



**Abertay
University**

British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2024

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Name and contact details of lead officer	3
Where to find the BSL version of this plan	3
Across all our Services	4
Transition and Access to University.....	6
The University’s contribution to other relevant long-term goals	8
Monitoring and review	11

Introduction

The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 requires Scottish Higher Education Institutions to publish British Sign Language plans (in BSL and English) every six years, setting out how they will promote and support students who use BSL as their first, or preferred, language (including in its tactile form) with a clear measurable commitment to improvement associated with the BSL National Plan which is available to view at: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/10/3540/0>.

The Abertay University BSL Plan follows the BSL National Plan, published 24 October 2017, which was developed through extensive engagement with Deaf and Deafblind BSL users and those who work with them. It is framed around the same long-term goals as the BSL National Plan, where these are relevant to the overall context within which University works.

The aim of the plan is to:

- I. to encourage BSL users to apply to the University
- II. improve the support available to BSL users

In doing so the University commits to supporting BSL, including in its tactile form.

To date the University has gathered views from local BSL users and local and national bodies. The lessons learned through these consultations have shaped our draft British Sign Language Plan. The University is committed to continued engagement around a) implementing actions and b) providing feedback on progress, including contributing to a national progress report in 2020.

The draft plan outlined below is a 'work-in-progress' which will be developed further in consultation with the BSL community. A number of the actions are intended to support the University to better understand the BSL community and the community's needs in order to enhance support and remove barriers to BSL users engaging with the University as staff, students and visitors.

Name and contact details of lead officer

James Nicholson, Director of Student Services

t. 01382 308094

e. J.Nicholson@abertay.ac.uk

British Sign Language (BSL) users: [contactSCOTLAND-BSL](#)

Where to find the BSL version of this plan

The BSL version of this plan can be found at: xxxxxxxxxxxx

Across all our Services

“Across the Scottish public sector, information and services will be accessible to BSL users”

By 2024, we will:

1. Analyse existing evidence we have about students and prospective students who use BSL in our university; identify and fill key information gaps so that we can establish baselines and measure our progress [BSL National Plan, action 2].

We will do this by:

- a) Investigating if a declaration box can be added to the University matriculation process. This will allow the University to collect data on the number of BSL users it has as students.
 - b) Reviewing how we can improve information the University holds about BSL users.
2. Improve information and services for students and prospective students who use BSL, including making our website more accessible to BSL users [BSL National Plan, action 3,4].

We will do this by:

- a) Identifying and ensuring key student information and marketing messages on our website are accessible for BSL users.
 - b) Providing guidance for University staff on how to improve information available to BSL users, including online resources.
 - c) Making reasonable adjustments to student recruitment materials to incorporate BSL where appropriate.
3. Promote the use of the Scottish Government’s nationally funded BSL online interpreting video relay services called ‘contactSCOTLAND-BSL’, which allows BSL users to contact public and their sector services and for these services to contact them [BSL National Plan, action 5].

We will do this by:

- a) Raising awareness of the service to staff and students via internal news items and through social media.
 - b) Adding a link to contactSCOTLAND-BSL on the University website.
 - c) Explore the options for adding contactSCOTLAND-BSL to University email signatures.
4. Signpost staff who work with BSL users to appropriate BSL awareness training, and enable them to take up such training [BSL National Plan, action 6].

We will do this by:

- a) Providing BSL/deaf awareness training for academic and support staff, as appropriate
- b) Provide the 'Introduction to BSL' course as part of a CPD/co-curricular opportunity for staff and students to undertake.
- c) Working with external partners to promote and deliver training opportunities.

Transition and Access to University

“BSL users will be able to maximise their potential at school, will be supported to transition to post-school education if they wish to do so, and will receive the support they need to do well in their chosen subject(s)”

By 2024, we will:

1. Ensure that students and prospective students who use BSL are properly supported [BSL National Plan, action 25].

We will do this by:

- a) Identifying which pre and post entry information should be translated to ensure BSL users know what to expect from the University.
 - b) Contacting applicants upon declaration to discuss support arrangements they require to enable the necessary support and adjustments to be put in place to follow a chosen programme of study, including attendance at open and applicant days.
 - c) Work with individual BSL users and their school and/or college to identify support need to aid transition to the University.
 - d) Ensuring that all University graduation ceremonies have registered BSL interpreters to anticipate the needs of student and non-student BSL users.
2. Respond to guidance/advice produced by the SFC and others to ensure that across staff the University are aware of their responsibilities towards BSL users [BSL National Plan, action 26].

We will do this by:

- a) Communicating guidance/advice via internal news items and email when appropriate
3. Commit to reviewing/refreshing this plan and to include more ‘local’ actions (based on feedback) after the national progress report (due October 2020) [BSL National Plan, action 26].

