

DCAL Communication Policy

At DCAL we aim to promote an inclusive language workplace policy. In order to do this DCAL actively recruits and supports both deaf and hearing staff, encouraging a bilingual, bicultural working environment, with two languages in use, British Sign Language (BSL) and English.

It is often more difficult for Deaf staff to have full access to those informal channels of information which hearing staff take for granted. It is DCAL's policy to create a 'deaf-friendly' workplace environment with equal access for deaf and hearing staff, students and visitors.

In order to ensure we provide an inclusive language environment DCAL uses the following guidelines in our everyday working life:

- i) Inclusive Language: An inclusive language (BSL and/or English) must be used at all times. For example if a Deaf colleague is present in a room, BSL must be used and if only hearing colleagues are present, English.
- ii) The following guidelines apply to meetings and other gatherings:
 - a. Seating arrangements: Whether meetings are chaired in BSL or in English - interpreters are ideally placed opposite Deaf participants and where these Deaf participants can also see the Chair. If hearing people are seated in the optimum seats, it is appropriate to ask them to move. Hearing colleagues who cannot access sign language should sit within earshot of the interpreters.
 - b. One language policy: Participants should stick to one language. This ensures better access for Deaf colleagues and enables interpreters to anticipate which language they need to provide based on who is contributing.
 - c. One at a time: Participants in meetings are to raise their hand if they wish to make a contribution. This enables ALL participants to identify who is contributing.
 - d. Rest breaks at appropriate times: If a meeting goes on for more than one hour, a short break should be given at intervals of around 40 minutes. If a meeting has only one interpreter it is important to build rest breaks into the agenda, to avoid repetitive strain injury to the interpreter, and to allow for cognitive recovery for all participants. Please do not continue conversation relating to the meeting during a break, however tempting it may be: this is disrespectful to participants who cannot access the other language.

These guidelines are a worthwhile reminder to our DCAL colleagues and a source of information for any external visitors who are new to DCAL.

DCAL also holds communication committee meetings which are held 2-3 times per year to review our practices and to explore new approaches to ensuring that all staff benefit equally from opportunities in DCAL and outside. The Communication committee memberships includes all Deaf staff and students, all in-house interpreters (where applicable) and senior members of staff. Minutes from these meetings are available to all DCAL staff and students.



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