

Articulating the specialism

The role of the Qualified Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People (QToD) supporting in higher education

We use the term 'deaf' to refer to all types of deafness, from mild to profound. This includes deafness in one ear.

Background

Deaf students enter higher education (HE) through different routes, eg Level 3*/A Level qualifications at school or college; as mature students with non-standard entry qualifications, eg an access course; or already with a first (or higher) degree.

The Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) is an allowance that currently pays for equipment or non-medical helper (NMH) support in lectures, research, tutorials, and study skills for HE courses. The student's needs are assessed and a range of people-based and equipment-based study strategies, and recommendations are made. If the DSA assessor recommends a tutor for language/study skills support, they will also recommend a service provider. This might be a specialist agency or the HE institution/university's own service. It will depend on this DSA assessment what needs are identified, and who might deliver the sessions. These could have various names (specialist study skills, specialist language tuition, Qualified Teacher of the Deaf [QToD]).

The support for some deaf students supplied in-house, ie by the HE institution, or more typically outsourced, could include an NMH such as a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter, lipspeaker, respeaker, specialist notetaker, speech-to-text reporter (STTR), specialist support professional, plus other roles if there are additional needs to deafness. In HE, the QToD role is known as a specialist support professional (SSP)¹.

A SSP must hold a deaf-related postgraduate qualification eg QToD mandatory qualification, or any postgraduate etc plus a deaf-related specialist qualification such as a Deaf Studies degree, CSW qualification, BSL Level 4 or above, BA (Hons) in Interpreting (British Sign Language and English). Therefore, SSPs may hold other professional profiles eg Communication Support Worker (CSW). However, whilst these professional roles are academically competent, not all those who work as SSPs will have the specialist teaching qualification in the same way as a QToD.

What is a QToD?

A QToD is an experienced teacher with an additional mandatory qualification (MQ) in childhood deafness who has the skills, knowledge, and expertise required to provide quality support to babies, deaf children, young people and their families from 0–25 in the home and education settings (mainstream settings and specialist provisions).

¹ The latest qualification requirements are available at www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/media/1987/final-nmh-qualifications-matrix-july2023.pdf

What is a QToD in HE?

The QToD is known as a SSP in HE. An SSP's input is bespoke support for the individual needs of deaf students, reflecting their method of communication, educational history, and experience. This support is not subject specialist support but support to enable access to the course. It is in line with the student's Study Strategies Assessment report (eg the DSA report or other funders' agreement).

QToDs are specialist professionals with experience and expertise in these areas:

Facilitating independent learning

- Support for taught sessions in the subject area
 - Clarifying and reinforcing taught material
 - Working on subject-specific terminology and meanings
 - Identifying material missing from notes and where to source this.
- Research strategies
 - Developing more advanced skills in academic reading, library, and online research
 - Identifying alternative accessible texts
 - Decoding assignment questions and teaching materials
 - Modifying the language of course materials
 - Showing the student how to organise research materials to form the basis of an argument.
- Composition strategies
 - Developing higher level academic writing skills, including essay, report, and thesis structures and conventions
 - Developing vocabulary and language for accuracy and nuanced meaning; also, grammar issues (eg consistent subject/verb agreement, noun/adjective distinction, internal referencing within text, ellipsis/explicit forms)
 - Appropriate referencing for the subject and institution.
- Proofreading strategies
 - Working on proofreading skills and strategies
 - Discussing how to use artificial intelligence (AI) to aid proofreading, following the guidelines of the HE institution/university.
- Note-taking
 - Using techniques for note-taking (eg précising, use of mind maps, Cornell)
 - Using apps for managing captioning recordings and audio-recordings
 - Managing provided notes as a useful reference.
- Presentations
 - Planning and developing strategies for clear and confident delivery
 - Developing confidence and skills in delivery via the student's preferred method of communication.
- Planning, organisation, and time management
 - Organising notes and teaching materials
 - Using information technology (IT) packages for organising material.
- Examination and assessment strategies
 - Supporting revision and exam techniques
 - Using feedback to evaluate own progress
 - Instigating examination access arrangements with subject staff/disability services.
- Communication
 - Using speech and language strategies.

- Assistive technology
 - Assistive listening technology and connectivity with devices in the classroom; connectivity with other assistive technology.
- Other roles
 - Signposting to other HE institution/university services (eg personal tutor, module leader, disability advisor, subject librarian, counselling, student welfare, DSA assessor, deaf student union)
 - Modifying the language and layout of exam papers when required
 - Advising the disability advisor (or contractor) if a change in tutorial hours is identified' or highlighting academic or other concerns
 - Specific advice to disability officers, teaching staff, and other university staff on making adjustments to create an inclusive learning environment for the student (with permission from the student)
 - The 'Higher Education Provider (HEP) Services could receive specialist audiological advice as needed regarding different personal remote microphone systems or specific course needs, such as an amplified stethoscope
 - Support aimed at enabling access to study, including appropriate modification to allow for the language of assignments
 - Liaise with the NMH provider agency who may typically lead on coordinating disability services and course staff regarding field trips and work placements, the possible need for a temporary change in support style, and the possible need to apply for Access to Work (AtW)
 - Liaise with the NMH provider agency who may typically lead on coordinating other professionals provided by DSA to provide joined-up support for the individual, such as a notetaker, interpreter, or qualified CSW
 - Be mindful of the student's personal and emotional state and liaise with HE institution/university services to express concern, if required.

The QToD may work on-site or remotely and may or may not have access to HE institution/university facilities (IT support, library resources, virtual learning environment, printing/scanning), and to academic staff. The schedule is flexible to fit the student's needs.

How do QToDs work to ensure the best outcomes for deaf young people in HE?

The premise of an effective QToD role is to share a specialist understanding of deaf students' needs and how to meet them. This specialist support focuses on two key outcomes as a route for social inclusion: ensuring all deaf students have fair and optimised access to HE studies, and that all deaf students have opportunities to develop their agency, voice, and independence.

The QToD will be part of a wider team, which might include

- academic tutors – responsibility to teach/reteach the subject studied remains with the academic department
- notetakers
- STTR
- BSL/English interpreters.

What are the legal requirements – both for deaf students and the QToD?

Under the Equality Act (2010)/[the Special Educational Needs and Disability Northern Ireland Order \(2005\)](#), HE institutions/universities have a legal duty to support students needing additional services and support. The DSA may not adequately cover the high support costs for some deaf students. The HE institution/university disability adviser will be able to inform the student of what costs can be met and what additional funding sources, such as charitable trusts, can be considered. For further information, read the [Disability Rights UK's information](#).

Other supporting information

Further information and guidance available from the following organisations:

Deaf Students Union – email: ukdeafstudentsunion@gmail.com

Facebook handle: [UKDSU](#)

Instagram handle: [@ukdeafsu](#)

[NDCS website](#)

[RNID website](#)

[Student Finance England](#)

[Student Finance Wales](#)

[Student Awards Agency Scotland](#)

[Student Finance NI](#)

[BATOD website](#) - Training as a QToD

* [Signature Level 3 qualifications](#) in BSL, Irish Sign Language, and Communication Support for Deaf Learners qualify as points on the UCAS Tariff calculator, the same as an AS level at grade B.

* In Scotland, [SQA units at SCQF 6](#) in BSL qualify as [21 UCAS points](#).

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