



Deaf Jessica graduates in IT

JESSICA Maher, from Bertram, has always battled against the odds.

She recently graduated from an IT course at Challenger Institute of Technology in which she was one of only two female students and the only one who finished the whole course without hearing a single word from the lecturers.

Ms Maher is deaf and completed the Certificate III in information technology with the support of an interpreter and note-taker provided by the centre.

"They are helpful but don't do the work for me, I have to study, learn and do the work to get through the

course, just like any other student," she said.

"Sometimes the examples are difficult because I am unable to hear sound."

Ms Maher said the centre was supportive and encouraged deaf people to enrol.

"I know of a few deaf people who work within the IT field, but I don't see a lot of deaf people studying information technology, especially women," she said.

Principal information technology lecturer Jack Burgess said Ms Maher was a determined person and keen to learn in classes.

Mr Burgess said he had learnt to spell out some words for Ms Maher using Australian sign language

(Auslan).

"I enjoyed trying to use Auslan and I would like to recognise and thank the Auslan interpreters for their fantastic work," he said.

"Challenger Institute IT staff completed a deafness awareness training course, which was hugely valuable and interesting and I would recommend it to anyone."

Mr Burgess would work with an interpreter in weekly one-hour sessions.

"I let Jessica set the agenda for what she wants to cover, and then I provide a quick outline of topics, and Jessica picks out parts she needs additional help with."



Lecturer Jack Burgess with Jessica Maher.