We will do this by:

- a) The University BSL working group meeting once per semester to review the plan and its actions.
- b) Inviting regular feedback from students/prospective students and staff who use BSL over the coming year/18 months
- c) Working with external partners to engage with BSL users to provide feedback the University BSL plan.

4. Provide assistance to students who use BSL to assist in completing SAAS application forms [BSL National Plan, action 26].

We will do this by:

- a) Student Advisors, supported by a registered BSL interpreter, being available to assist students to complete forms and where appropriate signpost for further guidance.

The University's contribution to other relevant long-term goals

“BSL users will be supported to develop the skills they need to become valued members of the Scottish workforce, so that they can fulfil their potential, and improve Scotland’s economic performance. They will be provided with support to enable them to progress in their chosen career” [BSL National Plan: Training, Work and Social Security]

By 2024, we will:

1. Raise awareness of the UK Government’s ‘Access to Work’ scheme for students who use BSL towards the end of their course so that they can benefit from the support it provides when they enter the world of work.

We will do this by:

- a) Adding content and a link to the University HR and Occupational Health intranet pages
 - b) Undertaking awareness training of ‘Access to Work’ with Careers Service and Human Resources staff. In turn, they can share information with BSL users who may access their service.
2. Improve information and services for job applicants who use BSL, including making our website more accessible to BSL users.

We will do this by:

- a) Ensuring there is appropriate BSL materials for key information on our job application webpages.
- b) Making reasonable adjustments to recruitment materials to incorporate BSL where appropriate.

“BSL users will have access to the information and services they need to live active, healthy lives, and to make informed choices at every stage of their lives” [BSL National Plan: Health (including social care), Mental Health and Wellbeing].

By 2024, we will:

1. Investigating how the University can make its Advice, Counselling and Mental Health and Careers Services accessible to students who use BSL

We will do this by:

- a) Working with staff and users to identify ways of making these sessions accessible to BSL users while establishing ways of managing confidentiality, where appropriate.

“BSL users will have safe, fair and inclusive access to public transport and the systems that support all transport use in Scotland” [BSL National Plan: Transport].

By 2024, we will:

1. Identify how the University can work with local transport providers to ensure that travel information is accessible and well-publicised

We will do this by:

- a) Displaying local travel information in appropriate spaces (physical and online).

“BSL users will have full access to the cultural life of Scotland, an equal opportunity to enjoy and contribute to culture and the arts, and are encouraged to share BSL and Deaf Culture with the people of Scotland” [BSL National Plan: Culture and the Arts].

By 2024, we will:

1. Explore how to make extracurricular/recreational activities offered within the institution are accessible to students who use BSL.

We will do this by:

- a) Working with BSL users, Abertay SA and Abertay Sport to find solutions to potential barriers to make their activities accessible.
2. Explore how to make events/activities offered or hosted within the institution are accessible to those who use BSL.

We will do this by:

- a) Working with external organisations and BSL users to find solutions to potential barriers to make their activities accessible, when appropriate.
- b) Provide registered BSL interpreters for University public events, for example, inaugural professorial lectures

“BSL users will have fair and equal access to the civil, criminal and juvenile justice systems in Scotland” [National Plan: Justice].

By 2024, we will:

1. Support students who use BSL through disciplinary meetings.

We will do this by:

- a) Reviewing current procedures for non-academic and academic misconduct meetings to ensure they are accessible for BSL users
- b) Ensure key University documents are accessible for BSL users

“BSL users will be fully involved in democratic and public life in Scotland, as active and informed citizens, as voters, as elected politicians and as board members of our public bodies”

By 2024, we will:

1. Investigate with Abertay SA how they can make their elections and class rep system accessible for BSL users.

We will do this by:

- a) Working with Abertay SA to review current processes and procedures and how these can be made accessible for BSL users to contribute and participate in the democratic life of the organisation.
2. University Court will investigate how members of the BSL community can participate and contribute to the governance of the University.

We will do this by:

- a) Reviewing current processes and procedures and how these can be made accessible for BSL users to apply to become a governor on University Court.
- b) Reviewing current processes and procedures and how these can be made accessible for BSL users to participate in elections to University Court and Senate.

Monitoring and review

Abertay University has a BSL working group that will meet on an annual basis to review progress of the actions outlined in the University action plan.

In the third year of the University BSL plan (2020-21) a more in-depth review of progress will be carried out. In year six of the University BSL plan (2024-24), a full review of the first plan will be conducted and consultation will be on the next one. This cycle of review and renewal will continue into future plans.

Please contact the University lead officer (details on page 3) if you would like to continue to be involved as the plan is further developed over the coming years.