



# Online Summer School for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students – August 2021

## Background

On 17<sup>th</sup> 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.

## 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 Deaf and Hard of Hearing<sup>1</sup> 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.

The original plan was to deliver the Summer School 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. Due to the COVID19 pandemic, in-person events had to be delivered online using a number of platforms such as Zoom, MS Teams and Collaborate. As a result, the summer school was delayed to 2021 to give the BSL Officer more time to plan how to effectively deliver this action.

## Organisation

At the University-wide BSL Implementation Group meeting in early April 2021, it was agreed that the BSL Officer would start planning for the summer school to be delivered in summer 2021. Later that month, the BSL Officer attended an online session delivered by UCL which was an overview on their lessons learned from delivering their summer school in 2020 and how they would build on this in 2021. During the presentation, there were a number of features discussed including the content of the summer school, delivering asynchronous and synchronous sessions with pros and cons of each, technology considerations, safeguarding issues and ensuring opportunities for engagement; all of

---

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

which supported the BSL Officer in planning similar for the University of Edinburgh. As this was going to be delivered online, it was felt that running the summer school over two ½ days would be a good introduction, to keep it small.

An email with a first draft of a proposed summer school agenda was then disseminated to BSL Implementation Group members requesting their feedback and suggestions, with some replies from some members suggesting additional sessions and more inclusion of 'real life' settings, for example a live lecture. The agenda for the summer school was adapted a few times before the BSL Officer confirmed the final proposal with the BSL Implementation Group. Colleagues were also asked if they wanted to be involved delivering different sessions. Altogether, 12 colleagues put themselves forward to participate in the summer school. Communication support was organised in May 2021, to ensure that both BSL/English interpretation and live captioning would be in place on both days.

The information about the Summer School was advertised through different channels – Facebook, Twitter, email newsletter and the BSL Plan webpage. A BSL video was produced which was captioned, alongside some text (where applicable), providing more information about the summer school and what was included. As this event was online, we wanted to make this event welcoming for DHH students from all over the UK in their last years at school. There was a total of 7 applications received, and 6 DHH students attended the event on both days. Demographics and responses to application questions can be found in [Appendix 1](#). Prior to the event, the BSL Officer organised a 30-minute pre-event meeting with all staff presenters, presenting an opportunity to go through the details for the summer school and for any questions to be asked.

Colleagues were asked to share any materials used in the summer school no less than 48 hours beforehand, to allow both the BSL/English interpreters and live captioners prepare for the event. This was shared in an online OneDrive folder which made it easier for access.

## Overview

Both days were delivered as ½ days, making up 4 hours per day which was a total of 8 hours for the whole event. This was delivered through Zoom, and the DHH students were sent a calendar invite separately from staff to protect personal details from being shared. The passcode was shared in a separate email to prevent any unwanted visitors from joining the session. The BSL Officer received administration support from SDS, and a participant list was shared prior to the event so both the BSL Officer and the admin facilitator knew who to expect for the sessions.

The whole event was recorded so that the BSL Officer could use this information to include in the debrief report as well as produce a handbook for the DHH students. The DHH students were informed both days before starting the event that the sessions would be recorded and the recording deleted within two weeks of the event. A Padlet was set up as a space for the DHH students to contribute any questions or comments they had, this gave them the opportunity to anonymously respond. This was used for the ice breaker on the first day, of which the following questions were asked:

