
GUIDANCE FOR AWARDING BODIES

Access to External Assessment for D/deaf Candidates

Version 3 – December 2006

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Signature would like to thank everyone who contributed to this guidance, including members of the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf (BATOD), teachers of D/deaf students and other specialist staff at specific schools, colleges and universities.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This guidance has been produced to supplement the *'Good Practice Guide on the Application of Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration in Vocational Qualifications'* produced by the Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB). The FAB guidance has been written to help awarding bodies and their centres meet their obligations on equality of access to accredited qualifications, as required by relevant legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and by the regulatory authorities'¹ document: *'The Statutory Regulation of External Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland 2004'*. Guidance similar to that produced by FAB is also available from the Joint Council of Qualifications (JCQ)² for GCE, VCE, GCSE, GNVQ, Entry Level and Key Skills.
- 1.2 It is assumed that users of this guidance are already familiar with the contents of the FAB guide to which Signature contributed. There was insufficient space in the FAB guide to include detailed guidance concerning D/deaf³ candidates as can be found in this document. This guidance does not cover 'special considerations' as these are dealt with in the FAB guide.
- 1.3 As with the FAB guide, the information in this guidance is advisory only and is intended for awarding bodies to adopt in their own contexts. Each awarding body will take responsibility for their own use and implementation of the guidance as well as its use by centres. Signature does not bear any responsibility for this. Each awarding body is responsible for any amendments and adaptations they make to the guidance for their specific needs. Awarding bodies may have to adapt the guidance to suit the different qualifications they offer and to fit in with their administrative systems.
- 1.4 This guidance is designed to assist awarding bodies when they receive requests from centres concerning D/deaf candidates. It is not exhaustive and in every case it is for awarding bodies and their approved centres to determine on a case-by-case basis that reasonable adjustments are necessary and will be effective. The guidance is applicable as from 1 November 2005. Awarding bodies are responsible for checking any updates and changes to the law.
- 1.5 This guidance does not provide the legislative background or define reasonable adjustments, or list the duties and responsibilities of awarding bodies and centres which are set out in the first part (Sections 1-6) of the FAB guide. This guidance focuses on assessments which are taken under examination conditions and where permission has to be obtained from the awarding body.
- 1.6 This guidance follows a similar structure to Sections 7 and 8.3 of the FAB guide. It also uses the same terminology as the FAB guide, but goes into detail concerning definitions and terms which apply to D/deaf candidates. There are instances where Signature offers alternative approaches that may be helpful to centres.

¹ The regulatory authorities for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, are Ofqual, DCELLS and CCEA respectively. Scotland is not covered by this guidance or that of FAB.

² *'Access Arrangements and Special Consideration Regulations and Guidance Relating to Candidates who are Eligible for Adjustments in Examinations'* published annually on 1 September each year.

³ The use of the upper case 'D' indicates that the person is linguistically and culturally deaf and uses sign language. The lower case 'd' is used to denote someone who has a hearing loss but does not regard themselves as a member of the above linguistic or cultural minority. The convention D/deaf covers both of these definitions.

2. About the D/deaf Candidate

- 2.1 When applying for and making reasonable adjustments regarding D/deaf candidates, centres and awarding bodies should recognise that deafness has implications for the candidate's language preference⁴ (i.e. English or British Sign Language (BSL)) and also the language modality in which they prefer to receive questions and give answers. The modality may be spoken, written or signed.
- 2.2 Deafness affects the development of communication, language and literacy. It impacts on how deaf people access learning and assessment. D/deaf candidates have communication needs and sensory needs. These affect how assessment material is presented and responded to. BSL users are often considered within the broader group of candidates for whom English is an additional language. Access to assessment for D/deaf candidates is therefore both a language issue and a disability issue.
- 2.3 Broadly speaking, D/deaf candidates can be considered in terms of their language and language modality preferences, i.e.
- Deaf candidates for whom BSL (or Irish Sign Language (ISL) which is the only other recognised sign language in the UK) is the preferred language.
 - Deaf candidates for whom English (or another spoken or written language) is the preferred language - candidates who can use hearing and/or who can lipread the spoken form.
 - Deaf candidates for whom English (or another spoken or written language) is the preferred language - candidates who cannot rely on hearing or lipreading and who require access through the written form.
 - Deaf candidates for whom English (or another spoken or written language) is the preferred language - candidates who cannot rely on hearing or lipreading and who require access through visual-manual means. This paper uses the term 'manually coded English' to cover a range of visual-manual support including fingerspelling, Cued Speech and Sign Supported English (SSE).
- 2.4 The above classification may or may not be reflected in the provision made by a centre for teaching and/or assessing D/deaf students. Schools and colleges differ in how they define their D/deaf students and their needs. Also many D/deaf candidates function differently with regard to language and modality in different contexts.
- 2.5 Awarding bodies do not normally require evidence of a candidate's hearing loss in support of a centre's request for a reasonable adjustment. In most cases, the implications of the hearing loss are clear and the centre will be able to verify evidence of this. Centres need to identify early on what assessment arrangements the candidate will need. Those who work with the candidate on a regular basis, and have been given authority by the centre to do so, are best placed to request reasonable adjustments and to provide evidence to support the request. This should always be done in conjunction with the candidate. The request for an adjustment to assessment must be accompanied by evidence which is sufficient, valid and reliable, and all adjustments must be authorised by the head of centre or a member of staff with delegated authority. Most awarding bodies have deadlines for applications for these arrangements. Having obtained permission for the arrangement, the centre must comply with the awarding body's regulations.

⁴ Signature recognises that for a number of deaf candidates, neither English nor BSL will be the language of the home. For some candidates, Punjabi or another heritage language may be the preferred language. This guidance does not claim to resolve these issues which need to be sorted out between centres and awarding bodies.

- 2.6 Assessment access arrangements or reasonable adjustments should reflect the candidate's normal way of working, including the arrangements made for them to access teaching. In the case of D/deaf candidates, there is considerable variation in the provision made to ensure they have access to the curriculum. Some students are taught through the medium of spoken and written English. Others are taught through BSL and others are taught through BSL and English. Teaching may be delivered directly to the student with the teacher or instructor using English and/or BSL. Alternatively, it may also be facilitated through a third party. For example, the language of the teacher may be interpreted into BSL, re-presented in a modified spoken form or in a written form (in the case of electronic note-taking).
- 2.7 There is considerable debate within the field of the education of D/deaf students as to what is appropriate provision, both in terms of the setting and the language and communication approach. Awarding bodies need to be prepared for the fact that centres offer a range of approaches to and support for D/deaf candidates when delivering the curriculum. The needs of the same candidate may not be described in the same way by different centres.
- 2.8 Deaf BSL users are often described as members of a linguistic and cultural minority. There may be an expectation on the part of centres that candidates will be allowed to use BSL in accessing and responding to assessment. BSL was recognised by governments as an official language in England and Wales in 2003, and in Northern Ireland in 2004. Whilst recognition was welcomed, this does not give BSL the same status as statutory languages (i.e. English, Welsh or Irish (Gaeilge)). Awarding bodies should note that the regulatory authorities state that:

“Awarding bodies may allow assessment in a language other than English, Welsh or Irish (Gaeilge) in qualifications designed for the workplace, provided that:

- a) the awarding body ensures that the assessment is comparable to that offered in English, Welsh or Irish (Gaeilge);*
- b) lack of proficiency in English, Welsh or Irish (Gaeilge) does not prevent the candidate from properly carrying out the role that is supported by the qualification.”*

(The Statutory Regulation of External Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, 2004 – Paragraph 40)

Awarding bodies are encouraged to respond to this permissive statement in the interests of Deaf candidates. However, they need to bear in mind their responsibilities under disability and equal opportunities legislation.

The regulatory criteria state:

“Awarding bodies may allow assessment in British Sign Language in accordance with criteria 14 to 20 in the section Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration.”

(The Statutory Regulation of External Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, 2004 – Paragraph 41)

- 2.9 There are also D/deaf candidates with visual, learning and physical disabilities who require additional arrangements and adjustments reflecting these. This guidance does not extend to these candidates. However, there is information in the FAB guide which awarding bodies may find helpful in dealing with candidates with a number of different needs.

