



Summer School for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students – June 2023

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. This was followed by a successful in-person Summer School delivered in June 2022, where 4 DHH people attended. The report for this can be viewed here: https://www.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/atoms/files/summer_school_june_2022_report.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 an electronic notetaker 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.

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

Following on from the success of last year's Summer School, it was agreed that the format would be delivered in exactly the same way this year: 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.

Organisation

At the University-wide BSL Implementation group meeting in early 2023, the BSL Officer updated members that planning was underway for a second on-campus Summer School for DHH. 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, 11 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. It has since been raised that appropriate equipment should be installed to allow DHH individuals independence to stay in halls without the need to rely on hearing people.

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 18 applications received and 13 DHH students physically attended the event. Demographics and responses to application questions can be found in [Appendix 1](#). Communication support was organised in March 2023, to ensure that both BSL/English interpretation and live captioning would be in place during the sessions.

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 George Square to participate in the first two sessions which were 'Applying to University' and the 'Disability and Learning Support Service'. These sessions are perhaps the most important sessions for any DHH to learn about and it was felt that this should be delivered first as that if a young person had to leave the event early for whatever reason, they would not miss this information. After lunch, we travelled over to Pollock Halls to check into our rooms. Two colleagues from ResLife and Allocations took us on a tour of the accommodation site followed by a presentation about their services. That evening, everyone participated in a team building activity in the nearby 'Locked In Edinburgh' as they worked together to solve clues to escape the room.

On the second day, we started with a tour of central campus led by current students who were members of the university's sign language society. This was followed by sessions on wellbeing services, a law lecture/activity and the students' association, with the last session of the day being delivered by a colleague from the British Deaf Association (BDA) Scotland who spoke about 'Knowing Your Rights'. The participants got some time to themselves to explore the city before meeting as a group to go to

Pleasance and participate in the climbing wall activity and squash.

The third and last day of the event saw the group get their things packed up and travelling to Holyrood campus where they met two Deaf role models who gave their experiences of being a student at university. This allowed the group to gain an insight into how it is being a deaf person navigating through university studies, as a colleague delivered a presentation re-emphasising the importance of asking for support throughout their university journey (e.g. checking in with disability advisors, checking equipment works, etc). In the afternoon, another colleague from BDA Scotland delivered a workshop about Deaf Roots and Pride, a transitions project that they facilitate as well as having a current student present about her experience.

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



Feedback

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

9 DHH students (69% response rate):

- Summer School rating: 4.78 out of 5 (average rating)
- Summer School met expectation: 100% yes
- Accessibility
 - o BSL/English interpreters: 8 respondents said 'Very Good', 1 respondent said 'Good'

- Electronic notetaker: 5 respondents said 'Very Good', 3 respondents said 'Good', 1 respondent said 'N/A – did not use'
- Additional comments:
 - Respondent A commented "*The interpreters were all lovely and really good at their jobs*"
 - Respondent B commented "*I appreciated the effort of the interpreters to make sure that everyone was engaged and informed in the conversation – no one was left out or felt they couldn't speak up*"
 - Respondent C commented "*Very good but sometimes the microphones used for the people speaking weren't that loud*"

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 – it should be led single-handedly
- 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
- Ask previous attendees to provide a short video / feedback to be used for future promotions
- Work with CAM to capture photos and videos of the event
- Offer both online and in-person events

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. Report of the University of Edinburgh Summer School 2022 for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students
 - a. https://www.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/atoms/files/summer_school_june_2022_report.pdf
- D. 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. 18 applications received (how many actually attended):

- a) Scotland – 15 (11)
- b) England – 2 (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 = 14
- ii. Deafened = 0
- iii. Hard of hearing = 10
- iv. Deafblind = 0
- v. Other = 0

b) *What languages do you use fluently? (Multiple choice)*

- i. English = 13
- ii. Spoken English with some signs (e.g. Signed Supported English (SSE)) or equivalent = 1
- iii. Another spoken language = 0
- iv. British Sign Language (BSL) = 7
- v. Another sign language = 0
- vi. Other (e.g. a mix of BSL and SSE) = 0
- vii. Other comment: = 0

