

## Teaching students in VET who have a hearing loss

### Working with an interpreter or a notetaker in your classroom

#### How is working with an interpreter or a notetaker different to any other class?

Some teachers and trainers can find it unsettling to have someone other than a student in their classroom. This is particularly true of interpreters because of the position they adopt in the classroom.

While notetakers often sit next to the deaf student, interpreters stand at the front of the classroom, next to the teacher. This can make it appear as though the interpreter is taking over your role. But that's not the case. Interpreters position themselves as close as possible to the teacher to make it clear the teacher is the person conducting the class. The deaf student will look between the interpreter and the teacher, which allows them to grasp the content of the class more effectively.

At times, you will have both an interpreter and a notetaker working in your classroom. For some classes (e.g. lectures) you may have two interpreters plus a notetaker. This can feel as though you have an entourage, which can be overwhelming. Just remember the purpose of interpreters and notetakers is to work with you to create an inclusive learning environment and that you, as the teacher, retain management of your classroom.

Finally, interpreters can be initially distracting for other students. It is often the first time students have seen an Auslan interpreter working. As the novelty subsides interest will wane.

#### What do I need to do to help the process?

There are many strategies that allow the teacher to help the interpreter or notetaker do the best possible job including:

- if possible, creating a circular or horse shoe seating plan
- providing notes, overheads or a lecture plan to the interpreter or notetaker to help them prepare for the class
- providing the interpreter or notetaker with a copy of any handouts that you provide during the class
- keeping the needs of the deaf student in mind.

#### Why do interpreters need breaks?

Interpreting is a highly cognitive process which is fatiguing. Interpreters are also susceptible to repetitive strain injuries. Regular breaks are required for mental and physical rest. Sometimes breaks occur naturally throughout the course of the day (between classes or at lunch). At other times the interpreter will need to take a break during your class. The length of time an interpreter can work

will vary. Talk to the interpreter and discuss a plan that will work for both of you. At times two interpreters work in tandem. This means the interpreters will swap every 15 to 20 minutes allowing you to continue the class as normal with no additional breaks.

**If an interpreter asks me to repeat or spell something does that mean they are not very good?**

Most of the time it means the opposite. An interpreter who requests information to be repeated is often conscientious and committed to accuracy. Be aware that interpreters do not have degrees in all the subject areas in which they work. What they do have is sound general knowledge and preparation techniques to make sure an accurate message is relayed.

**Can the interpreter or notetaker assist the deaf student if they need help in class?**

No. An interpreter is qualified and educated to translate from one language to another in real time. They do not have teaching qualifications or teaching experience. The same holds true for notetakers.

## More Information

deafConnectEd have a wide range of resources on our website with further information about supporting deaf and hard of hearing students in the VET sector and multimedia resources in addition to links to resources provided by other organisations. ([www.deafconnected.com.au/resources](http://www.deafconnected.com.au/resources))

Alternatively you may wish to contact us to discuss concerns or queries. We provide a state-wide service to the VET sector aimed at providing information to enhance the participation and learning experience of deaf students. We are happy to answer questions by telephone or email or we can visit your institute to provide coaching and advice to teaching staff in your department.

## More Information

For all the latest news and more information on the services and support offered by deafConnectEd, visit the Centre website: [www.deafconnected.com.au](http://www.deafconnected.com.au)

The website has a wealth of information and useful about

- learning Auslan
- resources – information sheets, DVDs and multimedia
- research
- publications

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