Assessment Arrangements Explained: Information for centres

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Contents

Introduction

This document contains information for teachers and lecturers on what to do when considering the provision of assessment arrangements for learners who have an identified difficulty, whether this be a physical (including medical or sensory), behavioural or mental health, or learning difficulty. It details the principles that apply when determining a learner's need for an assessment arrangement, and how and when to request an assessment arrangement. It also describes some examples of assessment arrangements that can be provided in SQA assessments.

The purpose of assessment arrangements is to provide disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs with an equal opportunity to **demonstrate their attainment** in an assessment. In doing so, we are providing an assessment environment that allows them to show the skills, knowledge and understanding they have achieved, without compromising the integrity of the assessment. Learners are individual people with a diverse range of needs, and it is important that you consider the individual assessment needs of your learners when considering the most appropriate assessment arrangements.

To determine the assessment arrangements that a learner may need, we ask you to begin by identifying the difficulties the learner faces when accessing coursework and assessments. You should hold evidence of the learner's identified difficulty and how this impacts on teaching and learning. It is important to stress that we do not require evidence of a diagnosis of a disability or additional support need to support a request for assessment arrangements. Further information on assessment arrangements, including our guidance on quality assurance requirements, is available on our website.

For example:

♦ a learner who is profoundly deaf, and who uses sign language such as BSL may need sign language support to access an assessment task
♦ a learner experiencing mental health difficulties, who is very lethargic first thing in the morning due to medication, may need the start time of an assessment adjusted
♦ a neurodivergent learner with dyslexia who experiences difficulties with processing written text, may need a text reader and may also need extra time to complete an assessment
♦ a candidate with who has persistent difficulties with concentrating such as ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), may need to undertake an exam in a separate room, or in a room with only a small number of learners.

For learners who are disabled, as defined under the provisions of the Equality Act (2010)[1], assessment arrangements such as those listed above might be the 'reasonable adjustment' required to compensate for a substantial disadvantage, but there may be other unique adjustments that need to be considered to meet their individual needs. However, it is important to recognise that some adjustments may not be possible for

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[1] The Equality Act (2010) requires that SQA make reasonable adjustments where a learner who is disabled within the meaning of the Act would be at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to a learner who is not disabled.

some qualifications. It is not possible to make an adjustment to the **standard** of the qualification where to do so would mean that it did not provide a reliable indication of the learner's knowledge, skills and understanding.

Note: Throughout this document, we refer to disabled learners in line with the Equality Act (2010) which gives SQA the power to make reasonable adjustments for disabled learners. However, this document also recognises the duties of centres and local authorities to provide assessment arrangements for learners with additional support needs under the [Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act (2009)](#) [2].

In all cases, we do not require learners to have a confirmed diagnosis of a disability for an assessment arrangement to be put in place. However, there must be an identified difficulty. It is the individual learner's assessment needs that must be the basis for the provision of an assessment arrangement. This means that you have a critical role in ensuring that the process of providing assessment arrangements is fair and operates with integrity.

To this end, we require that you have effective internal quality assurance systems and procedures in place to identify and verify learners' need for assessment arrangements. Your internal quality assurance system will be subject to our quality assurance procedures as detailed in the *Quality Assurance of Assessment Arrangements*: *Information for Centres* (publication code FA7266), which is available on [our website](#).

2The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act (2004), as amended, provides the legal framework underpinning the system for supporting children and young people in their school education. It is important to remember that the Act automatically deems that all looked after children and young people have additional support needs unless it is determined that they do not. It is therefore important that you consider whether a learner who is looked after and has been identified as having additional support needs also has an identified physical (including medical or sensory), behavioural, mental health or learning difficulty and requires an assessment arrangement.

Access to assessment: the principles

As the national awarding body for Scotland, we have a responsibility to ensure that assessment leading to certification is rigorous and fair for **all** learners, and that it allows learners to demonstrate the skills, knowledge and understanding required for the qualification. This is why it is important that assessment arrangements are only provided to those learners identified as having a physical (including medical or sensory), behavioural, mental health or learning difficulty that prevents them from accessing an assessment and demonstrating their attainment.

The four key principles that underpin our model for the provision of assessment arrangements focus on the need to remove barriers for disabled learners to provide them with an equal opportunity to access their assessments.

Principle 1: Assessment arrangements are intended to enable learners to demonstrate their attainment, not to compensate for lack of attainment

Assessment arrangements must be considered in the context of the distinction between a learner's attainment and that of their ability to demonstrate their attainment under assessment conditions. They are agreed before an assessment takes place and allow disabled learners to *access* the assessment and show the skills, knowledge and understanding they have acquired.

For example, a learner may have an identified reading difficulty and may require text-reading software to support decoding written text to access a History assessment and show their skills, knowledge and understanding. Assessment arrangements are not designed to compensate for a candidate who has not acquired the key skills, competence, knowledge and understanding of the qualification concerned.

For example, where a candidate has not been physically able to develop the practical skills in a subject such as Practical Metalwork or where a candidate has not been able to develop any reading skills in a subject such as ESOL, assessment arrangements cannot be put in place to compensate for this.

Principle 2: Assessment arrangement must not compromise the integrity of the qualification

Assessment arrangements must be considered in the context of the assessment standards or competence standards for each qualification. Assessment arrangements must not compromise these standards or undermine the integrity of the assessment or the credibility of the award. All relevant stakeholders, including learners, must have confidence that the qualification awarded to a learner provides a reliable indication of their knowledge, skills, understanding and competence.

For example, it is not possible for a candidate to use a human reader in a reading assessment of the National Literacy Unit, where independent reading skills are being explicitly assessed. The provision of a human reader would undermine the fundamental assessment objectives of the reading assessment in the National Literacy Unit and learners would not be able to demonstrate the required level of skill.

Principle 3: Assessment arrangements must be tailored to meet a learner's individual needs

Assessment arrangements must be considered in the context of the individual learner's assessment needs in each subject area.

As part of the overall support offered to them, learners should have an assessment arrangement plan, considered subject by subject, with no assumption that the same kind or level of support will be required in every case. Subjects and their methods of assessment may vary, leading to different demands of the learners. This is why you must consider the individual learner's need for assessment arrangements on a subject-by-subject basis and, in collaboration with the subject specialist, make a judgement about the difficulties the learner will experience in the specific assessment.

