

There is no doubt that online video conferencing poses challenges for us all, and for deaf people, in particular.

Here are some things to consider when working with deaf people using video conferencing platforms:

* ensure that the deaf student has access to session content and the agenda in advance - Powerpoint slides, reading and resources. This is crucial for keeping up with the discussion and helps the deaf student to familiarise themselves with jargon and concepts in advance.
* use a headset with inbuilt microphone if possible, as this provides better sound quality access and helps to eliminate background noise from where you are transmitting.
* choose a quiet location (carpeted rooms with low ceilings have more favourable acoustics) and close the door to keep background noise to a minimum.
* use an ethernet cable or ensure you have a high quality Wifi signal to avoid glitches and freezing.
* use a HD webcam for a better quality picture. Lip reading is very hard work when face to face, and even more challenging on screen.
* consider lighting - make sure your face is well lit and that you are not backlit, which casts shadow on your face, making lip reading difficult.
* manage the online discussion by ensuring one person speaks at a time. The typed chat function can be particularly useful for managing contributions and questions from students. Encourage students to use chat or the ‘raise hand’ notification, to indicate they have something to say.
* let all participants know how you will be managing the discussion at the outset, including your contingency if connection is lost i.e. contacting students by email within five minutes to reconvene the meeting.
* record the session so that it is available for students to watch again - this will allow them to pause, review and take notes at their own pace. Let students know at the start of the session if a recording will be available later.
* If you are sharing video or audio resources during the call, ensure that captions are enabled or that you provide a transcript. It may also be helpful to share these resources before of the session, allowing the deaf person the opportunity to watch in advance, and get to know its content.
* automated captioning is being rolled out by MS Teams but is not yet widely available. Please note that live captions are generated using automated speech recognition. They are not always accurate and cannot be relied upon for access. Please ask students to contact disability@chi.ac.uk if they feel they need additional support.
* After your online session, check in with the deaf person by email to see how they found it. They may have suggestions which could enhance the next session’s experience.