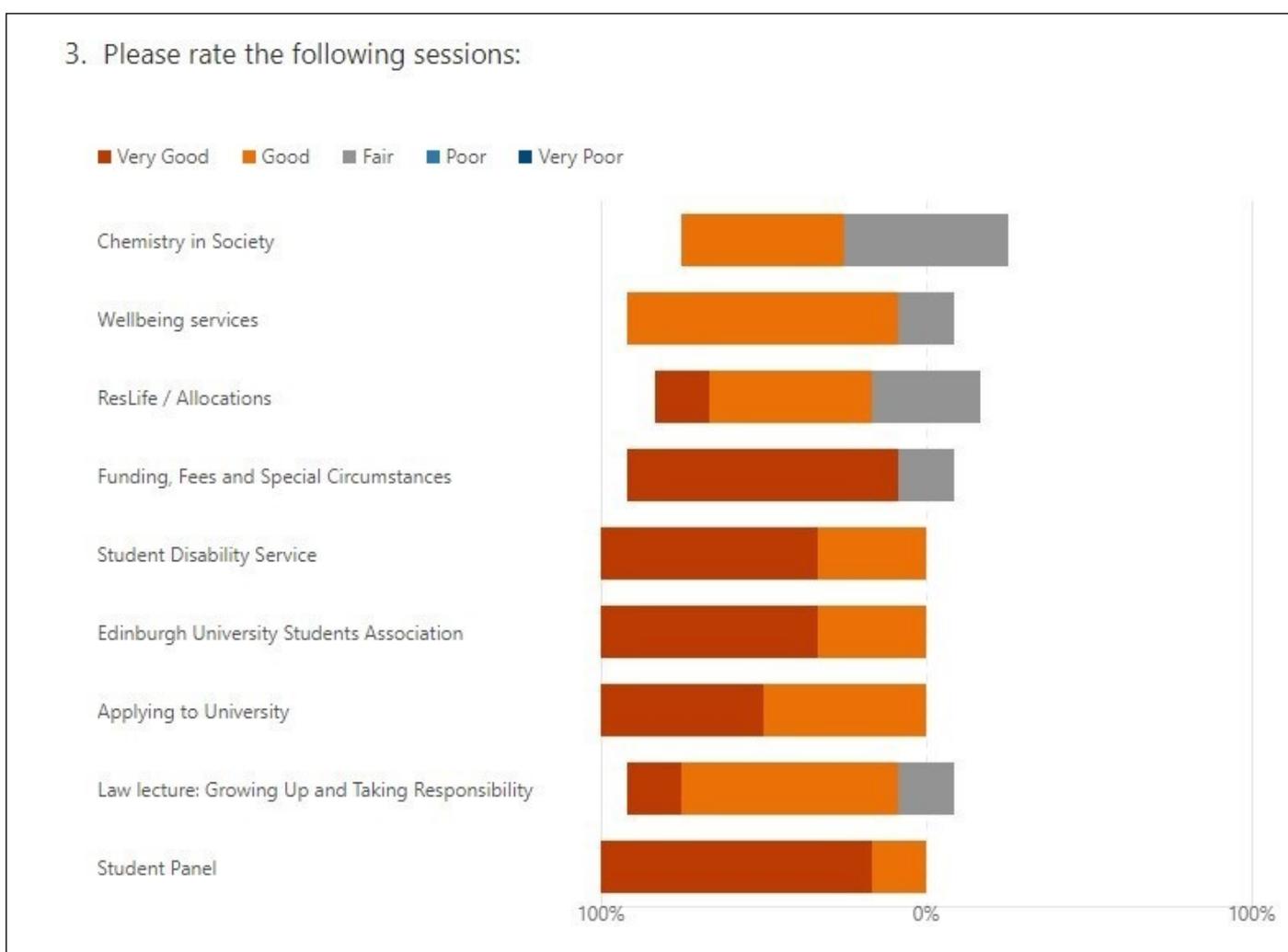
- Hopes – finishing school, what do you hope for?
  - o *Going to university*
  - o *To be able to get into my dream university*
  - o *To get into uni and pick a course that I'll enjoy*
- Fears – as you come to the end of school, what are you worried about?
  - o *Not getting a place at university*
  - o *Not getting into uni*
  - o *Not knowing what I want to do at the end of school*
- Questions (for the whole event)?
  - o *Can we get a place at a university if we didn't get the required grades?*
- Comments (for the whole event)
  - o *Looking forward to learning more about the University*

However, no further activity was detected in the Padlet after the ice breaker which suggests that this may have been difficult for the DHH students to access or leave running in the background. The DHH students later found the confidence to post comments and questions in the chatbox within the Zoom platform.

Each of the sessions were delivered as 30 – 45 minute presentations, with time at the end of each session to allow the DHH students to ask questions. The sessions delivered were as follows:

- 2x lectures – Chemistry and Law
- Wellbeing services
- ResLife and Allocations
- Fees and Funding
- Special Circumstances
- Student Disability Service
- Edinburgh University Students Association
- Applying to University
- Student Panel with 3 current and former DHH students studying at the University of Edinburgh

The sessions delivered were enjoyed by the DHH students, as evidenced below:



## Feedback

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

### 6 DHH students (100% response rate):

- Summer School rating: 4.67 out of 5 stars
- Summer School met expectation: 100% yes

- Accessibility
  - o BSL/English interpreters: 5 respondents said 'Very Good' and 1 respondent said 'Fair'
  - o Live captioning: 1 respondent said 'Very Good' and 5 respondents said 'Fair'
- Interest to attend on-campus event: 4 out of 6 respondents said they would be interested

Full details of post-event feedback responses from staff presenters can be found under [Appendix 3](#).