This will require due consideration of the learner's needs in the subject concerned and the extent to which the published conditions of assessment may prevent the learner from accessing the assessment to demonstrate their attainment.

For example, a learner with significant writing difficulties might not be at any disadvantage in the multiple-choice question paper in the National 5 Chemistry exam. However, the same learner might have significant difficulties producing an extended written essay in the National 5 History exam.

Principle 4: Assessment arrangements should reflect, as far as possible, the learner's usual way of learning and producing work

Assessment arrangements must be considered in the context of ongoing support the learner needs to access teaching and learning. There should be continuity between the learner's need for support in learning and need for support in assessment. Assessment arrangements that are put in place should, where possible, reflect the ongoing support given to the learner in a learning environment.

For example, if a candidate uses a ICT with a text reader software regularly in class to overcome specific reading difficulties, this would most likely be the assessment arrangement provided in assessments.

However, there may be situations where a learner's particular type of support provided in the learning environment is not acceptable in an assessment.

For example, a learner who has a language and communication difficulty, and who normally has someone in class explaining words and terms, would not be allowed such support in the external exam.

For this reason, it is very important that learners are aware of, and have practice in, working in a way that reflects what could be permitted as support in the assessment situation.

Assessment arrangements: putting the principles into practice

Identify the possible assessment needs of a learner

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Determine appropriate assessment arrangements

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Verify assessment arrangements

⬇

Request assessment arrangements

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Prepare for delivery of assessment arrangements

Identifying the possible assessment needs of a learner

1   Assessment arrangements are only for learners identified as having a physical (including medical or sensory), behavioural, mental health or learning difficulty.

2   Information on the learner's needs and strategies are often shared by Support for Learning to aid teaching and learning. Knowing this is key to identifying any difficulties the learner may or may not have in accessing assessments.

3   A learner's needs and difficulty accessing an assessment is often identified before they begin study. It may also become apparent during study.

Determining the appropriate assessment arrangement

4 We rely on centres identifying and requesting appropriate assessment arrangements. The support learners need should be considered subject-by-subject. Methods of assessment may vary, meaning learners may have different requirements in different subjects at different levels.

5 Assessment arrangements must not compromise the integrity of the assessment. They focus on removing barriers in assessments, while still assessing the same skills and competences as all other learners.

6 Assessment arrangement decisions should reflect, as far as possible, the learner's way of learning and producing work during their course of study.

Verifying assessment arrangements

7 The fact that a learner has a disability or additional support need does not guarantee an assessment arrangement. You should have evidence for every assessment arrangement request you make.

8 Your internal quality assurance system must include processes for identifying the learner's need and verifying the need for an assessment arrangement.

9 Requests must be agreed by a senior manager at your centre's verification meeting before submission.

10 Learners (and parents/carers must give consent, if the learner is under the age of 16) for all assessment arrangement requests. Learners and their parents/carers need to know that you will share their information with us.

Requesting assessment arrangements

11 Those involved in submitting AAR requests should be familiar with the updated *Assessment Arrangement Requests System: A guide for centres* (BA8137). This can be found on SQA's secure website under NQ, then Assessment Arrangements.

12 Assessment Arrangements are requested through the Assessment Arrangements Request System (AAR). This is developed and run by SQA, and is a record of all assessment arrangements submitted to us for external national exams.

13 Requests for learners who have English as an additional language (EAL) and those without an additional support need using ICT should not be submitted via AAR. Requests should be made on the relevant spreadsheets available from SQA's secure website under NQ, then Assessment Arrangements.

14 Assessment arrangement requests should be submitted by the deadlines published in the Key Dates document — you can find this in SQA Connect.

Preparing for delivery of assessment arrangements

15 You should plan and make the necessary arrangements for providing the requested assessment arrangements. You will need to make sure that:

— The learner knows and understands how the arrangement will work.
— Any person supporting a learner understands their role.
— Separate or individual accommodation is suitable.
— You have considered the need for extra invigilation.
— Assessments follow the learner's usual way of working ie ICT, reader, prompter.

Assessment arrangements: contacting SQA

This section provides details of how and when to contact us in relation to assessment arrangements, and describes some examples of assessment arrangements that can be provided in our assessments. This is not an exhaustive, nor prescriptive, list. Learners who share a similar difficulty may have different needs when accessing teaching and learning, and assessments. It is for this reason that we ask you to work from the individual learner's needs in identifying the most appropriate assessment arrangement, rather than from a fixed list of options. Again, where particular examples of difficulties/disabilities are used, these are just examples and not a list of all eventualities.

Each learner's assessment needs must also be considered in relation to the particular subject and assessment being undertaken. Subjects and their methods of assessment may vary, leading to different demands of the learner. You must consider the learner's need for assessment arrangements on a subject-by-subject basis.

The inherent flexibility of some internal assessments will allow many learners to achieve the standard for the qualification without an assessment arrangement. For example, in many internal assessments, learners can demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding in a variety of ways, using a range of assessment methods.

We would expect that the first discussion between centre staff about the provision of assessment arrangements for learners is held at the start of the academic year. You may wish to hold several meetings throughout the academic session to ensure there is sufficient opportunity for staff to discuss the provision of assessment arrangements and any changes, if required, with the learner before they undertake an assessment.

If you have any concerns or queries about the suitability of an assessment arrangement, or whether this would be permitted, you should contact us at the earliest opportunity. We will need time to consider each individual request and to discuss them with you before they are provided to the learner.

When to contact SQA

Internal assessments

You do not need to submit a request to us for assessment arrangements used in an internal assessment. You can provide the assessment arrangement as long as the learner's need has been appropriately verified and it does not compromise the assessment/competence standards. However, if you are in any doubt about whether a learner is allowed a particular assessment arrangement, or whether it compromises assessment/competence standards, you must first discuss this with your SQA co-ordinator. Your SQA co-ordinator should contact us as soon as possible, and before the learner undertakes the assessment. You should submit full details of the learner's difficulty in accessing the assessment, the proposed assessment arrangement, and the specific assessment being undertaken, to the Assessment Arrangements Team by e-mailing aarequests@sqa.org.uk.

Practical Performance assessments

Any assessment arrangements required for disabled learners in practical Performance components such as Music, Dance, Drama and Modern Language Performance: Talking assessments must be agreed in advance with us. You should refer to Key Dates section in *Delivering National Qualifications: Guide for SQA Co-ordinators* (available on SQA Connect) for the deadlines by which you must submit assessment arrangement requests.