3. Making Reasonable Adjustments

- 3.1 Reasonable adjustments must not affect the reliability and validity of assessment outcomes. They constitute an arrangement to give the candidate access to the qualification but not to obtain any advantage over other candidates in doing so. The standards expected of the D/deaf candidate are the same as those expected of non-D/deaf candidates, even though the way in which the D/deaf candidates demonstrate they have met the standard may be different.
- 3.2 Assessment access arrangements or reasonable adjustments should reflect the candidate's normal way of working and the history of provision during teaching and assessment, provided this does not affect what is being assessed. The centre may expect whatever arrangements are made for accessing learning to be allowed by awarding bodies for accessing their assessments and qualifications. The centre may not be aware that the way of providing support for learning may in fact be inappropriate for accessing assessment.
- 3.3 This document, as with the FAB guide, uses the term 'access facilitator' to cover a range of professional roles and processes through which D/deaf candidates access assessment. Information about access facilitators is set out in Section 4E of this guidance. In order for awarding bodies to safeguard the integrity of their assessments, they may stipulate the qualifications or other credentials of access facilitators. The professional who provides access to assessment should preferably:
- have received training and qualified in the relevant role;
 - have been trained to work in assessment situations;
 - have experience of educational vocabulary;
 - be familiar with subject and course;
 - be known (but not too familiar) to the candidate.
- 3.4 In order for D/deaf candidates to have access to the curriculum, they require the support of specialist staff, with a wide range of roles. Many support staff working with D/deaf students will be used to ensuring that the students are actually learning and not just receiving information. The D/deaf student will be provided with support from a member of staff whose job it is to ensure that the student has access through their preferred language and/or modality, to what is being taught. In an educational context this support may go beyond pure facilitation and extend to explanation, reinforcement and clarification to ensure the student has understood, as opposed to just receiving the information. When providing access to assessment, support staff acting as access facilitators will need instructions and information from awarding bodies as to how to present the assessments appropriately. Awarding bodies may need to remind access facilitators that their role is not to explain the question (which is likely to reveal the answer) but to present clearly what the question is asking of the candidate.
- 3.5 Awarding bodies need to balance any concerns they may have about the credentials of the staff delivering assessments, with the aim of removing obstacles to assessment. If awarding bodies set their expectations for staff qualifications too high, centres may decide not to put forward D/deaf candidates. If they set their expectations too low, D/deaf candidates may be put forward who are in fact unable to meet the assessment criteria but appear to demonstrate that they can do so, thus threatening the integrity and status of the qualification.
- 3.6 It is generally recognised that awarding bodies need access to a panel of experts to advise and assist with the assessment access arrangements for D/deaf candidates. For example, in the case of written papers, Signature recommends the use of people from the BATOD/NATED approved list of language modifiers. This list can be obtained from bevan@blueyonder.co.uk or phone number 0114 221 6504.

BATOD also publishes a useful booklet *'The Language of Examinations'*. It costs about £15 and is available from www.batod.org.uk.

- 3.7 Awarding bodies should also make use of other experts to advise on the interpretation and translation of papers into BSL and on the presentation of 'oral' examinations and assessments. There are known sources of expertise within BATOD and NATED and also within some of the schools, and further and higher institutions which specialise in the education of D/deaf students.
- 3.8 Awarding bodies and centres are only required by law to do what is 'reasonable' in terms of giving access. What is reasonable will depend on the individual circumstances, cost implications and the practicality and effectiveness of the adjustment. Other factors such as the need to maintain competence standards and health and safety, will be taken into consideration. A number of the reasonable adjustments described in this guidance can entail considerable cost to the awarding body and centre. Neither may have the resources to provide what is being expected. For example, a centre may ask for a written paper to be translated into BSL at source by the awarding body. An awarding body might specify that a qualified and registered BSL/English Interpreter can be used but not a Communication Support Worker (CSW). Whilst Signature has views on this and will endeavour to be a model of good practice, this guidance advises measures which the majority of awarding bodies and centres would consider 'reasonable'.
- 3.9 Not all the reasonable adjustments described in Section 4 will be reasonable, permissible or practical in particular situations. If in doubt, the centre is advised to contact individual awarding bodies for advice. The candidate may not need or be allowed the same adjustment for all qualifications. Some candidates may need a single adjustment, others may require a combination of several adjustments.
- 3.10 The list of reasonable adjustments in this guidance follows the same format as the FAB guide, i.e.
- A Changes to assessment conditions.
 - B Use of mechanical, electronic and technological aids.
 - C Modification to the presentation of assessment material.
 - D Alternative ways of presenting responses.
 - E Use of access facilitators.

4. Range of Reasonable Adjustments to the Assessment of D/deaf Candidates

A Changes to assessment conditions

A1 Extra time

Justification

Where assessment activities are time-constrained, the D/deaf candidate may be allowed extra time during an assessment. More than the usual amount of extra time may be justified for a D/deaf candidate:

- using a modified paper;
- being tested in reading or writing where they cannot receive assistance in these during this assessment, even though they are eligible for such assistance elsewhere;

- using a BSL paper (videotape) and/or responding in BSL. The candidate may need to make notes or write short answers from which to present their BSL answers;
- requiring breaks during an assessment owing to physical or memory difficulties.

When not allowed

Extra time should not be allowed where timing is part of assessment, for example where the assessment includes the time taken or speed/pace of production of, e.g. a practical skill such as BSL.

A2 Accommodation

In addition to ensuring that the D/deaf candidate is appropriately positioned near the front of the room and in good light, it may be necessary to accommodate the D/deaf candidate(s) separately if they are using access facilitators or equipment which may disturb other candidates. Where D/deaf candidates are responding using spoken English or BSL which can be 'overheard' or 'overseen' by another candidate, they should be assessed individually, either simultaneously in different rooms or consecutively in the same room. Where D/deaf candidates are accommodated separately, the usual examination conditions apply and separate invigilation should be arranged.

A3 Early opening of papers

Justification

In some circumstances, many awarding bodies allow early opening of up to one hour for written papers. As early opening is primarily to allow the person who is presenting or facilitating access to the assessment to prepare, one hour of preparation is only likely to be adequate for a Reader or Live Speaker where the candidate is D/deaf.

A centre can request additional early opening time where a BSL/English Interpreter or Oral Language Modifier is being used, provided this is done under controlled conditions, i.e. invigilation, and the centre verifies this. This longer period of early opening may also be required for Modern Foreign Language examinations where the access facilitator needs to prepare using the transcript and related question paper.

Extended period within which early opening is allowed

It may not be possible for the access facilitator to be present two hours before the assessment starts, in which case the awarding body may consider allowing a longer period of time within which the additional preparation time can be taken, e.g. within 24 hours of the assessment provided this is done under controlled conditions, i.e. invigilation, and the centre verifies this.

B Use of mechanical, electronic and technological aids

B1 Assistive technology

Where a candidate usually wears hearing aids, a cochlear implant or a radio hearing aid, these should be worn during the assessment. They are not regarded as 'assistive technology' specifically for the assessment.

It is assumed that the candidate and/or those responsible for presenting the candidate for assessment, have checked that whatever 'aid' is worn is in optimal working order.

Some D/deaf candidates may benefit from the use of hardware and software such as word processors. However, this must not contain additional functionality that will give the candidate an unfair advantage. If such functionality is present, it must be disabled.

B2 BSL/English dictionaries/glossaries

In some assessments, candidates are able to use bilingual dictionaries. There are online and other format dictionaries and other BSL/English resources, which can be used with BSL-users as with speakers of first languages other than English, Irish or Welsh. Care should be taken in agreeing to requests for the use of these resources. Awarding bodies should be confident that the dictionary or glossary to be used does not give the candidate an unfair advantage. For example, some of the resources listed below are available through the Internet. Usually awarding bodies would not allow the use of computers connected to the Internet.

Some of the recognised glossaries for BSL are as follows:

- www.artsigns.ac.uk.
- www.sciencesigns.ac.uk.
- www.builtenvsigns.ac.uk.
- www.engineeringsigns.ac.uk.
- 'Signs for Education (Maths, IT and English) CD-ROMS published by Microbooks.

C Modification to the presentation of assessment material

C1 Language modified assessment material

a) Modified written paper

The carrier language in assessment materials can be modified for a D/deaf candidate whose first language is either English or BSL. The modified version of the paper should contain the same questions as the standard version and the answers should be the same as one would expect in response to the questions in the standard version. The subject-specific or technical language which is the focus of the assessment may not be modified. It is recommended that the candidate is given a copy of the original paper as well as the modified version in order to safeguard the candidate and the modifier.

In a modified paper, the English (or Welsh or Irish) in which the paper is written, has been modified at source by the awarding body either:

- written as a modified paper from the start, i.e. through the process of paper setting; or
- produced as a modified version from the standard version.

Awarding bodies would not normally permit centres to carry out further modifications as these might jeopardise the integrity of the assessment. Where the centre is allowed to modify externally set material, they should take responsibility for the accuracy of the modification. Inaccuracies may result in the candidate making errors for which (s)he would be penalised.

