

Accessibility for Students using ASL Interpreters: In-Person Lectures

The PMC hires professional interpreters for students that communicate using American Sign Language (ASL). ASL interpreting is extremely demanding, physically and mentally, so interpreters work in pairs so they can switch roles every 15 minutes or so. The “teamer” monitors and shares any missed information with the “signer”.

Interpreters sit or stand at the front of the room, to the left or right of the instructor, so that the student has an unobstructed view of the instructor’s activities as well as the interpreter. An interpreter may stand beside an object being discussed, for example, during a demonstration.

Students using ASL Interpreters cannot watch their Interpreters and take notes at the same time, so they also have access to notetaking support from the PMC.

Interpreters follow a Professional Code of Ethics, according to which they:

- interpret everything said during a lecture, including questions and comments from the class.
- maintain confidentiality about the interpreting assignment.
- work solely to facilitate communication; do not comment on information they are interpreting.

Strategies to Improve Accessibility:

1. If the ASL interpreters can review class materials in advance their work is more accurate. Hunter Calder, PMC Student Support Officer, will send you the names and emails of the ASL interpreters assigned to your course. Please add them to your course Brightspace page under the ‘PMC’ role, by following the instructions to [Enroll a User](#). Also - Please send them any materials to be used or referred to in class that are not posted in Brightspace.
2. The student must have visual contact with the interpreter. Keep lighting needs and classroom positioning in mind. Avoid standing in front of the interpreter, or a glare from a window. When showing a film or video in class, please ensure that the student has enough light to see the Interpreters.
3. When speaking with the student in person, please face them and not their ASL interpreter. Be sure to use direct language (for example, “Do you know?” versus “Ask her if she knows”).
4. Interpreting requires a pause between speakers, for example during class discussions. This is because the ASL interpreter finishes signing a few seconds after a speaker is done, and can interpret just one person’s comments at a time. Please allow a brief pause between speakers.
5. Please repeat questions and comments from the class, especially from the back of the room.
6. The extra cognitive load required to actively engage in a lecture is extremely demanding for the student using ASL Interpreters. They must mentally reconstruct the information from their interpreter’s signs, after a slight delay, while at the same time constantly trying to catch up with the ongoing stream of information. Please ensure that you provide a short break for classes exceeding 1.5 hours.

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7. Students need time to transition between two visual inputs, e.g. their ASL interpreter and a lecture slide. If applicable, please post lecture slides and other visual material in Brightspace in advance.
8. Please provide important information and announcements (e.g. changes to deadlines) on the class website. In addition, please advise all students in advance of any tests or exams as to how they may contact you to ask questions about the exam in writing, as well as receive any important communication from you in writing.
9. Be aware that ASL is not just English converted to signs: It is a separate language with a distinct syntax, grammar and structure. Excessive use of idioms, and extraneous details may lead to misinterpretation of spoken *and* written information, including on exam questions. Students that communicate using ASL typically need more time to read and write in English compared to their peers. Writing style may reflect the fact that ASL is their first language.
10. Interpreters will be present during in-person tests/exams to communicate with others in the environment, including invigilators, teaching assistants, and instructors. Be sure to book your in-person tests and exams in the [McIntyre Exam Centre](#).

Questions or concerns?

Contact the student's PMC Coordinator. If unknown, please contact the PMC front desk: 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca

Hunter Calder, PMC Student Support Officer: hunter.calder@carleton.ca

For specific questions or support related to captioning, please contact Hunter Calder, PMC Student Support Officer (hunter.calder@carleton.ca)

Resources:

PMC: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/faculty-and-instructors/resource-guides/universal-instructional-design/>

Carleton Teaching and Learning Services: [Accessibility Resources for Instructors - Teaching Resources \(carleton.ca\)](#)
[Guidebook for Instructors](#) (Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, 1997)