It is not the Visiting Examiner's responsibility to make decisions on the appropriateness of assessment arrangements for individual candidates. You must contact the Assessment Arrangements Team (aarequests@sqa.org.uk) with details of the candidate and the proposed assessment arrangement as soon as possible. In advance of their scheduled visit to your centre, we need to inform Visiting Examiners of any assessment arrangements that have been agreed for disabled learners in practical Performance components for Dance, Drama, Modern Languages and Music.

External assessments

You must submit all assessment arrangements requests for external assessments using the Assessment Arrangements Request (AAR) software. In submitting these requests to us, it is understood that these arrangements are used throughout teaching and learning and in any internal assessments for these courses. Each year, in October, access details and a link to the AAR user guide will be e-mailed to your SQA co-ordinator. You must read the AAR user guide in conjunction with this guidance. Please contact the Assessment Arrangements Team (aarequests@sqa.org.uk) if you require more information.

If you are in any doubt as to whether a particular assessment arrangement would be acceptable for a learner in the external exam or in any externally assessed coursework, you must contact us for advice as soon as possible, and, where possible, before the learner starts the course.

Requests for assessment arrangements in the external exam must be submitted by the published deadline dates. This is published in the 'Key dates' section of *Delivering National Qualifications: Guide for SQA Co-ordinators* (which is available on SQA Connect). This is particularly important for adapted question paper requests — these are individually created according to each individual learner's needs.

It is essential that you submit your requests as early as possible, and that the modification required is correctly identified. It is not necessary to wait until candidates have sat prelim or formal timed assessments to submit adapted paper requests on the AAR system; the adapted papers you request should reflect what the candidate uses in a teaching and learning setting. We encourage you to send samples of modified classroom materials with the learner's details to the Assessment Arrangements Team. This will allow us to ensure that any modifications requested for external assessment materials match what the candidate uses.

Note: We can also provide adapted versions of coursework assessment tasks for Administration and IT on request. Requests for these must be submitted to SQA by e-mail to aarequests@sqa.org.uk by December each year, as detailed in the 'Key dates' section of *Delivering National Qualifications: Guide for SQA Co-ordinators*. **Please do not request these adaptations through the AAR system.**

The guidance in the next section ('Examples of assessment arrangements') can be shared with your learners or, where appropriate, invigilators and anyone involved in the provision of assessment arrangements (for example, scribes, readers, prompters, etc).

For the external exam, it is very important that you discuss the assessment arrangements being provided for a learner with your chief invigilator before the learner undertakes the assessment. Before the start of the exam timetable, the chief invigilator must be provided with a copy of the AAR system report showing which assessment arrangements each learner has in place for each exam.

In all cases, it is essential that your learners are well prepared for, and have had practice in using, the assessment arrangement being provided before an external assessment. For example, a learner who is provided with an enlarged or modified question paper in an external exam should be familiar and be comfortable with using this.

In applying for assessment arrangements, you **must** ensure that the learner (and the parent/carer or guardian if the learner is under the age of 16) agrees to the types of arrangements provided in class and in all assessments. You must also review the evidence collated about a learner's needs and ensure that the assessment arrangements provided in one academic year are still appropriate for the candidate in the next session.

It is important to clarify that it is not necessary to gather evidence with and without support each year. You do not need to verify the reason a disabled learner and/or those with additional support needs requires assessment arrangements each academic year. However, with changes to the level of demand in assessments with each level of National Qualifications, it is important that you confirm whether the assessment arrangements provided in a previous academic year are still appropriate, and if there are any changes to this provision.

For examples of good practice and guidance on evidence requirements, please refer to our quality assurance guidance for schools and colleges, which is available on our website

Examples of assessment arrangements

Adapted question papers

The following types of adapted question papers can be requested from SQA using the Assessment Arrangements Request (AAR) system. Please also refer to *Requesting Adapted Question Papers and Artwork: Guidance for Centres* (publication code BB 7579) which can be found on our website and the AAR system user guide which can be found on SQA secure (under NQ, then Assessment Arrangements).

♦ Digital question paper — this is the original question paper supplied as a PDF for on-screen display and completion. You must read the guidance on digital question papers on the 'Digital Question Papers' section of our website.

♦ Question paper printed on one of SQA's suite of seven specified colours. Examples of the seven specified colours are available in *Requesting Adapted Question Papers and Artwork: Guidance for Centres* (publication code BB 7579) which can be found on our website. SQA can also provide samples of the seven colours available— e-mail aarequests@sqa.org.uk.

♦ Standard enlarged print question paper — this is the original question paper enlarged to 18pt, in standard SQA font, on A3 white paper

♦ Adapted enlarged print question paper —the question paper can be produced in one of the following font sizes: 14pt; 18pt; 24pt; 36pt and 48pt; and/or in one of the following font styles: SQA Standard; Arial; or Comic Sans. In addition, and where appropriate, visual content is proportionately enlarged unless otherwise requested.

♦ Modified question paper — graphical content (for example graphs and diagrams) in the question paper can be simplified or removed. This can include removing extraneous grid lines from graphs, greyscaling or shading removed from diagrams, or providing a question paper with colour indicating arrows where colour content is key to a particular question (ie Art and Design, Design and Manufacture, Graphic Communication, Media and Higher Fashion and Textile Technology).

♦ Optionality — the question paper can be reduced in size to only include questions for the contexts the learner has studied. This can be requested for: History; Modern Studies; and Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies. While optionality can also be requested for English for learners with an enlarged or braille question paper, this reduces the choice of questions available to the learner. In these instances, you must have consent from the learner (and their parent/carer where required) to request this type of adaptation.

♦ Braille question paper — this is the question paper produced in braille with visual content appropriately modified. It is also possible to request a print copy of a braille question paper in which text is presented in English with visual content appropriately simplified or removed.

♦ Raised diagrams — these are tactile diagrams supplied with braille question papers. They can also be supplied with a modified large print paper on request.

♦ Question paper with double line spacing — this is the question paper produced with double spacing between lines of text. Please remember that this increased line spacing will significantly increase the total number of pages in the question paper.