Purpose

The purpose of modification of a written paper is to make the written English more accessible to D/deaf candidates. There are a number of factors to consider when modifying written exam papers:

- The modified paper may avoid the use of English language structures with which a D/deaf candidate may not be familiar or comfortable.
- That does not mean it is written in BSL or following BSL structures as this would result in it no longer being recognisable as English.
- A modified paper should be unambiguous, using correct and uncomplicated English for the carrier language within questions.

One could argue that a paper which has been modified for D/deaf candidates or written with D/deaf candidates in mind, is in fact the paper which should be used for all candidates. If the original paper is written in accessible English, there should be no need for it to be modified.

Experts

Signature recommends that awarding bodies make use of a panel of recognised experts in the production and modification of written papers for D/deaf candidates, including those who are familiar with the literacy needs of BSL- and English-users. Signature recommends that awarding bodies make use of the BATOD/NATED approved list of people who have been trained to modify written papers, and that this list is extended to include D/deaf experts with particular experience of this type of task (see 3.6).

Shortcomings of modified papers

There is some doubt about the value of modified papers. D/deaf candidates have different needs so that one modified paper is unlikely to suit all. There are also some examples of where centres believed a paper had been modified but it had not, e.g. on the instructions of the Chief Examiner, without informing those who had put forward the modifications.

b) Assessment material in British Sign Language

Where the language of the written papers, in its standard or modified form, is not accessible to a Deaf candidate whose preferred language is BSL, a BSL version of the assessment material may be provided instead of or in addition to the written assessment material. This may also be a reasonable adjustment where the centre cannot provide a BSL/English Interpreter. Although BSL does not have a written form, an exam paper written in English can be translated into BSL or the assessment material can be prepared originally in BSL. The BSL version is recorded on video, CD-ROM or DVD.

Awarding bodies may consider producing the BSL paper themselves. If BSL papers were commissioned from a central source where translators provide this service across a range of awarding bodies, this would ensure that BSL papers were produced to the same standard. However, if the awarding body permits the centre to produce the translation of the assessment material, it will need to consider (as with the 'live' interpretation of written papers (C2)) introducing measures for checking the accuracy of the translation.

In the case of a BSL paper, the sign language used to present the instructions and questions must be carefully selected to ensure that the validity and reliability of the assessment is not reduced, and the integrity or reliability of the qualification is not compromised. It is important to ensure that the Deaf candidate is neither unfairly disadvantaged or advantaged.

Assessment criteria

As with the use of a BSL/English Interpreter⁵ (see reasonable adjustment E4), the translated paper can be all, or in part, in BSL depending on the assessment criteria.

- BSL may be used for the rubric, instructions and carrier language. For example, if the candidate is being assessed on their ability to 'evaluate', 'describe' or 'compare' and not on their ability to read these words on the exam paper, these terms can be interpreted into BSL.
- BSL cannot be used where reading or listening are the competences being assessed. English should be used (e.g. writing or fingerspelling) for the technical language, where the candidate's knowledge of the specific English words or phrases is being assessed.

Texts which cannot be presented in BSL

There are other written materials used in exams which cannot be translated into BSL or presented in BSL. These include texts and materials used in English and other language and literature exams where the candidate is expected to read the original version (e.g. quotations).

The presenter

The BSL paper should be presented by someone who is fluent in BSL and English, and able to interpret and translate between the languages. It is recommended that the awarding body gives serious consideration to commissioning BSL papers from a 'native user' of BSL (i.e. a Deaf person) who has experience and training in translation.

The presentation of instructions and questions in BSL is an alternative to having the written paper interpreted 'live' to the candidate (see reasonable adjustment E4) with the lack of quality control that can arise from this.

Some schools and colleges have resisted the use of pre-recorded BSL versions of papers on the grounds that the Deaf candidate may not be familiar with the signs used by the presenter. However, as there are now reference sources of agreed educational signs (see B2), one should be able to expect that the signs used in the BSL 'paper' at this level, will be those with which the candidate has been familiarised through the teaching.

Implications

There are clearly a number of implications for awarding bodies in producing BSL papers. However, these need to be considered in the light of concerns about the lack of quality control where a 'live' and simultaneous interpretation is used, especially where the person providing the interpretation may not be suitably qualified or experienced for this task.

C2 Modified or standard written paper with modification through 'live' presentation

Another reasonable adjustment is to provide modification of the language presented in the written paper (whether or not this has been modified). This entails the provision of an access facilitator who:

⁵ Information about BSL/English Interpreters can be found on the Signature website www.signature.org.uk.

- reads aloud what is written; or
- modifies the written language while presenting in spoken English (with or without the use of manually coded English); or
- interprets the written paper into BSL.

The choice of access facilitator and the modification which that person can provide, will depend on the assessment criteria for the exam. With the use of a BSL/English Interpreter (see E4) and an Oral Language Modifier (E3), the interpretation or modification may be of all or part of the paper, depending on the assessment criteria and the request of the candidate.

It is recommended that awarding bodies 'mark up' written papers to show which words cannot be interpreted or modified but must be presented in the written form and/or read aloud (depending on whether the candidate is being assessed on their knowledge of the written form).

Reading of the written questions is part of the assessment

Where all candidates are required to read the written questions in order to satisfy the assessment criteria, the D/deaf candidate is expected to read the modified written paper independently. However, the rubric and instructions may be presented in spoken English (see E1), or in modified oral language (see E3), or interpreted into BSL (see E4). The questions cannot be spoken or signed.

Knowledge of subject-specific written English words or phrases is part of the assessment

Where the candidate is assessed on her/his knowledge of the English technical or subject-specific terms, most awarding bodies allow BSL to be used for the rubric, instructions and carrier language. For example, if the candidate is being assessed on their ability to 'evaluate', 'describe' or 'compare' and not on their ability to read these words on the exam paper, these terms can be interpreted into BSL.

- Where the assessment is of knowledge of the subject-specific written form of English words and phrases, these should not be signed but should be presented in writing or through fingerspelling.
- In the case of deaf candidates who do not require an interpretation into BSL, questions can be presented in spoken English either read aloud (see E1) or with clarification through modification (see E3). Where the assessment is of knowledge of the subject-specific written form of English words and phrases, these should be presented in writing.

Assessment is not of reading but of concepts

Where candidates are not required to read in order to satisfy the assessment criteria, the original or modified written paper could be used together with an interpretation into BSL or a spoken presentation using modified oral language. Awarding bodies may find the following advice helpful:

- If the assessment is of knowledge of the concept and not of the English word which represents it, then a sign interpretation may be used. In addition to the rubric, instructions and carrier language, the technical or subject-specific terms can be interpreted. However, the interpretation must ensure that the signs used for the concepts being assessed do not give clues to meaning, which are not available for those relying on the spoken or written word.

- As BSL is a visual-gestural language there are many signs which are iconic in their visual representation. Many technical items in English will have sign language equivalents which have been used in their teaching. There has been some discussion as to whether there should be standardised signs for technical language assessments, which represent the concepts without giving unacceptable clues to meaning. Currently there are many curriculum concepts for which standard signs do not exist and there is a risk that the interpretation may indicate the meaning of a test item in a way which is not appropriate for the assessment. Therefore, awarding bodies should ensure that appropriate instructions are given to interpreters.

C3 Modified oral assessments

Justification

Modifications to oral assessments are justified:

- where listening (and speaking) skills are being assessed in a language exam; and
- where there is an oral assessment within a non-language subject.

In spoken language examinations (whether the language is English, a Modern Foreign Language, a heritage language, Irish or Welsh), it is the ability to comprehend and produce the spoken form which is being assessed. A hearing loss affects how the D/deaf candidate needs to receive spoken English in order to comprehend it and how the candidate produces spoken English so that others can understand what they are saying. Many D/deaf candidates do not have difficulty with reading and writing languages but may have difficulty with listening and speaking elements.

Endorsed or indicated certificates

In the past a D/deaf candidate could be exempted from assessment in sections of the specification where they could not demonstrate the skill being assessed because of their disability. They could achieve a qualification based on the remaining sections with an indicated or endorsed certificate. The candidate's marks for the other components were enhanced. The certificate showed which parts of the assessment the candidate had been exempted from, but was a full award.

However, legal advice indicates that this practice would not comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. Granting exemptions and certificate indications to some disabled candidates is likely to amount to unlawful discrimination against other candidates. The practice amounts to applying different competence standards to some as against others. Many awarding bodies have ruled that candidates can no longer get endorsed certificates. However, the JCQ has given an extension to their current practice of allowing these through to 2007.