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	English, maths, admin, business, other idk (sic)
2	History, geography, modern studies
3	Modern studies, biology, history, mathematics and English
4	Economics, physics, accountancy (advanced Highers)
5	Graph comm, physics, maths
6	Maths, English, human biology, modern studies and computer science
7	Law and health and social
8	Art, practical cookery, chemistry, criminology
9	Maths, English, physics

10	Still to be confirmed dependent on higher results. Currently Advanced Higher Modern Studies, Advanced Higher History and two Highers courses to be decided
11	Higher biology, Higher business, Travel and Tourism, Higher HFT (Health Food and Technology)

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

1	Apply college or university not sure
2	Get a job and apprenticeship
3	I want to apply for university when I graduate from high school
4	University
5	University
6	College and part time job for to try make money for the future

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

1	Yes, I would like to deaf teacher
2	History
3	Bakery
4	Yes, I want to study the law course
5	September 2023
6	Yes Medicine
7	Product design, summer 2024
8	Considering to go to the university
9	No
10	I have already applied for university to do sociology / anthropology
11	Yes, I'm considering something to do with linguistics and language acquisition or a completely different route and micro Biology
12	n/a
13	Yes I am thinking of applying to university for criminology or forensic science
14	December 2022
15	Engineering
16	No I already applied to college for bakery
17	Yes an undergraduate in Law and History, application should be submitted for December for the term starting September 2024
18	Thinking about BSL Interpreting and Translation, or speech and language therapy

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

- i. Twitter = 0
- ii. Facebook = 0
- iii. From a teacher = 12

- iv. The University of Edinburgh website = 1
- v. University staff = 0
- vi. Email from the University of Edinburgh = 2
- vii. From a friend = 1
- viii. Other = 2

Appendix 2 – post-event feedback from DHH students

Additional questions not already covered in the [Feedback](#) section. Nine out of thirteen attendees answered the survey, marking a 69% response rate.

- *Did you enjoy the evening activities (Escape Room / Climbing Wall)? What would you like to have done differently, if anything?*

1	I really enjoyed the activities as it meant I was able to make better friendships with the people there both in working together in the escape room and supporting each other when climbing
2	They were so much fun and I really enjoyed them
3	Yes I enjoyed escape room to gave good communicate to other to solve the code as a teamwork.
4	n/a
5	Yes, they were very enjoyable and it was a fun challenge in the escape room with communication between BSL users and English speakers
6	yes i did really enjoy it
7	The activities were enjoyable and I was fine with them.
8	Catherine had a great time, enjoyed meeting new people and found the talks very useful. Thanks
9	Very enjoyable

- *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 have enjoyed doing another group activity with the people
2	No, it was really well planned
3	N/A
4	Perhaps a session (mock lecture) inside of a lecture room to gain an insight into the acoustics and lighting of a lecture. This is way it wouldn't be a surprise when it comes to the real thing as we already have experience.
5	Having more time to explore the city with the other deaf students would have been nice
6	more free time, get together more time chat and more service each subject how get attend it
7	The law lecture was interesting and I wish there was another subject too.
8	No
9	No

What did you like most about the Summer School?

1	I enjoyed having the opportunity to meet and become friends with other people like me
2	Meeting other deaf people
3	I like DSA, be deaf at university and knowing your right which help to independent yourself and know what I need for future.
4	Everybody got along really well, even though there were some barriers
5	Socialising with other deaf people

6	i don't know which one but I like everything but one thing I most like and learn about being deaf at university
7	I really liked the walking around to see the buildings and such within the different campuses.
8	Catherine liked meeting new friends.
9	Getting the experience of living in halls and meeting new people.

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

1	many of the rooms that the talks took place in were quite hot and made me a bit nauseous at times but that can't be helped much
2	I would of loved it to of been longer
3	To learn how to independent yourself while applying to university amd male a new friend.
4	If I had been there the full three days!
5	Explain the importance of confidence in learning? I.e. not being afraid to ask questions (honestly I can't think of anything to improve it was great)
6	got more together other people like introduce but you did actually great job
7	I guess the schedule could've been less full for the day we arrived? As it was a bit of a blur to me.
8	Nothing
9	Nothing