You must ensure that your learners are familiar with the format of the adapted or digital question paper being requested from SQA. We encourage you to send samples of

modified classroom materials you have produced along with the learner's details to the Assessment Arrangements Team to ensure that any modifications requested for the question paper matches what they use in class. Learners must have had appropriate opportunities to practise using the format that will be provided in the actual exam. Examples of adapted question papers and artwork are available in *Requesting Adapted Question Papers and Artwork: Guidance for Centres* (publication code BB 7579) which can be found on our website.

If your learner is unable to use any of the available options on the AAR system, under the appropriate adaptation you can select 'Other' to provide further details of what is required. The reason why they are unable to use any of these options should be added to the Additional Comments box. A member of our Assessment Arrangements Team will contact you directly to discuss your requirements.

Note: Where a candidate is unable to use any of the colours from our standard suite of coloured question papers, you will be asked to supply the coloured paper in the required paper size.

Note: SQA can also provide adapted versions of coursework assessment tasks for Administration and IT on request. These requests must be submitted to SQA by e-mail to aarequests@sqa.org.uk by December each year, as detailed in the 'Key dates' section of *Delivering National Qualifications: Guide for SQA Co-ordinators*. **Please do not request these adaptations through the AAR system.**

For internal assessments, you do not need to seek approval from SQA to produce adapted assessment materials, provided the adaptations made do not change the assessment standards or competence standards. If you are concerned that a particular adaptation may have changed the assessment standards, please contact our Assessment Arrangements Team for advice (aarequests@sqa.org.uk).

Assistance in listening assessments

Technological aids

Technological aids which provide better access to sound, such as radio aids for deaf learners, may be used in a listening assessment.

Extra time in the listening assessment in the external exam

Where a learner requires extra time for a listening assessment presented to them on CD, you can request a version of the 25% extra time CD with extended pauses using the CD requirements pro forma.

Live presentation of the Modern Language listening assessment in the external exam

Listening assessments for Modern Languages, which are normally presented to learners on CD, may be presented live to enable deaf learners to lip-read. Copies of the transcript for the listening assessment will be provided for the person delivering the live presentation. The live presentation should, where possible, be given by someone whose first language is the language being assessed.

The transcript can be made available to the person delivering the live presentation up to 60 minutes before the start of the exam. They should be allowed sufficient time in isolation to read through the transcript and hear the CD through. This is to enable them to match the speed and style of the recording. If required, an additional CD may be requested for this purpose. The transcript should then be read to the learner with appropriate pauses.

The contents of the listening transcript must not be communicated to any other party.

Example

Magda has a hearing impairment and lip-reads. Her school asks for a live presentation in the external assessment of listening. This is done by the teaching assistant, who is German.

Extra time

In National Qualifications that have timed external assessments, we recognise that some learners, due to their difficulty, may need extra time to complete these assessments. To ensure that the process of assessment is rigorous and fair as possible for all learners in timed assessments, we must ensure that extra time is only provided to address an identified disadvantage.

The arrangement of extra time should not be confused with supervised breaks or rest periods. There is more information about breaks in the section 'Supervised breaks or rest periods in a timed assessment'.

Only those learners who have been identified as having a particular disability and where there is appropriate evidence of their ongoing need for extra time are eligible. It is therefore important that you have the necessary evidence available to support the provision of extra time.

The amount of extra time required may vary according to the learner's individual needs. There must be appropriate evidence indicating:

♦ the impact of the learner's disability on their ability to complete tasks in a specified time.
♦ that a learner is normally given and uses extra time to complete other class learning activities, tasks and assessments.
♦ that a specific amount of extra time is appropriate.

Internal assessments

If a candidate is identified as requiring extra time in an internal assessment, you only need to seek approval from us for any assessments where the performance of a task in a specified time is an assessment requirement.

External assessments

The amount of extra time requested for the external exam through the (AAR) system should accurately reflect the learner's assessment needs. While it is recognised that you may not have absolute values for the amount of extra time needed, it is nevertheless important that you have evidence available to show that the learner needs extra time and evidence of how you have determined the amount they need.

For example, an extra time allowance (25%) for a learner with mild spelling difficulties who reads accurately and writes fluently, and where there is only evidence to support an extra time allowance of 10% to check over spelling and punctuation, could provide an unfair advantage over other learners.

Remember: Evidence that extra time is used when given in a timed assessment is not sufficient evidence on its own of the need for this arrangement. The evidence you hold of a learner's need for extra time should include information about:

♦ how the learner's difficulty impacts on teaching and learning in class,

- the learner's normal way of working in class (considered on a subject- by-subject basis), and
- confirmation that extra time is an appropriate support for the learner's assessment needs.

Too much extra time in an assessment may be tiring for the learner and may ultimately disadvantage them.

Example 1

Claire has dyslexia, which affects their speed of writing. The centre requests 25% extra time for their Higher English and Higher History exams, and 15% extra time in their Higher Chemistry and Higher Mathematics. There is clear evidence of Claire's ongoing significant difficulty in completing tasks (class tasks, assignments, assessments) in the normal allocated time. There is evidence available to show that Claire needs approximately 25% extra time for extended writing subjects (such as English and History), and that approximately 15% extra time is sufficient for Chemistry and Mathematics (where less extended writing is required) to meet their needs.

Example 2

Kay experiences mental health difficulties that means that they become very anxious before their assessments and have difficulty concentrating. Based on evidence from previous class assessments, the college provides Kay with 15% extra time that is sufficient for them to complete their SQA assessments. The extra time provided allows Kay to read through the questions and any associated text carefully, giving them time to process this information and check that they are satisfied with their answers at the end of the assessment. Knowing that they have this amount of extra time available has been shown to reduce Kay's anxiety and allow them to complete the assessment.

Example 3

Jamie is blind and uses braille. There is extensive reading in the Higher History question paper, and there are many diagrams and tables to interpret in the Higher Mathematics question paper. Jamie's centre requests 50% extra time to complete their exams in these two subjects based on evidence that this is the approximate amount of extra time they need in class to read extended text and to interpret diagrammatical material.

Example 4

Luke has a physical disability and uses word processing software when producing hiswritten responses. His typing speed is quite slow, so it takes him longer to complete written tasks. As Luke is undertaking National 4 courses where there are no timed external assessments, he is able to complete the assessment tasks over a longer period of time.