In most instances, a candidate who can only access 75% of the assessment is now only entitled to 75% of the marks. Speaking and listening assessments of English or other spoken languages, are examples of sections where it may have been judged that a D/deaf candidate could not demonstrate the skill being assessed because of her/his hearing loss and therefore has not been entered for this assessment.

Some people argue that D/deaf candidates should be allowed to sit additional reading and writing tests to make up the full 100% of the assessment and marks. However, this would be across two and not four language competences. Others expect awarding bodies to allow a range of arrangements through which tests of listening and speaking are made accessible and therefore the candidate has the opportunity of achieving in those sections.

Making speaking and listening tests accessible

Centres who work with D/deaf students argue that there are a number of ways in which access to listening and speaking tests can be provided and adjustments made so that D/deaf candidates can demonstrate the skills being assessed. Some consider that these adjustments should apply only to subjects other than languages. Others say they are appropriate across all subjects where there is an oral element to the assessment.

a) Listening tests (language exam) and assessment material in audio format

There are a number of ways of providing access to tests requiring listening to materials in audio format within a language exam.

For D/deaf candidates 'listening' (to English) can be defined as receiving spoken information in the source language which for a deaf person can be done through (to differing degrees) hearing and seeing. There are a number of options for making the spoken form accessible and which are used in the teaching of spoken languages to D/deaf students.

Live Speaker and tapescript

In listening tests, a tapescript of the test may be provided which is read to the candidate by a Live Speaker. The centre is allowed to open the tapescript well before the exam so that the Live Speaker can study it. If there are several native speakers on the tape, then ideally the centre should try to assemble several Live Speakers to speak the dialogue. If this is not possible, the centre could get one male and one female speaker who would point to cards to show who they are when they speak. It is not appropriate to offer the candidate the whole tapescript to read but it is appropriate to provide a list of proper nouns which are difficult to lipread or predict. The D/deaf candidate is expected to lipread the Live Speaker.

Separate room

D/deaf candidates who might not be able to hear the tape in a large classroom might be able to hear it if the tape was played in a separate room with better acoustics, and perhaps played louder (for some candidates only) and using additional equipment to allow the input to be channelled through hearing aids more effectively.

Live Speaker and supported lipreading

For some D/deaf candidates, spoken English presented by a Live Speaker at 'normal' speed and with 'normal' articulation, may not be lipreadable without the intervention of someone skilled in 'lipspeaking'. A qualified Lipspeaker⁶ is trained in techniques and protocols to present a version of the source spoken message, which is visually accessible to the deaf person who is lipreading. Awarding bodies may wish to consider allowing the use of a Lipspeaker in the verbatim presentation of spoken language assessments to deaf candidates, whether from an audio recording or presented 'live'. The Lipspeaker would need to be fluent in the language which is being assessed. It might also be appropriate for a teacher or support worker who has received training in lipspeaking, to do this.

⁶ Information about Lipspeakers, STTRs and Electronic Note-takers can be found on the Signature website www.signature.org.uk.

Cued Speech

There is also the option of the Live Speaker using Cued Speech as this is a visual match to spoken English. Cued Speech gives a visual representation of how a word sounds with no reference to how it is spelt. The Cued Speech Transliterator gives the candidate clear access to the spoken word via lipreading. There is no clue to meaning or to the written form of the word being spoken and cued.

Fingerspelling

Another option is for the Live Speaker to accompany their spoken language with fingerspelling, ranging from initialising to spelling complete words. The candidate is provided with visual cues to the spoken word. Fingerspelling provides cues which relate to the written form of the word even though they are based on the manual alphabet.

Unless carefully monitored, there is a risk that the use of fingerspelling may give the D/deaf candidate an unfair advantage over others. Awarding bodies need to observe caution before agreeing to allow the use of fingerspelling to give access to listening tests. In language exams, SSE should not be used as this can give inappropriate visual clues to meaning.

Note on the above:

There is a view among those who work with BSL users that there are a number of approaches to modifying assessments of 'speaking and listening' where English (or another spoken language) is the language being assessed for such candidates. However, most awarding bodies would rule that the approaches below cannot be used for the oral component of a language exam.

- 'Live English'

One approach is to define 'speaking and listening' as producing and receiving 'live English' (or whatever the spoken language). 'Live English' includes recognisable elements of the English standards such as English word order and lip patterns. However, it also contains elements which are available to D/deaf candidates and can be assessed for its 'Englishness' even though the English may not have been received purely through hearing nor produced purely through speech. For example, the presenter of English to the BSL-using candidate may use SSE and the candidate may use SSE in their response.

- 'Communication' instead of English

Another approach is to allow Deaf candidates to use BSL for speaking and listening tasks and tests, and rename this as a 'communication element' rather than 'oral English'.

- Messaging

Another example of how BSL-using candidates may be assessed in their 'live' spontaneous English-based communication is through the use of MSN messaging.

- A foreign sign language

It has been suggested that where Deaf candidates are studying a foreign language such as French through the medium of a foreign sign language such as French Sign Language, they should be allowed to do their oral exam through the foreign sign language.

Further information about arrangements for foreign language exams can be found at <http://www.hilarymccoll.co.uk/resources/GridOnline.pdf>.

b) Listening test (subjects other than languages)

There are a number of ways of providing access to tests requiring listening within an exam subject other than languages.

Reading aloud of written questions

In oral tests within a subject exam which is not a language exam, the D/deaf candidate may be able to lipread the person presenting the oral questions.

Language modification and supported lipreading

For some D/deaf candidates, spoken English presented at 'normal' speed and with 'normal' articulation, may not be lipreadable without the intervention of someone skilled in 'lipspeaking'. A qualified Lipspeaker⁷ is trained in techniques and protocols to present a version of the source spoken message, which is visually accessible to the deaf person who is lipreading. Awarding bodies may wish to consider allowing the use of a Lipspeaker in the presentation of spoken language assessments to deaf candidates. It might also be appropriate for a teacher or support worker who has received training in lipspeaking, to do this.

Verbatim transcription

Another measure for making the spoken form accessible is to provide a simultaneous verbatim transcription such as through the services of a Speech to Text Reporter (STTR) or a highly skilled Electronic Note-taker. However, as the spoken language is rendered in its written form, this may be considered inappropriate for the purposes of assessment since the task becomes one of responding to the written and not the spoken form of the language.

Manually coded English

Where the candidate's preferred language is English but where manually coded English is used to facilitate access, awarding bodies may wish to consider allowing the use of this where subject knowledge and not English skills are being assessed. The speaker can accompany her/his spoken language with fingerspelling, ranging from initialising to spelling complete words. The candidate is provided with visual cues to the spoken language, cues which relate to the written form of the words even though they are based on the manual alphabet.

There is also the option of using Cued Speech or signs in English order. Unlike in language exams, SSE may also be used as the candidate is not being assessed on her/his understanding of spoken English. As with the use of fingerspelling, the candidate is provided with visual cues to the spoken language, but care must be taken to not give away the meaning of any English test items when sign is used. English test items should be fingerspelt or written.

BSL

Deaf candidates, whose preferred language is BSL, are allowed to use this for the oral element of examinations where subject knowledge and not English skills are

⁷ Information about Lipspeakers, STTRs and Electronic Note-takers can be found on the Signature website www.signature.org.uk.

being assessed. Where the candidates are being assessed on their communication and presentation skills and not on their English skills, it is appropriate to allow them to receive and present in BSL, using an interpreter. However, care must be taken to not give away the meaning of any English test items when BSL is used. English test items should be fingerspelt or written.

D Alternative ways of presenting responses

D1 Responses in British Sign Language to written questions

Justification

Where there is evidence of need, awarding bodies may allow D/deaf candidates to sign their responses to written questions. Signing of responses should not be permitted if the ability to write or speak English, Welsh or Irish (Gaeilge) is being assessed or where, for other reasons, signing the responses will invalidate the assessment requirements.

A candidate can sign full responses in BSL but where the assessment is of knowledge of the subject-specific written form of English words and phrases, these should not be signed but should be presented in writing or through fingerspelling.

Quality assurance

Candidates' signed responses should be recorded on video⁸ for quality assurance purposes. Some awarding bodies may be able to accept the videotape instead of or together with the answer paper and employ a bilingual examiner of the subject, to mark this. However, for most awarding bodies, the centre will need to provide a translation of the responses into written English for the examiner. The centre should ensure that the person providing the translation is appropriately qualified to do so (see E4). Where the centre provides a translation of the candidate's response in the form of a transcript (see E5), this should be authenticated and signed off as being an accurate reflection of the candidate's response. The centre should keep a copy of this as a record of the assessment. It is particularly important that the centre can satisfy the awarding body that the candidate has demonstrated knowledge of the written English words or phrases which form part of the assessment, and not just that they are familiar with the concept being assessed.

