

Articulating the specialism – further education

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

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

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 deaf babies, children, and young people from 0 to 25 years¹ and their families, in the home and educational settings (mainstream and specialist provisions).

One role of a QToD is to advocate for the deaf young person, ie from the earliest stages to nurture high expectations and enable the young person (YP) to make informed choices about careers, suitable courses, routes to progression, and course provider options. It is recognised that due to the influence of socioeconomic factors identified by Fordyce et al (2015), some deaf YP are limited in their choice of further education (FE) providers due to transport cost, which may restrict their course options.

Ideally, the QToD supporting at FE will be involved in the transition process that will commence at the latest when the YP turns 14. Young et al (2016) outline the following factors to enable an effective transition experience:

- Starting the transition process early
- Keeping the YP at the centre of all decisions
- Making sure the transition process is fully accessible
- Providing taster learning opportunities

¹ The upper age depends on the legislation within each UK nation and the local funding arrangements.

- Ensuring that the YP understands the transition process
- Working in partnership with the YP

Whilst QToD support may be provided through a local authority's sensory support service, some colleges may recruit their own in-house QToDs.

What is the role of the QToD in FE?

The QToD's input is bespoke support for the individual needs of deaf students, reflecting their method of communication, educational history, and experience. This intervention is not subject specialist support but support to enable access to the course.

Deaf students enter FE at different levels through different routes, eg Level 2², ³/General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) qualifications at school, apprenticeships, vocational technical studies, and elective home education. In the UK, the Department for Education (DfE) defines FE as including "any study after secondary education that's not part of higher education" (that is, not taken as part of an undergraduate or graduate degree). Courses range from basic English and maths to Higher National Diplomas (HNDs).¹ Deaf students in FE might use Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) Nationals and T Levels as a route towards higher education (HE). A higher level of QToDs' involvement in FE may be with students on foundation courses, lower tier courses, and with GCSE English or maths retakes. FE refers to any post-secondary education or training that is not part of HE, such as university degrees. This includes a wide range of courses, from basic English and maths to HNDs, and technical and vocational qualifications for 16 to 19-year-olds.

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

² 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.

³ In Scotland, SQA units at SCQF 6 in British Sign Language (BSL) qualify as 21 UCAS points.

- Working with subject staff in the curriculum design and modification of existing teaching materials
- 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 college.
- 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 to organise material.
- Examination and assessment strategies
 - Supporting revision and exam techniques
 - Using feedback to evaluate one's 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.
- Social and personal needs for transition into adulthood
 - Signposting to national and local deaf services for focused support and advice
 - To encourage a community of deaf learners within the college and, where possible, provide a space for formal and informal meetings, such as a booked room or a designated table in the refectory
 - To develop skills in deaf students to support integration into the hearing world and work
 - To develop a process where deaf learners' voices can be heard.

- Other roles
 - Working with, supporting, and sometimes managing other deaf education professionals such as qualified communication support workers (QCSWs), notetakers, etc
 - Working with, supporting, and sometimes managing other special education professionals such as qualified teachers of visual impairment (QTVIs), qualified teachers of dyslexia, neurodiversity, individual support workers, etc
 - Signposting to other FE college services (eg personal tutors, module leaders, disability advisors, subject librarians, counselling, student welfare, careers advisors)
 - Signposting to Access to Work (AtW) for young people preparing a transition to employment
 - Signposting to Disability Students Allowance (DSA) for young people considering a transition to HE
 - Modifying the language and layout of exam papers when required
 - Giving specific advice to disability officers, teaching staff, and other college staff on making adjustments to create an inclusive learning environment for the student (with permission from the student)
 - Signposting specialist audiological service for the college as needed regarding different personal remote microphone systems or specific course needs, such as an amplified stethoscope
 - Aiming support at enabling access to study, including appropriate modification to allow for the language of assignments
 - Liaising with the college staff who may typically lead on coordinating disability services and course staff regarding field trips and work placements, and the possible need for a temporary change in support style
 - Liaising with the college contact who may typically lead on coordinating other professionals to provide joined-up support for the individual, such as a notetaker, interpreter, or QCSW

- Being mindful of the student's personal and emotional state and liaising with the college to express concern, if required
- Posting FE options – personal agency – linked to the Specialist Deaf Curriculum Framework (SDCF)

The QToD may work on-site or remotely and may or may not have access to FE facilities (IT support, library resources, virtual learning environments, printing/scanning) and to college 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 FE?

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 FE 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 – the responsibility to teach/reteach the subject studied remains with the academic department
- Notetakers
- QCSWs
- Speech-to-Text Reporter (STTR) and/or speech-to-text apps
- British Sign Language (BSL)/English interpreters.

What are the legal requirements for both deaf students and QToDs?

Under the Equality Act (2010)/The Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order (2005), colleges have a legal duty to support students needing additional services and support. Funding for additional needs on apprenticeships or work placements is split between funding from AtW and for learning support.

Other information

- NDCS 2024 data indicates the FE destination of deaf school leavers is 44% in England, 40% in Scotland, 39.9% in NI, no data for Wales.

- Apprenticeships and traineeships can be made accessible to deaf people through funding from training providers and the AtW scheme.
- Various types of support are available for deaf students in FE, including Qualified BSL/English interpreters, QCSWs, notetakers, AI captioning, speech therapy, speech-to-text apps, and technologies like streamers and loop systems.
- Learning support needs may change due to the new learning environment, curriculum, and teaching styles during this transitional stage. These changes should be reflected in the documentation associated with transitions in each UK nation and supported by professional evidence to ensure funding can be allocated.
- In England support for deaf college students is funded by local authorities. The Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) is a statutory document; however, students under special educational needs (SEN) support may not access the same level of input experienced throughout secondary education.
- In Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland support for deaf college students is not funded by local authorities. Therefore, the YP needs to discuss their support arrangements with their college before they start. The college will be responsible for funding their support.
- In Northern Ireland, the Education Authority is not required to maintain a statement for students who have left school and are enrolled in FE or HE institutions, or attending training courses. Under the Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order 2005, FE colleges are required to make reasonable adjustments for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they can access provision. The DfE assists FE colleges to fulfil this obligation through the Additional Support Fund.

Further information and guidance are available from the following organisations:

- [NDCS website](#)
- [RNID website](#)
- [BATOD website](#) – [Articulating the role of the QToD \(SSP\) in HE](#)
- [BATOD/NDCS Specialist Deaf Curriculum Framework](#)
- DfE – [Further education](#)

- [‘Stepping up: Quality Standards for Young Deaf Learners in Further Education \(England\)’](#) – Education and Training Foundation delivered in partnership with the National Deaf Children’s Society
- In Scotland – [‘The Principles of Good Transitions 3’](#)
- ‘Stepping Up: [‘Quality Standards for Further Education Providers’](#) - Education and Training Foundation
- [‘Transition planning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disability’](#) – Northern Ireland Assembly research and information service briefing paper
- Gyrfa Cymru/[Careers Wales help with transitions and attend school meetings from Year 9](#)
- NDCS – [Personal passports and profiles](#)
- [Disabled Students’ Allowance](#) (for HE courses)
- Jisc – [Further Education and skills](#)
- Council for Disabled Children (CDC) –
 - [Blog](#)
 - [Training and guides](#)

Created June 2025

Review June 2026