

Name	Paul
Age	>60
Degree	Archaeology, Single Subject
Year	3
Full-Time/Part-Time	Full-Time
Disability	Hearing Impairment
Diagnosis	1-5 years ago

I started to have hearing problems when I was doing a part-time Archaeology course; I was having problems understanding English! A friend who owns a hearing aid company supplied me with a hearing aid that fitted in the ear. This was okay for a while then, to speed up the process, I decided to study Archaeology full-time. Jumping through the hoops, I went to my local council and, of course, could not get any funding to do the course, probably thought at my age they would not get the money back. They told me about Disability Grants and sent me to an Access centre. I was interviewed and they tested my hearing. They told me that the in-ear aid was no good, which is why I ended up with this double thing. They advised me to have the best on the market and, compared to other types and National Health hearing aids, it is out of this world. Therefore I have had very few problems. If I had had a National Health analogue, or even a digital type, I might have had problems. This has an FM radio and it is all controlled by my watch. There are adjustments for different sound levels and for loop systems.

It has a volume control. It works best in classes with lecturers talking at/towards you, but there can be problems with peripheral hearing. Outside there can be problems if it is windy with the wind blowing across the ears. There is a radio microphone which can be hung around the speaker's neck, or put on a table pointing at the person speaking. As it is a radio mike, I can wander off to the toilet and still hear what is being said! It came with one of the best sets of equipment on the market. The only problems are in small groups, the problem of peripheral hearing. When it was fitted they compared it to having glasses. Glasses consist of one lens in front of another which makes sight perfect. Hearing is different, that can only be adjusted, not made perfect.

In classes I tried to get there early and sit at the front. The biggest problem has been young ladies of about 20 or 21 who are shy and don't know what to talk about, and their sound output is just above a whisper.

There have been very few problems with fieldwork. I had a pro-lapse of the back 15 years ago, so I have to be careful. Swimming keeps me fit. I adapt, but I did get Housemaid's Knee from kneeling down doing fieldwork. I got treatment for this. Now I use a solid-type kneepad. The ones that I was using before were fixed permanently to the knees, but these were too thin. I have had no problems getting onto, or across, the site. However, if I was given the job of clearing 10 x 10 metres of turf, I would have to watch out. It is all a matter of being sensible.

At odd times the supervisors on site were a bit quiet, I sometimes turned up the volume, but at no time did I have to ask them to speak louder. I tried to opt for normality and cope by using the technology, but I do need to be taught to the face more. At the weekly site summaries the speaker moved his head away at times and I missed some bits. Saying that, with the super-equipment I am not your average deaf student. There is also my age; I have a lot of life skills which help me cope. The Council said they never used to buy hearing aids for students before, but this was recommended, and pushed, by the Access Centre. There is a need to push for this type of hearing aid.

I did not have any real problems working as part of a team, as we worked in loose groups. If I had wanted 100% communication, I would have had to tell the whole group about the condition and tell them to look at me when speaking. I often said: 'Sorry, say that again'. If communication was important at any time, I would probably explain it to the supervisor. Many people might be embarrassed by getting special treatment, I have got used to it. It comes with time and experience. It would probably be different for a non-mature student. Different reactions from different people depending on the length of time they have been deaf.

I have really enjoyed being a student and had no real problems in classes. The biggest problem has been with some supervisors, they forget the mature life-experience. They are used to dealing with much younger people. For example, one chap had spent 35 years as a small animal vet. We all took our bones to him which upset the supervisors for a while. When drawing site plans, one supervisor looked at my plan and guessed I was an engineer.

I did not learn many transferable skills through doing fieldwork as I already have life-skills. Can't say how much you actually taught me, apart from actual fieldwork skills.