Awarding bodies should be aware that transcribing videotapes is a time-consuming, costly and difficult process, demanding of centres' resources.

D2 Responses in spoken English to written questions

Justification

Where there is evidence of need, awarding bodies may allow D/deaf candidates to present their responses to written questions in spoken English.

The speaking of responses is not permitted if the ability to use written English, Welsh or Irish (Gaeilge) is being assessed or where, for other reasons, speaking the responses will invalidate the assessment requirements.

⁸ All video equipment should be electrically operated to ensure that filming and recording are continuous.

A candidate can speak full responses to questions but where the assessment is of knowledge of the written form of English words and phrases, these should be presented in writing.

Quality assurance

Awarding bodies may require that candidates' spoken responses are recorded on audiotape for quality assurance purposes. For most awarding bodies, the centre will need to provide a transcription of the responses into written English for the examiner (see E2 or E5). Where the centre provides a transcription, this should be authenticated and signed off as being an accurate reflection of the candidate's responses. The centre should keep a copy of this as a record of the assessment. It is particularly important that the centre can satisfy the awarding body that the candidate has demonstrated knowledge of the written English words or phrases which form part of the assessment and not just that they are familiar with the concept or spoken word being assessed.

Manually coded English

Awarding bodies should note that some candidate's spoken responses may in fact be presented through a mixture of speech and sign. This presentation may not be recognisable as BSL but more like manually coded English. The signs used by the candidate will be transcribed into English but this is not a translation from BSL to English (see D1). The same conditions apply as for responses in BSL, i.e. all items for which knowledge of the English word or phrase is required must be fingerspelt or written and the candidate's responses should be recorded on videotape.

D3 Responses to oral assessments

a) Speaking tests (language exam)

Justification

Awarding bodies are unlikely to allow significant modifications to oral assessments where speaking forms part of the assessment for a language. As the assessment is of the ability to speak a language, few modifications are likely to be allowed with regard to the candidates' responses to oral assessments.

Some D/deaf candidates can use spoken language to the required standard and are intelligible to others.

'Speaking over' the candidate

For D/deaf candidates who have difficulty making themselves understood, some awarding bodies may consider allowing the use of a Lipspeaker or teacher skilled in 'interpreting' the D/deaf person's speech, to speak over the candidate's attempts. The output of this person would be what was assessed.

Note on the above:

There is a view among those who work with BSL users that there are a number of approaches to modifying assessments of 'speaking and listening' where English (or another spoken language) is the language being assessed. However, most awarding bodies would rule that the approach below cannot be used for the oral component of a language exam.

- More flexible definition of ‘speaking’

‘Speaking’ could be defined as producing the recognisable spoken form of the target language which for a D/deaf person can include articulating visually, not using voice, using target language lip patterns, fingerspelling, Cued Speech, etc. The output of the candidate is recognisable as the target language.

Further information about arrangements for foreign language exams can be found at <http://www.hilarymccoll.co.uk/resources/GridOnline.pdf>.

b) Speaking/oral tests (subject exams other than languages)

Justification

Awarding bodies may allow modifications to an oral assessment where this is part of the assessment for a non-language subject, e.g. Geography. As the assessment is of subject knowledge and not of the ability to receive and speak a language, the oral test can be modified with regard to the candidates’ responses.

Some candidates will want to use their own voice for the oral test and will be able to be understood.

‘Speaking over’ the candidate

For D/deaf candidates who have difficulty making themselves understood, some awarding bodies may consider allowing the use of a Lipspeaker or teacher skilled in ‘interpreting’ the D/deaf person’s speech, to speak over the candidate’s attempts. The output of this person would be what was assessed.

Manually coded English

Awarding bodies may be willing to allow candidates to use manually coded English, i.e. fingerspelling, Cued Speech or SSE to enhance their spoken production, where subject knowledge and not English skills are being assessed. If the candidate is required to show knowledge of an English word or phrase, awarding bodies will need to stipulate to centres and candidates, the evidence required for this. For example, it may be considered that the use of a sign to show meaning is not appropriate, and that the candidate should use the recognisable spoken, cued, spelt or written form.

BSL

Deaf candidates whose preferred language is BSL are allowed to use BSL for the oral element of examinations where subject knowledge and not English skills are being assessed. If the candidate is required to show knowledge of an English word or phrase, awarding bodies will need to indicate to centres and candidates that this should be done through fingerspelling or writing.

E Use of access facilitators

Definition

An access facilitator is someone who provides the candidate with access to assessment where a reasonable adjustment to the presentation of and/or response to the assessment is required.

The person fulfilling the role of access facilitator may be a professional whose role is exclusively to provide a language or communication service to facilitate communication

between D/deaf and hearing people. The umbrella title for these roles is Communication Professionals.⁹ Communication Professionals include:

- BSL/English Interpreters;
- Lipspeakers;
- Note-takers (Manual and Electronic);
- Speech to Text Reporters;
- Cued Speech Transliterators.

However, there are few Communication Professionals employed by educational institutions. Instead other professionals with skills in interpreting, note-taking, oral language modification, etc work in education and are likely to have teaching or support roles, rather than purely access roles. Teachers of the Deaf, CSWs and Deaf Educational Instructors are likely to have as part of their jobs, the facilitation or conducting of assessments and therefore the role of access facilitator.

Specification/credentials

Signature recommends that whatever the role to which the person has been appointed, when they are providing access to assessment:

- they are expected to have received training in the access skill which they are using;
- they are expected to have received training in the preparation, delivery and response to assessments;
- they should be familiar with the subject matter being assessed;
- they should be familiar with the candidate (e.g. have worked with her/him before) but not be a relative, friend or the candidate's usual teacher.

As many D/deaf candidates receive specialist support in all or most subjects, it is likely that the person who has supported in the subject being assessed, will facilitate access to the assessment. However, the centre needs to be aware of the implications of using someone who is too familiar to the candidate.

Signature recommends that an awarding body puts into place measures to ensure the quality of language and communication support for assessment. For example, it may be appropriate to stipulate the qualifications of the person providing the support and to record the support or intervention as well as the candidate's responses to the assessment.

Instructions

Awarding bodies will need to give instructions to centres as to what they are required to do and what they may and may not do during the assessment. Having received information from the awarding body, the centre should give these instructions to the access facilitators. The centre should ensure that the candidate and the access facilitator are clear about the limitation of the latter's role. Awarding bodies may wish to consider instructing centres to video for quality assurance purposes, interactions between the candidate and the access facilitator where BSL is used.

Invigilator

The same instructions should also be given to the invigilator. It is recommended that invigilators receive some Deaf Awareness training. An invigilator must be present when an access facilitator is used to ensure that the guidance is followed. However, in the

⁹ Further information about Communication Professionals can be found on the Signature website www.signature.org.uk.

case of BSL-using candidates and access facilitators, since the invigilator will not know what is being said/signed, the interaction should be videoed for quality assurance purposes.

E1 Reader

Role

The role of the Reader is to read aloud verbatim, when requested, all or part of the written assessment material.

Justification

Where there is evidence of need, a Reader may be allowed in all assessments where reading or understanding of the written word is not an assessment requirement or the competence being assessed.

A Reader is justified for candidates for whom English is the preferred language and where they do not have adequate reading skills to read independently to the level required. This adjustment is allowed where the candidate has received this support during their learning and where the centre can satisfy the awarding body that the deaf candidate's level of oracy is significantly higher than their level of literacy.

The same person can act as a Reader and a Scribe so long as permission has been given for both arrangements.

The process

The Reader can read the whole paper or some words. They use the same language as that in which the question is written, and read accurately and at a reasonable rate. They should have sufficient knowledge of the subject to read technical terms accurately.

The Reader may respond to a request from the candidate during an examination or provide this support at their own instigation. The Reader cannot assist with technical language and cannot clarify or explain. The Reader does not modify the language of assessment. A Reader is not a translator or interpreter. The Reader cannot use BSL.

The Reader is likely to support the candidate's access to the spoken form through hearing and lipreading through the use of enhanced intonation, appropriate breathing, pauses and emphasis.

The Reader may also be allowed to provide additional visual clues to what is being spoken such as fingerspelling. However, if this is insufficient for the deaf candidate, an Oral Language Modifier and not a Reader may be required (see E3) subject to the assessment criteria.

E2 Scribe

Role

The role of the Scribe or amanuensis is to write down verbatim or word process a candidate's dictated answers to questions at the same time as the candidate is taking the exam.