**Staff presenters (at time of writing, 7 responses received = 58% response rate):**

- Objectives clearly communicated: 6 out of 7 respondents said 'Yes'
- Summer School delivery through Zoom: 5 respondents agreed it was 'Very effective' and 2 respondents said 'Somewhat effective'
- Information about working with BSL users (including BSL/English interpreters) disseminated prior to the event – was this sufficient?: All 7 respondents answered 'Yes'
- Interest to be involved next time: 6 out of 7 said 'Yes'

Full details of post-event feedback responses from BSL/English interpreters can be found under [Appendix 4](#).

**2 BSL/English interpreters (100% response rate):**

- Do you feel you received enough preparation material prior to the event?: Both agreed 'Yes'
- Summer School delivery through Zoom: Both agreed 'Very effective'
- What worked well?:

1	I think the timings for speakers and breaks worked well as there was enough time to come away from the screen. The chairing of the event by Alison worked really well and tied the event together.
2	Overall the delivery was smooth and efficient. From an interpreting perspective I felt prepared and supported both before and during the event.

## Recommendations

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

- Presentations to be tailored to include more information about specific support for DHH students throughout their University journey
- Similar event organised for mature DHH students (e.g. transition from college, starting higher education later in life)
- 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)
- Delivery of asynchronous and synchronous sessions, to maximise opportunities for DHH prospective students from all over the UK

## 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](https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/bsl-plan-2018-2024_web_0.pdf)
- B. 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](#)

# AUTHOR: Alison Hendry, British Sign Language (BSL) Development Officer

DATE: 7<sup>th</sup> September 2021

## Appendix

### Appendix 1 – application form questions

A. 7 applications received:

- a) Scotland – 3
- b) England – 4
- c) Northern Ireland – 0
- d) Wales – 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 = 4
- ii. Deafened = 1
- iii. Hard of hearing = 3
- iv. Deafblind = 0
- v. Other = 0

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

- i. English
- ii. Spoken English
- iii. Messages / emails, Face to face where I can read lips or over video chat
- iv. Speech or BSL/SSE
- v. Spoke
- vi. Oral
- vii. BSL

c) *What subjects will you be studying at school after the summer holidays?*

1	A-Level Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics
2	Languages- French and German (have been doing Business and Philosophy, but have taken them this year)
3	Higher Admin Higher PE Higher Sports Leadership Nat5 Maths (Resit)
4	Advanced Higher Computing, Advanced Higher Geography, Advanced Higher Mathematics
5	Psychology, maths, biology
6	A level History English and Classical Civilisation
7	Advanced Higher maths, physics, chemistry and Higher English, but I may change that to advanced higher computing

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

1	Medicine
2	Yes, September 2021
3	I am looking to apply anytime this year so that I can go to university in September 2022

4	Yes, I will be applying for 2022 entry
5	September 2022 entry Psychology
6	Autumn 2021 Classics
7	I'll apply before the end of 2021 hopefully. My preferred course is Computing Science with Artificial Intelligence

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

- i. Twitter = 2
- ii. Facebook = 1
- iii. From a teacher = 3
- iv. The University of Edinburgh website = 1
- v. University staff = 1
- vi. Email from the University of Edinburgh = 1
- vii. From a friend = 1
- viii. Other = 1

## Appendix 2 – post-event feedback from DHH students

Additional questions not already covered in the [Feedback](#) section.

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

1	I think everything was covered very well
2	no
3	No, I thought the wide variety of topics covered resulted in an interesting couple of days, thank you!
4	More subject lectures if possible
5	I think everything was covered
6	More subject lectures

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

1	I enjoyed the applying to university talk
2	Other than the useful information, I enjoyed the quizzes in the beginning
3	The information about all the help that will be available to me as a deaf student applying to university. As before this was very confusing and complicated to me.
4	Information provided and the fun atmosphere
5	I enjoyed the student panel the most and thought it was lovely to hear their personal experiences
6	The fact it was for Deaf people only. There's not many of those available

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

1	The captioning was rather slow and sometimes would not have the whole sentence on screen
2	nothing
3	Nothing, I thoroughly enjoyed it.
4	I can't really think of anything!
5	The live captioning was sometimes faulty and wouldn't display the full sentence
6	Meeting in person, but I know that that isn't possible at the moment

## Appendix 3 – post-event feedback from staff presenters

Additional questions not already covered in the [Feedback](#) section.

