

## **New lines of research in Deaf Studies at the Research group Speech and Language Therapy: Participation through communication**

**As of January 2020, the Research group Speech and Language Therapy: Participation through communication will be developing new lines of research related to sign language and Deaf Studies. As Professor Ellen Gerrits, head of the research group, notes, “By embedding these lines of research, the Deaf Studies programme will be substantively strengthened, which will have a major impact on professional practice”.**

Language and communication are crucial to everyday life. For a considerable number of deaf and hard of hearing people in the Netherlands, that language is Sign Language of the Netherlands (NGT). Through education and applied research, HU University of Applied Sciences (HU) contributes to relevant and practical knowledge in areas such as language development, sign language interpreters, issues related to inclusion, and education in and of NGT. The HU is the only place where students can graduate as NGT interpreter or NGT teacher.

Deaf and hard of hearing people face significant challenges when it comes to participating in everyday life, including in areas such as communicating with medical professionals, equal job opportunities, the availability of interpreters to access important news or equal education opportunities. “We want to develop knowledge and interventions that further contribute to communication and participation for this group as well,” says Gerrits. We want to contribute to knowledge development and provide interventions that improve communication and the level of participation for this group as well

### **Lines of Research in Deaf Studies**

The new lines of research are being set up by [Maartje De Meulder PhD](#), senior researcher at the research group and senior lecturer at the Institute for Sign Language & Deaf Studies (IGT&D). De Meulder specialises in Deaf Studies and applied linguistics. Her broader research interests are in the areas of sign language rights, language policy, sign language maintenance and revitalisation, multilingualism and sign language interpreters. Over the coming period, she will be working in close collaboration with the IGT&D, professionals in the field and other stakeholders, to further shape the current research programme. De Meulder will be assisting bachelor and master students of the IGT&D with their graduation assignments, teach within the master in Deaf Studies and contribute to curriculum innovation within the IGT&D. She will also serve as the



'bridge' between the research group and the institute and establish a knowledge agenda oriented towards 2026, with regards to research questions that arise from professional practice and society.

### **Research group Deaf Studies**

Repositioning the Deaf Studies lines of research coincides with the expiry of the four-year period of the Research group Deaf Studies and the retirement of professor Beppie van den Bogaerde, who conducted research into Sign Language of the Netherlands and served for 33 years as the 'ambassador of the deaf community'. Van den Bogaerde was one of the founders of the NGT interpreter and NGT teacher-training programmes at the HU. She became a professor at the HU in 2007. Since 2013, she combined this position with a professorship in Sign Language of the Netherlands at the University of Amsterdam. Worldwide, she has made a significant contribution to the recognition of sign languages.

### **More information:**

- [Innovations in Deaf Studies: The Role of Deaf Scholars. Edited by Annelies Kusters, Maartje De Meulder, and Dai Obrien \(2017\).](#)