

The use of linguistic support in the assessment of writing in National Qualifications in English

The aim of SQA's Assessment Arrangements policy is to make adjustments for disabled candidates when they are placed at a substantial disadvantage in relation to the published assessment arrangements.

Candidates, who are unable to present written responses in English because of a particular disability and who need to use some form of linguistic support (ICT, including assistive technologies, and scribes) on an ongoing basis, may have such support in all of the assessment components in English including those assessing writing.

The key purpose or the rationale of the assessment objective of writing in National Qualifications in English is about the candidate's ability to compose a piece of writing which is appropriate for purpose and audience. For example in Standard Grade English, the Grade Related Criteria state that the purpose of the Writing task is to allow candidates to demonstrate that they can:

- ◆ convey information, selecting and highlighting what is most significant
- ◆ marshal ideas and evidence in support of an argument; these ideas have depth and some complexity; he or she is capable of objectivity, generalisation and evaluation
- ◆ give a succinct account of a personal experience: the writing has insight and self-awareness, express personal feelings and reactions sensitively
- ◆ display some skill in using the conventions of a chosen literary form, and in manipulating language to achieve particular effects.

In Intermediate and Higher Courses, pupils are required to compose a piece of writing which must be expressive or creative or a report and must show all of the following:

- ◆ **Content** is relevant and appropriate for purpose and audience, reveals depth and complexity of thought and sustained development.
- ◆ **Structure**, is effective and appropriate for purpose, audience and genre; content is sequenced and organised in ways which assist impact.
- ◆ **Expression**, capable use of techniques relevant to the genre and effective choice of words and sentence structures sustain a style and tone which clearly communicate a point of view/stance consistent with purpose and audience.
- ◆ **Technical Accuracy** - spelling, grammar and punctuation are consistently accurate.

The use of assistive technologies or a scribe enables a disabled candidate, who is unable to write, to produce a piece of writing which can be assessed against the assessment criteria outlined above. Such support might mean that the spelling and punctuation components of the Technical Accuracy criterion are not being demonstrated by the disabled candidate.

This is deemed to be a reasonable adjustment to make for the disabled candidate to allow them access to the assessment and is necessary to remove the significant disadvantage that the disabled candidate is under. SQA is satisfied that the level and rigor of the assessment is maintained and the award is not compromised.