

## Guidelines for supervising when working remotely with disabled students

Disabled students will be affected in a range of ways by their disabilities/impairments and with differing degrees of impact. If you are unsure what the student requires ask them in your first meeting and check in with them over the course of you working together that the strategies are working. The start of working together is a good time to check in about what support the student requires.

These guidelines should be read alongside the CCTL [guidelines](#).

### Setting up the meeting

- Offer students a choice of on-line learning by audio only, or by audio with video (and the addition of text via the chat function). Working via video can be overwhelming for some disabled students with autism spectrum conditions (ASC) in particular and some students may not have access to reliable internet access.
- Discuss the option to end the session at any point if the student feels overwhelmed or unwell. Extended periods of video calling can be exhausting and may have a greater effect on disabled students.
- Confirm the [accessibility features](#) of the platform you are using If Teams then captioning, backgrounds and recording according to the [Policy on Recordings of Teaching Materials/Lectures](#).
- Use a plain background (or the option of blur my background in Teams) to reduce distractions.
- Ensure your environment is quiet as far as is possible to reduce distraction.
- Revisit how the sessions will work particularly if you have previously worked in person with the student.

Additionally, for deaf students and those who have a hearing impairment;

- Ensure that lighting is good and highlights the face of the supervisor/participants.
- Ensure the picture quality is as high as possible so that the image is clear.
- Ensure that the audio quality is of a standard that the student is able to hear all participants clearly. Test this at the start of the session.
- Make sure there are no shadows falling onto the supervisor's/students faces as this will make it difficult for the student to lip read or pick up information from facial expressions.
- Keep the background lighting even and not too bright as this will throw the participants face into silhouette, making it difficult for students who rely on lip reading or picking up information from facial expressions.

- Keep hands and fingers away from the face and look directly into the camera so that the face can be seen clearly.
- Speak clearly, check that the student can hear at intervals. Be prepared to repeat words or sentences and let the student know this is acceptable.
- Keep all background noise to an absolute minimum. Background noise is distracting and can be picked up by hearing aids/ radio aids at the same volume as speech. It is difficult to 'cancel out' background noise, when using such devices.
- Make sure the doors and windows are shut to reduce external noise.
- Be aware that there is likely to be 'echo' sounds if teaching place in a room with no carpet/curtains/soft furnishings.
- Where possible, wear plain clothes with no patterns as this will be distracting to the student if they are to concentrate on hearing and lip reading, or need to focus on the speaker's face or audio.

### Materials/pre reading

- Presenting new materials to be read at speed is likely to present a barrier for most disabled students. Such materials should be sent in advance so that students can access them before the session.
- Be aware that if students are required to refer to any textual information, they may be required to access screen reading software such as Jaws or NVDA. It will be useful for students to have been sent any materials in advance in an accessible format.
- For most students with visual impairments the most accessible documents are Word documents which have been set up with proper headings, titles and tables using styles.

### 1-1 discussion

- Allow students plenty of time to answer as many disabled students may take time to answer for a variety of reasons.
- Use straightforward and unambiguous phrasing where possible and avoid multiple parts to questions.
- If a student is having difficulty offer to write questions in the chat in addition to speaking.
- In some cases, the answers to questions given by students with ASC, Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) or mental health conditions may not appear to be as well organised as their peers.
- Consider reassuring the student they have answered a question where they may be continuing unnecessarily.
- Discuss questions with the student to ensure a shared understanding if ambiguity is causing difficulties.

- Be aware that some disabled students may be using ergonomic equipment and assistive technology/software to access their learning and be mindful that this may lead to delays in responses.

### Small group work

- If there are more than two people in any supervision, ensure that only one person is speaking at any one time and explain/verbally indicate when another person is due to speak. For example, 'I will now hand over to X'.
- Participants can indicate they wish to speak by indicating using the chat or raised hand function.
- Or, if someone wishes to speak when others are talking, indicate this by raising a hand (but be aware that some people cannot raise their hands). This will help the student to 'place' the person who is speaking.
- Be aware that the student may not be able to follow non-verbal clues/facial expressions to know when to start or stop talking.

**Disability Resource Centre**

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