1; 19.2; 19.3).

• Funding should be made available to develop Deaf Studies, Sign Linguistics and other deaf-related courses within HEIs. Such courses not only contribute to the education and professional development of access
professionals, they also encourage ‘communities of deaf students’ to develop in HEIs (rec 12.4).

Other

• HEIs, FECs and schools/services for deaf pupils should collaborate with the Centre for Linguistic Access in order to improve the preparation of deaf young people for participation in tertiary education (rec 8.7).
• Audiology services should ensure that there is high quality, phased transition from paediatric to adult services for deaf students (rec 8.2).
• Speech therapy services should ensure that adult services are available for deaf students (rec 12.2).

Other recommendations at national level

Further research
• Further study is needed regarding the incidence of deaf students among the student population. Extending studies to FE and to prior educational placements would be beneficial (recs 1.1-1.4).
• There should be further research into the potential demand for lipspeakers and for lipreading tuition among deaf students (rec 12.1).

Funding issues
• The criteria for both DSA and for the Premium in Support of Disabled Funding grants should be widened and made more flexible. (recs 5.1-5.6; 6.3).
• HEIs should be encouraged to devolve decisions on the spending of the Premium Funding to their Disability Offices (rec 5.4).

Assessment
• Pending establishment of a Centre for Linguistic Access, the ‘Working Towards Best Practice in Linguistic Access for d/Deaf Students’ group should be consulted about the development of supplementary Quality Indicators and exemplars (rec 7.5).
• Students should never have to pay for assessments themselves (rec 7.6).
Training

• The Scottish Executive should work with SHEFC (now SFHEFC) to set new student-number targets for sharply increasing national uptake on BSL/English interpreting courses and on the establishment of HE degree programmes in BSL and Deaf Studies (recs 12.3; 12.4).

National Conference

• A national Scottish conference on access for deaf students within HE should be held to discuss the recommendations contained in this report.

New undergraduate provision in BSL and Deaf Studies

• Focused funding should be available for the development of undergraduate courses in BSL and Deaf Studies (rec 20.2).

Other recommendations at HEI level

Admissions/transition

• HEIs should accept deaf students on an equal basis to other students (ie not conditional upon cost/availability of access support) (rec 4.1).
• HEIs should liaise with organisations most involved with deaf people when making decisions about whether deafness would prevent a deaf student from fulfilling professional ‘fitness for practice’ (rec 6.2).
• HEIs should liaise with the proposed Centre for Linguistic Access in the delivery of a specialised Access Course (rec 8.5).
• Opportunities should be provided for new students to familiarise themselves with access/support arrangements before the start of the course (rec 11.5; 17.4).
• Focussed opportunities should be provided for prospective deaf students to learn/improve BSL skills (recs 20.3; 8.4).
• Information on admissions, access provision and course information should be available in BSL and clear English (rec 14.3; 16.4).
• Training should be available for deaf students to optimise the use of laptops (rec 17.1).
Placements

- Disability Offices should liaise with the deaf students and placement provider regarding the provision of access services and of preparatory deaf awareness training (rec 6.4).

Provision of Access and Support Services

- There should be a wider promotion of electronic notetaking (rec 12.6).

- Adequate amplification systems should be available throughout HEI provision, and staff should be obliged to make use of equipment if a student has requested this (recs 15.3; 15.4).

- Links should be established with local speech therapy services, in order that a service can be available to students (rec 12.2).

- High quality training in BSL, and in working with BSL/English interpreters, should be made available to deaf students (rec 8.4).

- Facilities should be made available to BSL-using students for key tutorials to be video-recorded and transcribed (rec 16.2).

- Specialist tutorial support in English Language skills should be available to deaf students (recs 8.3 and 12.10).

- Key information within the HEI (including course materials) should be made available in both BSL and clear English (recs 16.3; 16.4).

Teaching resources

- The potential for ‘remote tutoring’ should be explored (with video interpreting where this is appropriate) (rec 16.5).

- More web-delivery of course materials would be beneficial (bearing in mind the fact that some deaf students will be at a disadvantage where information is only available in English) (rec 17.3).

- Academic staff should be encouraged to make greater use of deaf-friendly support materials, including more visually-based handouts, illustrated Powerpoint presentations etc (rec 18.1).
• Materials should normally be available to students and access staff prior to teaching sessions (rec 18.2).

• Videos should be subtitled (rec 18.3).

*Health and Safety*

• Appropriate health and safety strategies and provision of equipment should be in place in all HEIs (recs 9.1-9.4).

*Deaf employees*

• HEIs should plan to target deaf staff as employees (eg as lecturers, advisors for deaf students, etc) (recs 10.2; 10.3).

*Deaf Awareness Training*

• Deaf awareness training should be provided for all staff on a regular basis (rec 11.1).

• Training geared to the specific linguistic requirements of new students should be compulsory for all staff who will come into contact with that student (rec 11.4).