Extension to deadlines

Depending on the circumstances, an extension to the published deadline dates for the submission of externally-assessed coursework and internal assessment results may be permitted. Requests should be made in writing to the Assessment Arrangements Team by e-mail to extensions@sqa.org.uk. However, it should be noted that extensions should be carefully managed to prevent additional 'bunching' of assessments and deadlines for learners during a short time period.

Example 1

Jane has experienced mental health difficulties during her time at college, and has had less time to complete her assessments. Her college has requested an extension for submitting her internal assessment marks.

Example 2

Alex has chronic fatigue syndrome. This has meant that they have been unable to complete their Higher Care project by the published submission date. Their school requests an extension to this deadline to allow them to complete their project.

Use of ICT and digital question papers

Use of ICT to type/speak responses or to read while using the conventional question paper

For many disabled learners, using ICT to type, to dictate with speech recognition software or to read with text to speech software provides a more effective and independent means of communication than using human support such as a reader and/or scribe.

If your disabled learner wishes to use the conventional question paper but requires the use of ICT, you must request this using the Assessment Arrangements Request (AAR) system. You must select the **ICT option**. If your learner is using speech recognition or a text reading pen (without dictionary, thesaurus storage or other facilities), you must identify this in the 'Other Arrangements' field, for example 'Dragon NaturallySpeaking', 'Reading Pen'.

You must ensure that the required technical resources are available and that our technical and security requirements have been met. Please refer to the SQA Co-ordinator's Guide on SQA Connect for more information.

Remember: Learners must be confident, competent users of the technology before it is used in any SQA exam or assessment.

Digital answer books (DABs)

Using digital answer books for question papers in 'question and answer' (structured) format

Some conventional question papers come in the format of a 'question and answer' booklet where learners would normally type their answers under each question. For these question papers, learners will need to use the generic digital answer booklet (DAB), which is available from the section 'Digital Answer Booklets' on our website.

The generic answer booklet is only available as MS Word files, so if your learner is authorised to use spellcheck, you will need to ensure that the MS Word settings on the device are correct. The generic answer booklet can be used both for practice and, unless otherwise indicated, in the external exam.

Using digital answer books for question papers in 'question only' (unstructured) format

More commonly, the conventional question paper come in the format of a question-only, unstructured paper where learners have to write their answers into a separate answer book. The list of current question papers that are 'question-only' and require a separate answer booklet can be found in the 'Digital Answer Booklets' section of our website.

For question papers in this format, learners can use the paper-specific digital answer booklets. For practice purposes, the current paper-specific digital answer booklets (available from the Digital Answer Booklets page) should be used. We will advise you when the answer booklets on the website can be used in the actual exam. These paper-

specific answer booklets are available in both MS Word and PDF formats. The PDF digital answer booklets are available in both 'Spellcheck on' and 'Spellcheck off' versions. You must ensure that you provide the correct one for your learner, and that the 'Spellcheck on' version of the PDF digital answer booklet is only used where it is appropriate.

Remember: The paper-specific answer booklets can be used can be used for both practice purposes and, unless otherwise indicated, for use in the external exam.

Use of digital question papers

The digital question paper is a PDF copy of the conventional question paper. If your candidate wishes to use the digital question paper, you must select the **digital question paper option** on the AAR system to order it on CD. This will also automatically populate the 'separate accommodation' field and open the options for use of ICT with spellcheck; you must ensure that this option is changed to 'ICT **without** spellcheck' if the learner does not need the spellcheck facility. If your learner does not need individual or small group accommodation when using ICT, you can also remove the request for separate accommodation. If your learner requires any additional software, such as speech recognition or text reading software, you must identify the required software in the 'Other' field, for example 'Dragon NaturallySpeaking'.

If you wish to know more about SQA's digital question papers, please go to the 'Digital Question Papers' webpage.

Contingency arrangements

The contingency arrangements that apply to all exams apply also to learners using ICT. In the event of any technical difficulties occurring during the exam, the designated teacher/technician may be allowed into the exam room to resolve any technical issues, repair or provide another machine to enable the learner to complete the exam. The invigilator should ensure an additional allowance of time equal to the time lost is made available to the learner, and the learner should be advised of this at once to allay any anxiety.

If the technical issue is resolved, and the learner has been given an allowance of additional time, the matter should be reported to SQA by the invigilator.

In any case where a fault results in the spoiling of, or changing of the learner's work, an invigilator report should be prepared by the invigilator and countersigned by the chief invigilator. This should be sent to the Assessment Arrangements Team by e-mail. All sections of the invigilator report should be completed in full, including the name of the centre and the affected learner's name.

Remember: in the event of any technical difficulties, it is expected that a reader and/or scribe should be available as a contingency arrangement if the learner requires this type of support. **You do not need to record contingency arrangements on the AAR system.**

Example 1

A centre requests the use of ICT for Atif, who has significant writing difficulties. He is allowed to use word processing with spellcheck software for all his external exams.

Example 2

Gill experiences severe anxiety difficulties and finds it difficult to handwrite their responses in their assessments. Their college allows them to produce their answers on their laptop for all their internal assessments.

For further guidance on using speech recognition software, please see section 'Screen reader and speech recognition software'.

For further helpful information on the use of information, communication and assistive technologies, visit CALL Scotland.

Numerical support in Mathematics assessments

Learners appropriately identified as having a specific difficulty with number manipulation/calculation/retention (for example, dyscalculia, although this does not need to be formally diagnosed) could be permitted, as a reasonable adjustment, to use a number square/line, multiplication square or a basic calculator in non-calculator mathematics assessments.

Note: The calculator must be a **basic, four-function calculator**, capable of basic multiplication, division, addition and subtraction only — **no other function is allowed.**

The provision of this type of basic numerical support is permitted as a reasonable adjustment for disabled learners to remove their substantial disadvantage and allow them to demonstrate their attainment of the required mathematical operational and reasoning skills.

It is generally accepted that a learner who is diagnosed with a numeric difficulty such as dyscalculia may be characterised by difficulties in processing number concepts and mastering basic numeracy skills. It often occurs alongside other specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, but it is important to note that not all dyslexic learners have problems with numbers. This is why we require centres to have appropriate evidence that a learner has been identified as having a particular disability/specific difficulty with numbers and is placed at a substantial disadvantage in demonstrating their attainment because of this particular disability/difficulty.

