

Articulating the specialism – higher education

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 or temporary deafness such as glue ear.

Background

Deaf students access higher education (HE) through various routes, such as Level 3^{1,2}/A Level qualifications obtained at school or college, as mature students with non-standard entry qualifications like an access course, or by already holding a first or higher degree.

The Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) is funding 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 or study skills support, they will also recommend a service provider. This could be a specialist agency, or a service provided by an HE institution or university. The result of this DSA assessment will identify the needs and potential providers for the sessions. These may have different names, such as specialist study skills, specialist language tuition, or a QToD.

Support for some deaf students is provided either in-house, ie by the HE institution, or more commonly outsourced. This 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 additional needs are also present.

In HE, the QToD role is recognised as a specialist support professional (SSP)³. It is worth noting that SSPs may hold other professional profiles, eg as a qualified communication support worker (QCSW), as an SSP must hold a deaf-related or any other postgraduate qualification plus a deaf-

¹ [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.

² In Scotland, SQA units at SCQF 6 in BSL qualify as 21 UCAS points.

³ The latest qualification requirements are available at www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/media/1987/final-nmh-qualifications-matrix-july2023.pdf

related specialist qualification such as a Deaf Studies degree, QCSW qualification, BSL Level 4 or above, or a Bachelor of Arts (BA) (Hons) in Interpreting (BSL/English).

However, while these professional roles are academically competent, not all those working as SSPs will have the same specialist teaching qualification as a QToD. The specialist professional should be the most appropriate professional for the support. For some deaf young people, a QToD is ideal; for others, input might come from a QCSW, who possesses specialised skills that are distinct from and complement the 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 needed to provide high-quality support to deaf babies, children, and young people from 0 to 25 years old and their families, in the home and educational settings (mainstream and specialised provisions).

What is a QToD in HE?

The QToD is known as an SSP in HE. An SSP's input is bespoke support for the individual needs of deaf students, reflecting their communication methods, educational history, and experience. This support is not subject-specific but rather aimed at enabling access to the course. It aligns with the student's Study Strategies Assessment Report (eg the DSA report or other funders' agreements).

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

Facilitating independent learning

- Support for taught sessions within the subject area
 - Clarifying and reinforcing taught material
 - Focusing on subject-specific terminology and meanings
 - Identifying missing material from notes and sources for this.
- Research strategies
 - Developing more advanced skills in academic reading, library use, and online research
 - Identifying alternative accessible texts
 - Decoding assignment questions and teaching resources
 - Modifying the language of course materials

- Demonstrating to 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, presentation and thesis structures, and conventions
 - Developing vocabulary and language for accuracy and nuanced meaning; also, addressing grammatical 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 developing proofreading skills and strategies
 - Discussing how to utilise artificial intelligence (AI) to assist with proofreading, in accordance with the guidelines of the HE institution/university.
- Notetaking
 - Using techniques for notetaking (eg précising, use of mind maps, Cornell method)
 - Using apps to manage captioning recordings and audio recordings
 - Managing provided notes as a helpful reference.
- Presentations
 - Planning and developing strategies for clear and confident delivery
 - Building confidence and skills in delivery through the student's preferred method of communication.
- Planning, organisation, and time management
 - Organising notes and teaching materials
 - Using information technology (IT) packages to organise materials.
- Examination and assessment strategies
 - Supporting revision and examination techniques
 - Using feedback to evaluate one's own progress
 - Instigating examination access arrangements with subject staff and disability services.
- Communication
 - Using speech and language strategies.

- Assistive technology
 - Assistive listening technology and connectivity with devices in the classroom, as well as with other assistive technology.
- Other roles
 - Signposting to other HE institutions and university services (eg personal tutors, module leaders, disability advisors, subject librarians, counselling, student welfare, DSA assessors, Deaf Student Union)
 - Modifying the language and layout of exam papers when required
 - Notifying the disability advisor (or agency) if a change in tutorial hours occurs, or raising academic or other concerns
 - Specific advice for disability officers, teaching staff, and other university staff on making adjustments to create an inclusive learning environment for the student (with the student's permission)
 - The Higher Education Provider (HEP) Services could obtain specialist audiological advice as needed regarding various personal remote microphone systems or specific course requirements, such as an amplified stethoscope
 - Support focused on facilitating access to study, including suitable modifications to accommodate the language of assignments
 - Liaise with the NMH provider agency, which typically leads 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, which usually takes the lead in coordinating other professionals supplied by DSA to deliver integrated support to the individual, such as a notetaker, interpreter, or QCSW
 - Be mindful of the student's personal and emotional well-being and contact with the HE institution or university services to raise concerns if necessary.

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 environments, 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 sharing their specialised knowledge and understanding of deaf students' needs and how to address them. This specialist support focuses on two main outcomes 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 may include:

- Academic tutors – the responsibility to teach or reteach the subject studied remains with the academic department.
- Notetakers
- Speech-to-Text Reporters (STTRs)
- BSL/English interpreters.

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

Under the Equality Act (2010) and [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 or university disability adviser can advise the student on what costs are covered and what additional funding options, such as charitable trusts, may be available. For more information, refer to [Disability Rights UK's guidance](#).

Other supporting information

Further information and guidance are available from the following organisations:

- United Kingdom Deaf Students Union (UKDSU) – email: ukdeafstudentsunion@gmail.com
Facebook handle: [UKDSU](#) Instagram handle: [@ukdeafsu](#)
- NDCS website– [Higher Education](#)
- [RNID website](#)
- [Student Finance England](#)
- [Student Finance Wales](#)
- [Student Awards Agency Scotland](#)
- [Student Finance NI](#)

- Jisc – [Higher Education](#)
- [BATOD website](#) Further education
- [BATOD/NDCS Specialist Deaf Curriculum Framework](#)
- Council for Disabled Children (CDC):
 - [Blog](#)
 - [Training and guides](#)

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