Justification

Where there is evidence of need, a Scribe may be allowed in all assessments where writing or keyboarding is not the competence being assessed. A Scribe can be

requested where a D/deaf candidate's free writing cannot be read by others, is grammatically incomprehensible or where the candidate has a significant visual impairment. As the effective use of a Scribe requires high level communication skills, for most D/deaf candidates, the use of a word processor is more appropriate. This is also more likely in real life such as the work place. Scribes should only be requested where candidates cannot produce written communication either by handwriting or word processing.

The same person can act as a Scribe and a Reader so long as permission has been given for both arrangements.

The process

The Scribe should be able to produce an accurate record of the candidate's response, write legibly or word process at a reasonable speed, and have sufficient knowledge of the subject to be able to record technical terms correctly.

The Scribe should write down answers exactly as they are dictated and where spelling accuracy and punctuation are being tested, the Scribe must follow explicit instructions from the candidate.

Computer software

Computer software which produces a hard copy of the candidate's dictated speech can also be used as a Scribe. However, voice-activated software which can recognise a deaf person's speech is in the early stages of development and is not yet commercially available. There are also concerns about the use of computers in the exam room, the training needed to use the software and the proofreading of scripts before these are handed in.

E3 Oral Language Modifier

Role

The role of the Oral Language Modifier is to provide a level of support beyond that provided by the Reader for candidates for whom English is the preferred language. The Oral Language Modifier goes through the rubric and can alter or modify the carrier language in written questions, especially where they know the candidate has specific difficulties with written language and may be confused. This support can be provided in response to a request from the candidate during an examination or at the instigation of the Oral Language Modifier. This intervention is a form of language modification, rephrasing the carrier language, changing the word order and substituting different words.

The role has been referred to by some awarding bodies as an 'Oral Communicator'. The term 'Communicator' can be a cause of confusion. A disadvantage of using this term for assessment purposes, is that the title 'Communicator' or 'Communication Support Worker' is often used in educational contexts with D/deaf students to denote a general support role, which includes a range of roles including interpretation and note-taking but also the preparation of materials, providing one-to-one tutorial support and giving Deaf Awareness talks to mainstream staff.

An 'Oral Language Modifier' is not the same as a Lipspeaker or Note-taker. The Oral Language Modifier (who is suitably skilled and qualified to do so) may use manually coded English, i.e. fingerspelling, Cued Speech or SSE but they must not give the meaning to the subject-specific or technical terms when these are being assessed. The role of Oral Language Modifier can be fulfilled by the Teacher of the Deaf or a person appointed by her/him.

Specification

Signature recommends that when agreeing to a request for reasonable adjustments which entails modifying written language orally, awarding bodies should seek evidence from the centre that the access facilitator can meet the following specification:

- Has achieved and can demonstrate a minimum standard of Level 3 in English¹⁰.
- Has received training in language modification.
- Has some knowledge of the theories underpinning these processes and strategies.
- Is known to the candidate.
- Is familiar with the subject and the course leading to the assessment.
- Is familiar with the assessment arrangements.

Justification

An Oral Language Modifier is justified for candidates for whom English is the preferred language and where they do not have adequate reading skills to read independently to the level required. Unlike the Reader, the Oral Language Modifier is justified where the candidate cannot access the spoken form of the written questions without further modification to the language used. It is expected that the Oral Language Modifier will be used at the request of the candidate.

Awarding bodies may consider this adjustment where the candidate has received such support during her/his learning. The awarding body may require evidence that the deaf candidate's level of oracy is significantly higher than their level of literacy.

Presenting questions in modified spoken language instead of in writing is appropriate where candidates are not required to read in order to satisfy the assessment criteria, i.e. where reading is not the competence being assessed.

It should be noted that this reasonable adjustment is not included in the JCQ or FAB guides. However, Signature considers the use of the Oral Language Modifier when assessing deaf candidates whose preferred language is English, to be equivalent to the use of a BSL/English Interpreter when assessing Deaf candidates whose preferred language is BSL, and should be allowed in similar circumstances and under similar conditions.

The process

Unlike a Reader, the Oral Language Modifier can modify language and does not just read aloud, verbatim. The Oral Language Modifier goes through the rubric and can alter or modify the carrier language in written questions especially where they know the candidate has specific difficulties with written language and may be confused (see C2). This support can be provided in response to a request from the candidate or at the instigation of the Oral Language Modifier.

Oral language modification involves rephrasing the carrier language, changing the word order and substituting different words. The Oral Language Modifier does not give the meaning to the technical terms.

Manually coded English

Where it has been agreed that the question can be communicated using manually coded English i.e. fingerspelling, Cued Speech or SSE, awarding bodies may allow this

¹⁰ There are a number of relevant English qualifications at this level, including A level English Language and Key Skills. English standards may be assumed for those with teaching qualifications.

to be done by an Oral Language Modifier, provided they have the skills to do so. This is not an interpretation. An Oral Language Modifier is not a translator or interpreter.

Quality assurance

There are a number of quality assurance measures which awarding bodies might wish to consider when agreeing to this reasonable adjustment. Where an Oral Language Modifier has been used:

- clear instructions should be issued as to what language can or cannot be modified;
- the awarding body may 'mark up' the paper in advance, indicating what language can or cannot be modified;
- it could be noted on the question paper, indicating what rephrasing has taken place and this could be returned with the answer sheet or book;
- the language used could be recorded on audiotape (or video recording where some visual-manual support used to accompany spoken language) and this record submitted to the awarding body;
- the Oral Language Modifier signs confirmation of having followed the instructions provided by the awarding body.

E4 BSL/English Interpreter

Role

This guidance like the FAB guide, uses the term 'BSL/English Interpreter' to indicate a role which is required when the language in which the assessment has been written is English and the preferred language of the candidate is BSL. The role of the BSL/English Interpreter is to render the meaning of the source language (spoken, written English or BSL) in the target language (BSL, spoken or written English).

The term 'BSL Communicator' is used by some awarding bodies to refer to the 'signer' or the person who 'interprets' written questions into BSL and answers presented in BSL into spoken English. However a 'BSL Communicator' is not the same as a 'BSL/English Interpreter'. They may have received no training in interpreting or translation between BSL and English. In some contexts the term 'BSL Communicator' is used to describe a monolingual BSL user (usually a Deaf person) who provides support in BSL and not English.

When interpreting assessments using a written paper, the BSL/English Interpreter may interpret the following items from written English into BSL, according to the assessment criteria:

- The rubric.
- The instructions.
- The carrier language in questions.
- The technical language in questions.

The interpreter may also provide a translation of the candidate's BSL responses to a paper written in English, into written English.

In addition to working 'live' and taking part in the assessment, the BSL/English Interpreter or Translator may also be used to provide a BSL version of the written paper. This type of translation is likely to be best done by a Deaf person who is a native user of BSL and bilingual in BSL and written English (see reasonable adjustment C1b).

Specification

Some awarding bodies may provide the centre with a specification for the person allowed to interpret assessment material into BSL and BSL responses into English. If an access facilitator is not a qualified BSL/English Interpreter, the minimum acceptable provision is as follows. The awarding body should seek evidence from the centre that the access facilitator can meet the following specification:

- Has achieved and can demonstrate a minimum standard of Level 3 in BSL and in English¹¹.
- Has some knowledge of interpreting and translation.
- Is known to the candidate.
- Is familiar with the subject and the course leading to the assessment.
- Is familiar with the assessment arrangements.

Signature recommends that awarding bodies make BSL versions of exam papers available in video, CD-ROM or DVD format. BSL papers could be commissioned from a central source where translators provide this service across a range of awarding bodies and to the same standard. Signature would be in a position to provide this resource were this to be requested by awarding bodies and centres. Other providers may be available.

Justification

Where BSL is the primary means of communication for a Deaf candidate, a BSL/English Interpreter may be used to sign the questions or part questions where the candidate is undertaking written assessments. This reasonable adjustment can be used instead of a BSL paper (C1b) and in addition to a modified written paper (C1a). An interpretation is a change from one language to another. The interpretation should not explain or indicate the meaning of technical words where the candidate's understanding of these words is inherent to the purpose of the question.

Where BSL is the preferred language of the candidate, a BSL/English interpretation may be allowed by the awarding body, subject to the assessment criteria. For example:

- Where reading, speaking or listening are the competences being assessed, BSL may only be used for the rubric and instructions.
- Where the candidate's ability to read is not being assessed, the question or instruction (or parts of it) can be interpreted.
- Where the candidate is not required to read the carrier language, this can be interpreted.
- Where the candidate is being assessed on her/his understanding of the carrier language as written, it cannot be interpreted.
- Where the candidate is being assessed on her/his knowledge of subject-specific or technical English language, this cannot be interpreted.
- Where the candidate is being assessed on their understanding of concepts and not English terms, these can be interpreted.