For example, a learner's specific difficulty with numbers must be appropriately identified. You must have evidence that the learner's identified level of difficulty means they require appropriate numerical support, and is not caused by a lack of ability, prior knowledge or motivation.

As with any request, the evidence would support the need for an appropriate assessment arrangement, which meets the individual learner's needs and reflects classroom practice.

Note: Learners who use any form of numerical support should be encouraged to write all of their working, even if this is simply recording what they are entering into the calculator, to ensure they can access the full range of marks available for each question in the assessment.

Practical assistant

A practical assistant is someone who carries out some tasks, for example in a practical assessment for health and safety reasons, at the learner's explicit instruction. This is permitted for learners who have physical or visual difficulties that prevent them carrying out practical assessments safely and independently. This arrangement can also be used to support learners in written assessments, for example, to turn the page or hold steady drawing equipment. Approval to use this type of arrangement depends on both the type of assessment, competence/assessment standards for the assessment and the degree of assistance that needed by the learner.

Guidelines for centres

It is your responsibility to:

♦ make the necessary arrangements for providing a practical assistant
♦ ensure that the learner is clear about what the practical assistant can and cannot do — a learner using a practical assistant should have had practice using this arrangement during their course
♦ ensure that the learner is trained on how to work effectively with the practical assistant in an assessment situation
♦ prepare clear instructions for the practical assistant on the assistance they are permitted to give to a learner in a particular assessment — for invigilated assessments, a copy of these instructions must be available for the invigilator
♦ ensure that the learner is not disadvantaged or advantaged — the aim is to enable an accurate assessment of the learner's skills without the assessment competence/assessment standards being compromised

Example 1

Drew has hemiplegia affecting their left side. They are right-handed. They need a practical assistant in their HND in Chemistry to hold steady equipment while they undertake the practical tasks. Drew is able, with the aid of the assistant, to demonstrate the practical skills that are being assessed and meet the competence standards for this qualification.

Example 2

Eva has a severe tremor in both hands and requires a practical assistant to allow her to take part in class activities in the National 5 Practical Woodworking course. However, Eva is unable to meet the assessment standards for the assessed practical activity as she is unable to independently demonstrate the key practical skills required for this qualification.

Information for practical assistants: what to do (and what not to do)

You should:

♦ be familiar with the requirements of the subject and assessment
♦ be clear on the limitations to your role. If a learner is being assessed on their ability to demonstrate a particular skill, you are not permitted to carry out that task on their behalf

♦ carry out instructions exactly as they are given by the learner, unless to do so would cause a hazard. (Do not give factual help or make suggestions about what the learner is required to do. If you do not understand the learner's instructions, you may ask for clarification)

Remember: Assistance may not be required throughout the whole practical assessment — there may be parts of the assessment that the learner can complete without help. A practical assistant should be made available for the full assessment, but the learner may also choose not to use this support — this is the learner's choice.

Any problems arising during a practical assessment must be referred immediately to the teacher/lecturer in charge.

Prompters

A prompter is someone who can be present during an assessment to ensure that a learner stays on task. A prompter may be required where a learner has little or no sense of time or has significant concentration difficulties. The prompter may sit beside the learner to keep their attention on the assessment.

There is also the option to use verbal or written prompts (in the form of cue cards), but the purpose of this arrangement must only be to keep the learner on task — the prompter cannot provide any support in relation to the production of exam work.

Guidelines for centres

It is your responsibility to:

♦ make the necessary arrangements for providing a prompter
♦ ensure that the prompter is someone with whom the learner is comfortable and who is familiar enough with the learner to know the difference between a real attention lapse and, for example, periods of thinking
♦ ensure that the learner and prompter are clear about the limitations of the prompter's role in an assessment situation

In the context of the external exam, it is your responsibility to:

♦ fully inform the invigilator beforehand of the methods to be used to prompt the learner — methods can include verbal prompts, the use of cue cards, or any other appropriate or familiar prompts, for example, a tap on the desk
♦ the content of any verbal prompts or cue cards should be e-mailed to the Assessment Arrangements Team (aarequests@sqa.org.uk) in advance of the exam for consideration prior to submitting the request via the AAR system
♦ provide separate, suitable accommodation when a prompter is used to ensure other learners are not disturbed — remember to take account of the need for any additional invigilation

Example 1

David has autism and loses sense of time. In the Higher Mathematics exam, the prompter sees that David is staring out of the window and has stopped working. The prompter taps on the desk to bring David's attention back to the question paper.

Example 2

Taylor has mental health difficulties and their condition results in them spending extended periods reading and re-reading their assessment task. The college provides them with a prompter who uses a variety of agreed cue cards with instructions to keep them on task.

Information for prompters: what to do (and what not to do)

Normally, you will be familiar enough with the learner to know the difference between a real attention lapse and periods of thinking.

Before the assessment you should:

♦ agree with the learner where you should sit, and the method you will use to bring back their attention, for example, a light tap on the desk, use of a verbal phrase or showing them a cue card
♦ ensure that the invigilator is aware of how you intend to prompt the learner in an external exam

During the assessment you should only draw the learner's attention back to the assessment task. You must not provide the learner with any advice or suggestions on how to complete the assessment. You do not need to be in a position to read the learner's responses.

Remember: In an external exam, the SQA-appointed invigilator is there to ensure that the correct procedures are followed, and that the required exam conditions are met. The invigilator should be fully informed of the method you will use to regain the learner's attention.

Reader

The use of a human reader can be allowed to meet the needs of disabled learners who have **substantial** difficulties with reading text and who cannot access the assessment material by any other more appropriate means, for example, by using a text/screen reader.

A human reader reads out text verbatim in an assessment to enable the learner to access it. This may involve reading out all written instructions and questions to the learner, or only certain questions and words as directed by the learner. Learners may also ask that their written responses are read back to them.

It should be noted that where a human reader is used by the learner in normal teaching and learning, the reader's role may be different in an SQA assessment. For this reason, it is important that learners are aware that the reader in the assessment situation will be restricted to reading verbatim the text in the assessment and is not permitted to provide any further clarification or explanation of the text.

Please also note that using a human reader may not be possible in some assessments. For example, in the National Literacy units, a human reader is not permitted in the assessment of reading because independent reading skills are explicitly assessed. In these units, learners are required to demonstrate the ability to read and understand word-based texts. Guidance on other, more appropriate, assessment arrangements can be found on our website.

