



Summer School for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students – June 2022

Background

On 17th September 2015 the British Sign Language (BSL) (Scotland) Bill was unanimously passed in Scottish Parliament, thus introducing the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015. As a result of this, listed public bodies in Scotland were placed with a responsibility to promote the use and understanding of BSL as a language, as well as producing a BSL Authority Plan to set out how their services will be better accessed by those who use BSL as their first or preferred language.

The University of Edinburgh published its first-ever BSL Plan in May 2019, running for six years between 2018-2024. Their BSL Development Officer (referred to as BSL Officer for the remainder of this document) was recruited in October 2019 to oversee the implementation of the BSL Plan throughout the University. The BSL Plan has 10 Long-term Goals and 54 Actions. The full plan can be viewed under [Useful links](#) at the end of this document as point A.

The Summer School for Deaf and Hard of Hearing¹ was first introduced in August 2021 as an online event which was delivered as ½ days over two days via Zoom. This proved to be a great success as six DHH students attended both days and all of them agreed that the Summer School met their expectations. A detailed report of this event can be found on the BSL Plan webpage at: https://www.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/atoms/files/online_summer_school_august_2021_0.pdf

Purpose

Under Section D in the BSL Plan, **Post-school education**, action point 24 states: *Plan a three-day summer school for deaf BSL users and other deaf students to attract students to our University.* The purpose of the summer school was to provide DHH students in their final years at school access to information about the University of Edinburgh using different communication support. On this occasion, there were two BSL/English interpreters and live captioners booked to work the whole event therefore making this accessible for those who use BSL and those who use captioning. This was modelled on the success of University College London's (UCL) own Summer School, designed exclusively for DHH students. More information about this can be found under [Useful links](#) as point B.

Following on from the success of the first Summer School, it was agreed that on this occasion the Summer School would be delivered over three days on campus, making use of the University's numerous facilities (e.g. lecture halls, student association spaces, the library) as well as accommodation and wellbeing services. The COVID-19 pandemic was still ongoing but the risks associated with this had been reduced and [no COVID rules or guidance](#) were in place at the time of

¹ 'Deaf' and 'Hard of Hearing' (thereafter 'DHH') will be used through the document, this covers all degrees of deafness

organising the Summer School (Scottish Government, 8th June 2022. The university had created specific COVID policies which were included in the preparation of the event.

Organisation

At the University-wide BSL Implementation group meeting in early 2022, the BSL Officer updated members that planning was underway for a Summer School for DHH to be delivered on campus. Colleagues were asked if they wanted to be involved delivering different sessions as well as offering suggestions of relevant contacts. The BSL Officer also reached out to external colleagues to see if anyone would be interested in offering a session for the young people to participate in. Altogether, 10 UoE colleagues and two external colleagues offered to participate in the summer school and provide a session. The BSL Officer also negotiated with colleagues at Pollock Halls in relation to booking out rooms and discussed appropriate evacuation plans as there were not any sufficient equipment in place (e.g. flashing fire alarms, vibrating pillow pads) to get the young people out safely in the case of an emergency. It was agreed on this occasion that the BSL Officer and a hearing colleague would act as chaperones and work together to evacuate the young people safely should an emergency arise.

Communication support was organised in April 2022, to ensure that both BSL/English interpretation and live captioning would be in place during the sessions. As the young people were arriving on-site at Pollock Halls on the first day, it was decided that live captioning was not required as the purpose of the first day was to allow the young people to arrive and settle into their rooms.

The information about the Summer School was advertised through different channels – Facebook, Twitter, email newsletter and the BSL Plan webpage as well as asking colleagues to disseminate through their respective networks. A BSL video was produced which was captioned, alongside some text (where applicable), providing more information about the summer school and what was included. We wanted to make this event welcoming for DHH students from all over the UK in their last years at school. There were a total of 8 applications received and 4 DHH students physically attended the event. Demographics and responses to application questions can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

Colleagues were asked to share any materials and post in an online Teams group which made it easier to access information. This allowed both the BSL/English interpreters and live captioners to prepare for the event. The Teams group was a successful way of keeping everyone updated as the event went underway.

Overview

Prior to the Summer School, participants and their parents/guardians were kept up to date about the event and sessions as well as further information about accommodation and catering plans. Forms for consent of media usage and dietary requirements were sent out before the event, following safeguarding policies.

The Summer School was delivered over three days, with the participants arriving at Pollock Halls to check into their room and meet their peers. Lunch was provided and the first session was a tour of the accommodation site followed by a presentation from ResLife about their service. That evening, everyone participated in a walk around Edinburgh before having dinner.

On the second day, it was a visit to Kings Buildings where everyone took part in a science lecture before travelling over to central campus for more sessions covering support available at university, student association and wellbeing services as well as a tour of central campus led by current students who were members of the university's sign language society. The participants got some time to themselves to explore the city before meeting as a group to go for dinner and play mini golf.

The third and last day of the event saw the group get their things packed up and travelling to Holyrood campus where they received a session about how to apply to university, followed by a discussion with former and current students who were deaf individuals. This allowed them to gain an insight into how it is being a deaf person navigating through university studies. In the afternoon, a colleague from British Deaf Association (BDA) Scotland delivered a workshop about Human Rights which the young people participated in. A representative from Heriot-Watt University delivered a short presentation about their institution.