- *Any comments on the pre-event communication from Alison?*

1	Excellent - very informative and helpful
2	Absolutely great - everything received in plenty of time, and with lots of helpful information. Tasks and deadlines clear, and lead-in to further information was clear too e.g. 'you will receive zoom links in a further email nearer the time.'
3	It was very good and set out expectations clearly (e.g. deadline for presentations to be sent, when the event was taking place etc).
4	Very good and regular, clear communication.
5	all very clear, the pre event meeting was helpful
6	good communication

- *Any comments on the online delivery of the Summer School?*

1	For me, it was very effective - I'm so used to presenting and attending on zoom. But it would have been nice to have a personal connection with the students attending - they had cameras off, and I had no idea who they were or what they were making of my presentation. I was really impressed we got questions and engagement from one. But some way of having a more direct connection might be good in future years
2	Easy to use, easy to navigate and was clear what we were to do and when.
3	It was really easy to log in. I appreciated having someone share their screen with the presentation as that meant I could focus on the content.
4	After I'd done it I realised I should have found out more about the students who were participating. It would have maybe helped me to focus what I was saying a bit more. Not sure I relayed all the information that would have been needed by them.
5	seemed to work very well in the online environment

- *Thinking about this year's Summer School event generally, what would you say worked well?*

1	I only saw a small bit - my own session - but I think it all went well. The organisation was especially good.
2	It looked like a great mix of events and sessions with lots of breaks scheduled. Plenty of chances for pupils to ask questions, too.
3	It was well-organised. The meeting was easy to access, and I knew what was expected of me without it having taken a lot of time to communicate.
4	I thought it all worked fine, from my point of view.
5	brilliant to be able to reach students who would normally miss out on this type of activity
6	good selection of topics, amount of time allocated to the event given it was online seemed to work well
7	everything from a presenter perspective

- *Is there anything that could have been improved for this year's Summer School generally?*

1	No.
2	Not anything I could think of.

3	No
4	Would have been nice to see the students, but get why they had their cameras off.
5	Would be great to boost numbers and advertise it widely to help others.
6	no
7	not from our point of view

- *Thinking about YOUR session, what you feel went well?*

1	I hope I pitched it at the right level - it can be really difficult to tell. But I thought I got my main points across.
2	It was great to be able to say hello and then pass over to my colleague so pupils knew two friendly faces from law, and they could meet even more people who wanted to encourage them to think about university/Edinburgh.
3	It was easy to access. It helped that someone else was sharing the screen and the slides. It was all very straightforward.
4	I felt relaxed during it but again I'm not sure I really gave the information that the students needed. There weren't really any questions which is either good or very bad! I felt the timing of 30 mins was good, but I maybe went too fast through some of the timeline information. Would value honest feedback on this!
5	The questions were really well thought out, I was really impressed with the participants. I am not sure if my presentation was easily interpreted as this was my first time working with interpreters.
6	the flow of the session went as expected
7	excellent support from the interpreter team

- *Thinking about YOUR session, is there anything you would have changed?*

1	A bit more prep!
2	I would not change anything. I slowed my pace only as much as I would when working with school pupils more generally when I always aim to be clear and concise. I practiced my wee introduction, and didn't say my name right at the start as I learned in BSL awareness. I would be happy to receive any feedback about anything Alison or the attendees would change, though.
3	No
4	Learn more about the audience.
5	Possibly should have gone into more detail about the personal statements... that is on me though, sorry.
6	A greater focus on the impact on wellbeing on deaf , BSL and hearing loss students
7	nothing specifically

## Appendix 4 – post-event feedback from BSL/English interpreters

Additional questions not already covered in the [Feedback](#) section.

- *Any comments on the pre-event communication from Alison?*

1	Excellent communication was provided with plenty of time to look over preparation materials.
2	No issues - timetable and prep materials were delivered beforehand in plenty of time

- *Any additional information regarding preparation (e.g. more details, clarification of terminology, timescale of receiving it)?*

1	Ideally, some glossary terms for more complex subjects e.g. chemistry would be great. Also, confirmation of attendees for student panel and their communication needs.
2	For the chemistry and law sessions, it would have been useful to have an opportunity to discuss the presentations with the presenters, to clarify terminology, concepts etc. Short meetings with each presenter would be enough.

- *Could you give some feedback on the presenters' delivery of their presentation?*

1	Some presenters spoke quite quickly and tried to fill too much info into their short presentations. The better paced and more visual presentations are much easier to interpret and understand. It is always best if the presenter isn't reading from a script and is speaking more naturally.
2	The majority of presenters were easy to follow, there were some that I felt were a bit faster but this was manageable and didn't cause any significant problems.

- *Do you have any additional feedback or suggestions on how the event can be improved next time?*

1	It might be beneficial to have more interpreters to cover the student panel section.
2	Nothing specific, I felt that the pre-event prep was detailed and useful so I had no particular concerns coming into this assignment.