Administration and IT

In the practical tasks for Administration and IT assessments, a reader must not interpret any manuscript corrections. The candidate must study and interpret any manuscript corrections, only referring to the reader to read out any text associated with the correction verbatim.

A reader may read text contained within questions/tasks and e-files, for example rubrics, instructions, questions/tasks and information (both printed and handwritten).

For more information on use of a digital screen reader in Administration and IT, refer to the section 'Screen readers and speech recognition software'.

English for Speakers of Other Languages

There are restrictions on the use of readers in National 2 and National 3 English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) units where the learner's independent reading skills are being explicitly assessed. You can find guidance and information on other, more appropriate, assessment arrangements on our website.

Scientific and mathematical notation

A human reader can read out any scientific or mathematical notation in an assessment where the learner is unable to do so.

Guidelines for centres

It is your responsibility to:

♦ Make the necessary arrangements for providing a reader.
♦ Ensure that the reader does not have a personal interest in the success of the learner, and is not a relative or a teacher who is involved in the learner's study of the subject — there may be exceptions to this, but you must contact us in the first instance to discuss this, in advance of the assessment date.
♦ Select appropriately skilled readers on the basis of their ability to work effectively with the learner.
♦ Ensure that readers are able to read accurately, intelligibly and at a reasonable rate. The reader must have sufficient knowledge of the subject to read technical terms effectively, including place names, names of characters in literary texts or text in a modern language and scientific/mathematical notation and formulae.
♦ Ensure that both the learner and the reader are well prepared for working together.
♦ Ensure that the learner has had previous practice in working with the reader.
♦ Ensure that learners using a reader have been using this arrangement as part of the support provided during their course. Learners should be familiar with working effectively with a reader in an assessment situation.
♦ Provide separate, suitable accommodation when a reader is used in an external exam to ensure other learners are not disturbed. Remember to take account of the need for any additional invigilation in the external exam.

Example 1

Charlie has a visual impairment and their centre requests an enlarged question paper for their Higher Modern Studies exam. By the time of the exam, their vision has deteriorated and Charlie has very little sight left. The centre requests a human reader to read the question paper to Charlie, as there has been insufficient time for them to become comfortable with a screen reader before the exam.

Example 2

Lyle has mental health difficulties and finds it difficult to concentrate sufficiently to read their unit assessments thoroughly. Their college provides them with the option of using a human reader or text reader for their graded unit assessment. As Lyle does not feel confident using ICT, Lyle needs to use a human reader in their assessment to maintain their attention on the assessment text.

Example 3

Anna has a severe physical disability and has difficulty focusing on texts. She normally has her support assistant read text for her in class as she finds it very difficult to use a text reader. She uses her support assistant to read for her in all of her assessments, both internal and external.

Information for human readers: what to do (and what not to do)

You should ensure that the learner is clear about your exact role in the assessment. For example, before the external exam starts, you might say:

♦ 'I can only read what you ask me to read.'

♦ 'I cannot explain any words or questions to you, but I can read words and questions as many times as you like.'

Before you start, you should decide, with the learner, which side you will sit on so that you are both comfortable.

You must only:

♦ Read as requested by the learner (learners will indicate to you the instructions, questions, passages (including those written in a modern language) or parts of questions / passages, they wish to have read. You can also read out a learner's exam response (or part of this), at their request, including those written in a modern language. When a dictionary is allowed, you may consult this at the learner's request and read out entries).
♦ Read the exact wording (instructions and questions) of an external exam question paper — you must not give meanings of words, rephrase, or interpret anything.

You must **not**:

Give any advice on which questions the learner should answer, which order the questions should be answered in, etc.

Learners have the option of reading some parts of the assessment themselves and having other parts read to them.

Although the learner should study and interpret any diagrams, graphs, formulae, equations or pictorial material themselves, they can ask you to read out any scientific or mathematical notation or any text associated with such material.

An SQA-appointed invigilator must be present when a reader is used in the external exam, and the invigilator may need to be positioned alongside you. You should discuss this with the invigilator before the start of the assessment.

You must refer any problems during the external exam to the invigilator.

Referral of a candidate's scripts to the principal assessor

In certain external exams where extended written responses are required, and the learner has substantial difficulties with written communication, centres can request that the learner's scripts be referred to the principal assessor (PA).

Referral to the PA may be requested for learners whose exam scripts may be difficult for a marker to interpret. The purpose of referral is to ensure that no undue penalty has been imposed by a marker.

All learners' scripts are marked against set criteria, and referring a script to the PA does not change this. All learners will be subject to the same marking instructions, regardless of their particular difficulties. For example, if a learner is being marked on their spelling and grammar, they will still be marked against these criteria — no allowances can be made.

The list of exams where this arrangement is allowed is available in the Assessment Arrangements Request (AAR) system user guide for centres which can be accessed from our secure website.

Note: the list of exams eligible for referral to a PA is subject to annual review.

Example 1

Blake is deaf and does not use sign; they have an idiosyncratic use of English that means a marker might have some difficulty in understanding their written responses.

Blake's school decides that the most appropriate assessment arrangement is to refer their Higher Modern Studies scripts to the PA to ensure that their marked script is checked to ensure the marker has not, in any way, over-penalised their written responses.

Example 2

Jo's teacher noticed that in class tests and prelims, she describes colour and tone in an unconventional way. The school suspects that Jo may be colour blind but the waiting time for an NHS appointment is six months.

Concerned that the marker may have difficulty marking Jo's script due to her description of colour, the school requests that her National 5 Art and Design script is referred to the PA to ensure that Jo is not penalised for her interpretation of the colours used in artwork that appear in the exam.

Screen readers and speech recognition software

Learners who use ICT in assessments may also need assistive technology to allow them to access the assessment independently. Learners with reading, writing or spelling difficulties, a visual impairment or a physical difficulty may find it difficult to work with a human reader or scribe and prefer to do this using software. The most common types of software used by learners are screen readers, text to speech software and speech recognition software.

In all instances, the system must be checked by the learner to ensure it is working correctly before it is used in the external assessment. You must also ensure that the required technical resources are available and that our technical and security requirements have been met. Please refer to the SQA Co-ordinator's Guide on SQA Connect.

Screen reader and text-to-speech software

Digital reading software and applications can be used by learners who are using ICT and a digital question paper.

