# Making online learning accessible for Hearing Impaired students

The information below is designed to complement the information given in the ‘Remote learning: Supporting disabled students’ and ‘Making your remote teaching inclusive’ documents.

In addition to this guidance, and the specific information about a student's study needs in the Student Support Plan, the Disability Advisory Service is always available to offer guidance in individual cases.

The suggestions below are steps that you can take that will make learning more accessible for those with Hearing Impairments. However, the student will also have needs and preferences that are unique to them, which may not be included here. Asking the student themselves what they need will be your main guide in deciding what steps to take. If they are happy to do so, ask them discretely about the impact of their disability and what might be helpful in a remote learning context (never ask or expect a student to discuss personal or medical details with you).

## Planning an online teaching session or recording

* Provide a well-defined timetable to enable support worker matching in advance.
* Provide learning materials at least 24 hours in advance of the session. This enables the student and the support worker (if applicable) to familiarise themselves with vocabulary to be used and the main subjects to be covered. For lectures, provide an outline in advance: the learning objectives, main topics to be covered, new terminology used, and further learning.
* Consider breaking up teaching sessions into shorter segments to aid concentration and make revisiting content more straightforward.
* Grant access to support workers: note taker, palantypist, BSL interpreter.

## Delivering a screencast or online meeting

* Consider the recording environment: it should be well lit. Using the blurred background functionality in Microsoft Teams will avoid distracting features in your room being seen e.g. clocks/pictures/books/reflections. If using a background image, check it is not creating a visual disturbance, and there is enough contrast between subject and background so the speaker is easily visible.
* When speaking, ensure you face the camera, as students may be lip-reading. Make sure your face is not obscured. Check head alignment and distance from camera. Don’t place camera into the sun/strong light as that will place your face in shadow, making it harder to distinguish facial expressions/carry out lip-reading.
* Ensure the audio quality is good. This can make a big difference for those with some functional hearing, as slightly better quality could make the speaker more readily intelligible. Using a free-standing microphone or headset tends to produce better audio quality than a laptop microphone. Carrying out a test recording or practice Teams meeting with a colleague will help assess the quality of the audio. If your student is using the captioning option within Microsoft Teams, then increased audio quality will deliver much better accuracy.

### Specific advice for screencasts

* If using PowerPoint during a screen-cast, turn on the captioning service within PowerPoint. The captions can then be downloaded and made into a transcript for the students’ use.
* Any audio-visual excerpts included should be captioned.

### Specific advice for online tutorials or classes

* Repeat any questions raised and any answers given—the clarity of speech will vary from speaker to speaker, depending on the equipment they are using and the quality of their internet connection.
* Hearing impaired students can take longer to process questions – allow them more time to respond and consider using online polls to get whole class interaction
* Ensure that any instructions given about follow-up work is written down and circulated afterwards.