The process

Awarding bodies should ensure that centres can provide the assessment material to the BSL/English Interpreter in advance of the assessment in order to prepare. The awarding body should advise how long before the assessment the interpreter can have access to the assessment material (see A3).

¹¹ There are a number of relevant English qualifications at this level, including A level English Language and Key Skills.

- Technical terms

It is recommended that awarding bodies indicate on the examination paper which items are not to be interpreted because they are technical words or phrases which form part of the assessment. If there are items in the written English which candidates must recognise from the English without an interpretation into BSL, these items should be presented through fingerspelling or in the written form. This should be made clear in the instructions.

Although fingerspelling would appear to be the only acceptable option available, as this will spell on the hands the same letters as are on the page, it will not really make a difference to the candidate's access. The candidate will either know the English word (written or fingerspelt) or not.

- Concepts

If the assessment is of knowledge of the concept and not of the English word which represents it, then a sign interpretation may be used, provided the sign used for the concept being assessed does not in itself give a clue to meaning which is not available for those relying on the spoken or written word. As BSL is a visual-gestural language there are many signs which are iconic in their visual representation.

Many technical items in English will have sign language equivalents which have been used in their teaching. There has been some discussion as to whether there should be standardised signs for technical language assessments which represent the concepts without giving unacceptable clues to meaning. Currently there are many curriculum concepts for which standard signs do not exist and there is a risk that the interpretation may indicate the meaning of a test item in a way which is not appropriate for the assessment. Therefore, awarding bodies should ensure that appropriate instructions are given to interpreters. If a standard sign does not exist or is not appropriate, this should be noted on the question paper and returned with the answer paper. Amended versions of questions should be shown on the assessment material.

- Literature

English literature as with any language studied in its written form, can be accessed by BSL-users. The candidate may have learnt to read using BSL. They may have studied English through the medium of BSL. However, as the exams are assessing the ability to read and write English, it is probably appropriate to say that only the rubric, instructions and questions can be interpreted into BSL.

Texts, materials, etc of English language and literature cannot be interpreted into BSL where the assessment is of the candidate's reading. Awarding bodies should be aware that whilst it may be appropriate to interpret exam questions into BSL, there would be practical problems for candidates in providing their responses to the questions if all quotations from text have to be in written English. In deciding whether to allow responses in BSL, the ability of the candidate to manage such responses should be taken into account.

- Responses

Where the candidate's ability to write is not being assessed, the response can be interpreted from BSL into English. Writing down in English what a candidate is signing in BSL is known as translating (see D1) and transcribing (see E5). The candidate's responses in BSL can be recorded on video and translated into written English (with or without interpretation from BSL into spoken English).

Quality assurance

There are a number of quality assurance measures which awarding bodies might wish to consider when agreeing to this reasonable adjustment. Where the use of a BSL/English Interpreter has been agreed:

- clear instructions should be issued as to what language can or cannot be interpreted;
- the awarding body may 'mark up' the paper in advance indicating what language can or cannot be interpreted;
- it could be noted on the question paper, indicating what interpretation has taken place and this could be returned with the answer sheet or book;
- the language used could be recorded on videotape and this record submitted to the awarding body;
- the BSL/English Interpreter signs confirmation of having followed the instructions provided by the awarding body.

E5 Transcriber

Role

The role of the Transcriber is to produce a written or word processed transcript, either to accompany the candidate's own attempts at writing, or as a translation of the Deaf candidate's BSL response, or as a record of the candidate's spoken response (depending on the assessment criteria). The transcript is produced after the assessment and without the candidate being present.

Justification

In certain situations, it is appropriate for a transcript to be produced and submitted as evidence for the assessment. Where a candidate's difficulties are not so significant as to require a Scribe, but the writing is still illegible, a transcript can be made. A Transcriber may be needed where the candidate is unable to use a computer or to dictate responses. Transcribing and word processing are not allowed where writing by hand is the competence.

Transcribers can also be used where the Deaf candidate responds in BSL and where what is produced for the examiner is a translation from BSL into written English. A BSL/English Interpreter will be needed to interpret from the candidate's BSL, either into spoken English and then transcribed or to produce the transcription themselves as a record of the translation from BSL to written English.

The process

The transcription would normally be a word for word copy of what the candidate has written without words being added or removed. In language exams, any errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar must not be corrected. In other exams, spelling can be corrected for non-technical words but this should be shown on the transcript.

The Transcriber will produce a transcript to assist the examiner in the assessment of the candidate's work. The examiner assesses the candidate's work and refers to the transcript where it is not possible to decipher what the candidate has written.

Where the transcript is of the candidate's responses produced in BSL and recorded on videotape, the examiner may refer solely to the transcript. Awarding bodies should be aware that transcribing from videotapes is a difficult, costly and time consuming process which makes demands on centres.

Specification

As in the case of reasonable adjustment E4, when transcribing for a BSL-user, the centre should ensure that the person who is asked to undertake this role:

- has an appropriate qualification in BSL;
- is competent in English;
- is familiar with the theory and practice of translation;
- has a good working knowledge of the content of the assessment.

Some awarding bodies may provide the centre with a specification for the person allowed to translate and transcribe BSL responses into written English.

E6 Lipspeakers, Note-takers, Speech to Text Reporters, Cued Speech Transliterators

Roles, justification and processes

Awarding bodies may wish to consider the use of Lipspeakers, Note-takers, STTRs, Cued Speech Transliterators as access facilitators for D/deaf candidates. These are the professional roles of Communication Professionals who facilitate access and communication between hearing people and deaf people (particularly adults) who are English, Welsh or Irish first language users.

Some language professionals use speech-based systems.

- The Lipspeaker conveys a speaker's message without using her/his voice. They normally work one-to-one with a deaf person. They produce the shape of the words with exceptional clarity, reproduce the rhythm and phrasing of natural speech and repeat the stress used by the speaker to enable the message to be passed to the deaf person. Facial expression, natural gesture and fingerspelling (if the deaf person requests it) are also used to aid understanding.
- The Cued Speech Transliterator is an experienced user of Cued Speech who cues the speech of a third person (using clear lip-patterns silently) at the rate of normal speech. It enables a deaf user to see a full visual representation of spoken language sound-for-sound in any situation including the classroom and examinations.

Other Communication Professionals use text-based systems.

- The Manual Note-taker works with deaf students in education. They take handwritten notes, providing a précis of what is said rather than a verbatim record, that the deaf person can use. A deaf person using a Lipspeaker or BSL/English Interpreter to access communication may not be able to take notes at the same time and would then also need a Manual Note-taker. In assessment situations, the Note-taker may be used to record in writing what is being said but as this will be a précis it is unlikely to be a complete enough record for language assessments.
- The Electronic Note-taker uses a QWERTY computer keyboard and types a condensed version of a speaker's message, generally operating at about 60 words per minute. This appears on the screen of the computer for a D/deaf person to read. There are two systems currently in use, SpeedText and Stereotype. Both use two computers, one for the D/deaf person and one for the operator. The linked computers make it possible for the D/deaf person to type messages direct to the operator, who can relay any comments, questions or responses the deaf person

may have, or to edit the text as it appears on the screen. As with the Manual Note-taker, in assessment situations, the Electronic Note-taker may be used to record in writing what is being said but as this will be a condensed version, it is unlikely to be a complete enough record for language assessments.

- The Speech to Text Reporter (STTR) uses a system in which the speaker's message is keyed into a special keyboard. This is then processed by a computer, converted into English and can be viewed on the screen of the computer or projected onto a large screen. It provides verbatim access to spoken information. The main systems in use are Palantype and Stenograph. STTRs work with speech speeds beginning at a minimum of 180 words per minute (wpm) but most reporters are able to operate at speeds over 200 wpm with an accuracy level of 97% and above. It is rare for schools and colleges to have access to the services of STTRs, but where a candidate is allowed to have a complete written version of spoken information and where a prepared transcript is not available, the STTR's verbatim record is the most accurate and complete.

Specification

Ideally a qualified Lipspeaker, Cued Speech Transliterater, Note-taker or STTR should be used. However, as there is a shortage of such professionals in deaf education as a whole (it is not just an issue for assessment), it is likely that the centre will be using staff such as CSWs who may or may not be qualified Lipspeakers, Note-takers or STTRs, in an assessment capacity. If a qualified person is not available the minimum acceptable provision is as follows.