Two responses out of four were received from the participants when asked about their thoughts on the sessions:



One respondent commented *"The 'support available at university' and 'wellbeing services presentation' were good sessions to learn more about how you can be supported at university as a deaf person"* – this feedback shows the importance of including said sessions as this was fully accessible for them and allows them to learn more about what is available at university.

Feedback

Full details of post-event feedback responses from DHH students can be found under [Appendix 2](#).

2 DHH students (50% response rate):

- Summer School rating: 5 out of 5 stars
- Summer School met expectation: 100% yes
- Accessibility
 - o BSL/English interpreters: 1 respondent said 'Very Good' and 1 respondent said 'Did not use'
 - o Electronic notetaker: 2 respondents said 'Very Good'
 - o Additional comments:
 - Respondent A commented *"All of my needs were met, especially when I needed*

sign language interpreted into English”

- Respondent B commented *“I was satisfied with the accessibility given. I managed to follow everything said”*

Recommendations

The BSL Officer proposes a number of recommendations for future summer school events:

- Led by a deaf role model (current / former student) who has been through further and higher education, they could work with the BSL Officer to lead the event
- Opportunity for day visit for those who may be nervous about staying over
- More variety of degree subjects to be offered during the summer school to show participants that they can study any degree they wish with no barriers
- More collaboration working with both internal and external colleagues looking at wider range of services (e.g. transition, additional learning opportunities, deaf services, other local FEI/HEI)
- More information about specific services translated into BSL
- Follow up with attendees 6 months after the event to measure the impact of the event on their next steps

Useful links

- A. The University of Edinburgh British Sign Language (BSL) Plan
 - a. https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/bsl-plan-2018-2024_web_0.pdf
- B. Report of The University of Edinburgh Online Summer School 2021 for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students
 - a. https://www.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/atoms/files/online_summer_school_august_2021_0.pdf
- C. The University College London (UCL) Discover UCL: A Summer School for D/deaf and Hard of Hearing Students
 - a. [Discover UCL: An Online Summer School for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students | Access and Widening Participation - UCL – University College London](#)

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Appendix

Appendix 1 – application form questions

A. 8 applications received (how many actually attended):

- a) Scotland – 6 (2)
- b) England – 1 (1)
- c) Northern Ireland – 1 (1)
- d) Wales – 0 (0)

B. The following are questions taken from the application form (disseminated prior to the summer school):

a) *How do you describe yourself in relation to your deafness? (Multiple choice)*

- i. Deaf = 6
- ii. Deafened = 0
- iii. Hard of hearing = 2
- iv. Deafblind = 0
- v. Other = 0

b) *What is your preferred method(s) of communication?*

- i. Speaking and lipreading
- ii. Speech
- iii. Using BSL language while having an interpreter with me
- iv. Talking
- v. BSL
- vi. My preferred method of communication is verbal communication
- vii. Speaking
- viii. Speech

c) *What subjects will you be studying at school after the summer holidays? (Please answer if you are still attending school after the summer holidays)*

1	Science, geography and maths
2	Teacher assistant course
3	Animal care
4	A level History, A level Religious Studies, BTEC Business
5	Advanced higher chemistry, advanced higher biology, advanced higher maths, advanced higher physics and higher politics
6	Admin, business, PE, leadership college (BSL)
7	I have graduated from high school

d) *If you are finishing school this year, what is your next step? (e.g. apply for college / university, apprenticeship, getting a job) (4 responses)*

1	Hoping to go to university in September
2	I'm in college. My next step is applying for ECA (Edinburgh College of Art University)
3	College
4	College

e) *Are you considering applying for a course at university / college? If yes, when do you think you will apply? What subject(s)?*

1	International Business Management
2	Yes - Maths
3	Illustration and Fine Art
4	College course - teacher assistant
5	Yes, I have already applied for college - NC animal care
6	I am considering applying for a course at university but not entirely sure yet. If I did decide to apply for university eventually, I would apply for a course in Business.
7	2023, politics, physics or medicine
8	Yes, midwifery or paramedic science

f) *How did you hear about the Summer School event? (Multiple choice)*

- i. Twitter = 0
- ii. Facebook = 0
- iii. From a teacher = 3
- iv. The University of Edinburgh website = 0
- v. University staff = 0
- vi. Email from the University of Edinburgh = 0
- vii. From a friend = 2
- viii. Other = 3

Appendix 2 – post-event feedback from DHH students

Additional questions not already covered in the [Feedback](#) section. Two out of four attendees answered the survey, marking a 50% response rate.

- *Did you enjoy the evening activities (walk around Edinburgh / crazy golf)? What would you like to have done differently, if anything?*

1	Yes
2	Yes, I enjoyed the evening activities

- *Is there anything else you would have liked to seen at the Summer School? (e.g. more subject lectures, more University services, etc)*

1	I would of liked more variety of subject lectures, and maybe more content of different degree options. This would allow people to been able to experience those subject lectures other than chemistry.
2	I was happy. Maybe it could have been better to have gone to more subject lectures but I was otherwise happy with how the time was used.

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- *What did you like most about the Summer School?*

1	Meeting new people across the UK, as I wouldn't have that opportunity if it wasn't for the event.
2	Engaging with people around me.

- *What could have been better about the Summer School?*

1	You could introduce other universities that support deaf people other than Heriot-Watt University.
2	Not much