

Inclusion in Higher Education:
**A longitudinal study of the experiences of hearing impaired students in a
university setting.**

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ABSTRACT

There is currently a lack of literature exploring the experiences of hearing impaired students during their time studying at university. This small scale research project was conducted at the same time that the Disabilities Discriminations Act (2001) was being implemented in Higher Education. At this time (2004), issues relating to inclusion were being constructed into policy in universities to ensure that reasonable adjustments were in place, in order to allow hearing impaired students' access to the academic and social curriculum.

This longitudinal study uses both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to gain insight into the experiences of hearing impaired students in Higher Education.

Three undergraduate hearing impaired students were interviewed at the end of each academic year. The resulting narratives were typed directly, by the students, onto a laptop computer to overcome any potential communication difficulties. Colaizzi's Thematic Analysis was used to identify emergent themes. The students' lecturers completed a questionnaire at the end of each academic year, documenting the 'reasonable adjustments' they had made. Timetables, support levels and examination results were also investigated.

The data indicates that the three students were fully included in all curriculum activities. Academic inclusion was effective and involved, as a priority, the use of technology such as: PowerPoint presentations; e mails for communication between students and their lecturers and university intranet sites, which ensured that information regarding university events, services and resources were readily available.

Six themes emerged from the student interviews: the need for academic inclusion; social inclusion; the use of the terms deaf and hearing; issues relating to communication; deaf awareness and deaf identity. The number of students' comments relating to social inclusion increased over the three years, identifying that they perceived it as a greater priority in the third year than the first year. The students' findings emphasise the importance of meeting individual needs in the inclusive environment and the need for the hearing impaired student to feel empowered in their learning environment. The data also highlights the complexity of the issues involved in the inclusion of hearing impaired students in Higher Education. As a result, this longitudinal study identifies the need for further research in this area, in order to identify the requirements for the successful inclusion of future hearing impaired students studying at university.