Signature recommends that when agreeing to a request for reasonable adjustments involving the use of these measures to facilitate access to spoken language, awarding bodies should seek evidence from the centre that the access facilitator can meet the following specification:

- Has achieved and can demonstrate a minimum standard of Level 3 in English¹².
- Has received training in lipspeaking or note-taking or speech to text reporting or Cued Speech transliteration.
- Has some knowledge of the theories underpinning these processes and strategies.
- Is known to the candidate.
- Is familiar with the subject and the course leading to the assessment.
- Is familiar with the assessment arrangements.

¹² There are a number of relevant English qualifications at this level, including A level English Language and Key Skills. English standards may be assumed for those with teaching qualifications.

APPENDIX

Summary of Reasonable Adjustments for D/deaf Candidates

Candidate language and modality descriptor	1. Written paper - literacy not assessed i) English paper interpreted into BSL ii) BSL paper	2. Written paper - literacy assessed	3. Oral examination or element of examination - not language	4. Oral examination or element of language examination	5. Practical examination with written instructions i) language not assessed ii) language assessed	Experts and access facilitators
A. Deaf candidate - BSL preferred language	<p>i) English paper.</p> <p>C1a) Modified paper.</p> <p>C2 E4 Interpretation into BSL (not technical terms).</p> <p>D1 E4 Responses in BSL interpreted and transcribed (E5) into English or marked in BSL. Technical terms given in English.</p> <p>A1 Extra time.</p> <p>A3 Early opening.</p> <p>ii) BSL paper.</p> <p>C1b) E4 BSL paper</p> <p>D1 Responses in BSL interpreted and transcribed (E5) into English or marked in BSL. Technical terms given in English by candidate.</p> <p>A1 Extra time.</p>	<p>C1a) Modified paper.</p> <p>C2 E4 Rubric and instructions interpreted into BSL.</p> <p>Questions read independently.</p> <p>Responses in written English.</p> <p>A1 Extra time.</p>	<p>C3c) E4 Spoken language interpreted into BSL.</p> <p>D3b) E4 Responses in BSL interpreted into spoken English or marked in BSL.</p>	<p>C3a) 'Listening' to a Live Speaker using fingerspelling of initial letters to complete words.</p>	<p>i) Language not assessed.</p> <p>C1a) Modified paper.</p> <p>C1b) E4 BSL paper.</p> <p>C2 E4 Interpretation into BSL (with or without technical terms according to assessment criteria).</p> <p>D1 E4 Responses in BSL interpreted into English (with or without technical terms according to assessment criteria), or marked in BSL.</p> <p>A1 Extra time.</p> <p>A3 Early opening (for preparation by interpreter).</p> <p>ii) Language assessed.</p> <p>C1a) Modified paper (English).</p> <p>C2 Rubric and instructions interpreted into BSL.</p> <p>Questions read independently.</p> <p>Responses in written English.</p> <p>A1 Extra time.</p>	<p>C1a) Modify written papers - approved written English language modifier.</p> <p>C2 Interpret written papers - E4 BSL/English Interpreter.</p> <p>C1b) Make BSL papers (videotape) - E4 BSL/English Translator or Interpreter.</p> <p>C3a) Deliver oral tests (language) - Live Speaker or audio tape and Live Speaker using fingerspelling.</p> <p>C3c) Deliver oral tests (not language) - E4 BSL/English Interpreter.</p> <p>D1 Interpret responses - E4 BSL/English Interpreter E5 Transcriber.</p>

Candidate language and modality descriptor	1. Written paper - literacy not assessed i) English paper interpreted into BSL ii) BSL paper	2. Written paper - literacy assessed	3. Oral examination or element of examination - not language	4. Oral examination or element of language examination	5. Practical examination with written instructions i) language not assessed ii) language assessed	Experts and access facilitators
B. Deaf candidate - English preferred language - aural/oral	<p>C1a) Modified paper.</p> <p>C2, E1, E3 Reader or Oral Language Modifier. Latter modifies language and delivers in spoken modality.</p> <p>D2 Responses in spoken English.</p> <p>A3 Early opening for preparation by Reader or Oral Language Modifier.</p> <p>A1 Extra time.</p>	<p>C1a) Modified paper.</p> <p>E1 Rubric and instructions read aloud (Reader) or E3 in modified spoken language (Oral Language Modifier).</p> <p>Questions read independently.</p> <p>Responses in written English.</p>	<p>C3b) Spoken language presented via Live Speaker.</p> <p>Tapescript provided.</p> <p>Language can be modified.</p> <p>E3 Oral Language Modifier</p> <p>Responses in spoken English.</p> <p>Audio tape and E6 Lipspeaker.</p> <p>D3b) E6 Lipspeaker.</p>	<p>C3a) Spoken language presented by Live Speaker.</p> <p>Tapescript provided.</p> <p>E6 Lipspeaker.</p> <p>D3a) E6 Lipspeaker.</p>	<p>i) Language not assessed.</p> <p>C1a) Modified paper.</p> <p>E1 Reader or E3 Oral Language Modifier.</p> <p>D2 Responses in spoken English or written English.</p> <p>A3 Early opening for preparation by Reader or Oral Language Modifier.</p> <p>ii) Language assessed.</p> <p>C1a. Modified paper. Rubric and instructions read aloud (E1) or in modified spoken language (E3).</p> <p>Questions read independently.</p> <p>Responses in written English.</p>	<p>C1a) Modify written papers - approved written English language modifier.</p> <p>C2 Read aloud papers - E1 Reader.</p> <p>C2 Modify written via spoken - E3 Oral Language Modifier.</p> <p>C3a) C3b) Present oral tests.</p> <p>Live Speaker - E6 Lipspeaker</p>
C. Deaf candidate - English preferred language - oral plus written support	<p>C1a) Modified paper.</p> <p>Responses in written English.</p> <p>A1 Extra time.</p>	<p>C1a) Modified paper.</p> <p>Questions read independently.</p> <p>Responses in written English.</p>	<p>C3b) Tapescript provided.</p> <p>Audiotape and E6 STTR or Electronic Note-taker.</p> <p>D2 Responses in spoken English and writing.</p>	<p>C3a) Tapescript provided.</p>	<p>i) Language not assessed.</p> <p>C1a) Modified written paper.</p> <p>ii) Language assessed.</p> <p>Questions read independently.</p> <p>Responses in written English.</p>	<p>C1a) Modify written papers - approved written English language modifier.</p> <p>C3b) Provide verbatim transcript.</p> <p>E6 - STTR or Electronic Note-taker.</p>

Candidate language and modality descriptor	1. Written paper - literacy not assessed i) English paper interpreted into BSL ii) BSL paper	2. Written paper - literacy assessed	3. Oral examination or element of examination - not language	4. Oral examination or element of language examination	5. Practical examination with written instructions i) language not assessed ii) language assessed	Experts and access facilitators
D. Deaf candidate - English preferred language - aural/oral plus manually coded English support	<p>C1a) Modified paper.</p> <p>C2 E1 Reader or E3 Oral Language Modifier.</p> <p>Latter modifies language further and delivers in manually coded English.</p> <p>D2 Responses in manually coded English.</p> <p>A3 Early opening for preparation.</p> <p>A1 Extra time.</p>	<p>C1a) Modified paper.</p> <p>Rubric and instructions read aloud using manually coded English.</p> <p>E3 Oral Language Modifier.</p> <p>Questions read independently.</p> <p>Responses in written English.</p>	<p>C3b) Spoken language presented via Live Speaker, E3 Oral Language Modifier. Tapescript provided.</p> <p>Language can be modified using manually coded English.</p> <p>D3b) Responses in manually coded English.</p>	<p>C3a) Spoken language presented by Live Speaker using fingerspelling or E6 Cued Speech.</p> <p>Tapescript provided.</p>	<p>i) C1a) Modified paper.</p> <p>E1 Reader or E3 Oral language modifier. Latter modifies language further and delivers in manually coded English.</p> <p>Responses in manually coded English.</p> <p>Early opening for preparation.</p> <p>ii) C1a) Modified paper.</p> <p>Rubric and instructions read aloud or in manually coded English.</p> <p>Questions read independently.</p> <p>Responses in written English.</p>	<p>C1a) Modify written papers - approved written English language modifier.</p> <p>C2 Present orally.</p> <p>E1 Reader.</p> <p>E3 Oral Language Modifier using manually coded English.</p> <p>C3a) Live Speaker and E3 Oral Language Modifier using manually coded English.</p> <p>E6 - Cued Speech Transliterator.</p>