Text-to-speech software allows the learner to highlight text that they would like read aloud (this can be a sentence, a paragraph or the entire passage) and for this to be converted into audio.

Screen readers can convert typed text into audio or braille and can also read any alt text for images, web pages or documents.

Administration and IT

It is possible to request a digital question paper for practical assessments in National 5 Administration and IT exam and Assignment, and for the Higher Assignment. These will work with a screen reader. However, some of the skills being assessed in these papers may not be covered by the software. For example, a screen reader may not:

♦ identify capital letters, specific punctuation or new paragraphs in questions/tasks that require candidates to key-in information
♦ be able to repeat specific details of manuscript corrections

We would recommend that, in addition to a screen reader, a human reader also be made available for candidates to clarify specifics during the assessment, if this is needed.

Speech recognition software

Speech recognition can be a suitable assessment arrangement for learners who use ICT. Learners must be confident, competent users of the technology before it is used in an assessment or exam.

Speech recognition can be used in all exams and assessments (including National 3 and 4 Literacy units and National courses in English) apart from assessment of writing in Modern Languages (including ESOL) and Gaelic (Learners). In these assessments, it is the overall quality of the written language, including spelling accuracy that is being

assessed and therefore use of speech recognition (which never makes spelling mistakes) would compromise the integrity of the assessment.

With some speech recognition software, phrases or passages of text can be stored under abbreviations or macros. You must check that macros or abbreviations are not stored in the learner's speech recognition voice profile. As speech recognition does not make spelling mistakes, it is not necessary to disable any spellcheck facilities.

Speech recognition is never 100% accurate, and there may be some degree of misrecognition of the text dictated by the learner. Some learners can identify and correct misrecognitions, but others with literacy or visual impairments may have difficulty. Learners can use text-to-speech software to read out the dictated text, and this may help to proofread and check responses. However, it may be that a member of staff will need to be available to support the learner to identify and correct errors. The way this is done, based on the individual needs of the learner, must be discussed and agreed with the Assessment Arrangements Team before the assessment.

While speech recognition is usually a much faster method of generating text than typing or handwriting, it still requires the learner to read and interpret questions and plan and compose answers. They may require time to proofread and correct recognition errors. You should consider whether the use of extra time and separate accommodation is also needed.

Note: In the event of any technical difficulties occurring during the assessment, the contingency arrangements detailed in the section 'Use of ICT' also applies to use of software.

For further helpful information on the use of information, communication and assistive technologies, visit [CALL Scotland](#).

Example

Juno is blind and uses braille. Juno accesses the exam using their BrailleNote device with a digital question paper and screen reader software. The software converts the content of the question paper into braille which Juno finds more accessible to use. Juno also uses their BrailleNote device to produce their exam responses using their brailler keyboard that converts their braille responses into English for marking.

Scribe

The use of a scribe can be allowed in assessments to meet the needs of disabled learners who have **substantial** difficulties with writing and who cannot produce their written responses by any other more appropriate means, for example by using appropriate ICT.

A scribe records a learner's dictated responses, either by hand or using ICT. This may involve scribing all the learner's responses, or the learner may request that only words or responses to certain questions are scribed. The scribe cannot enhance or refine the learner's dictated responses, but can use their discretion with regard to the correct spelling of a word and, where necessary, the correct punctuation.

In a number of assessments, subject-specific answer booklets are available for the scribe to use and can be downloaded by the centre in advance of the assessments from our website. We recommend that the scribe should use these subject-specific answer booklets in the external exam.

Note: A scribe as defined above is **not allowed** in the assessment of writing in:

♦ National Literacy Units
♦ National 2 and National 3 ESOL Units

English for Speakers of Other Languages

For National 2 and 3 ESOL units, candidates whose first language is not English develop the four skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking in English. In the writing assessments, candidates must demonstrate their ability to write technically accurate texts as described in the outcomes and assessment standards for each unit. Guidance and further information on other, more appropriate, assessment arrangements can be found on our website.

Modern Languages and Gaelic (Learners)

In the assessment of both Reading and Listening for Modern Languages and Gaelic (Learners), the learner dictates their response in English and they are not required to spell out any words. The scribe can use discretion with regard to spelling when writing down the learner's dictated responses in English. This is because spelling is not being assessed in Reading and Listening.

However, the scribe **cannot** use discretion with regard to spelling when writing down the learner's dictated responses in the Writing assessment for Modern Languages and Gaelic (Learners). It is the overall quality of the written language, including spelling accuracy, that is being assessed. For example, the spelling of a word in French can indicate a particular tense, grammatical person or gender. The French word *passer* sounds the same as *passez*, *passé*, and *passée.*

When a scribe is used in the assessment of Writing, the learner dictates their response in the target language and is required to spell each word, ensuring that the technical accuracy of the language used is still being assessed. The learner is still demonstrating the ability to produce a piece of writing with technical accuracy, which differentiates the

skill of writing from speaking. The physical capability to write is not the purpose of the assessment of writing.

For National Literacy units, candidates are required to demonstrate the ability to write technically accurate texts. There is guidance on other, more appropriate assessment arrangements on the [Supportive Practices for National Literacy Units webpage](#).

Guidelines for centres

It is your responsibility to:

♦ Make the necessary arrangements for providing a scribe.
♦ Ensure that the scribe does not have a personal interest in the success of the learner, is a relative or a teacher involved in the learner's study of the subject — there may be exceptions to this, but you must contact us in the first instance to discuss this before the assessment date.
♦ Ensure that the scribe is able to produce an accurate record of the learner's dictated responses — they must be able to write legibly or type at a reasonable rate, spell correctly and have sufficient knowledge of the subject to be able to accurately record technical terms, including place names, names of characters in literary texts or terminology used to describe the way a modern language is written.
♦ Select appropriately skilled scribes on the basis of their ability to work effectively with learners.
♦ Ensure that both the learner and the scribe are well prepared for working together and that the learner has had previous practice in working with the scribe —learners using a scribe should have been using this arrangement during their course.
♦ Ensure that learners are familiar with how to work effectively with a scribe in a timed external exam.
♦ Ensure that the learner and the scribe are clear about the limitations of the scribe's role in an assessment situation.
♦ Provide separate, suitable accommodation when a scribe is used in the external exam to ensure other candidates are not disturbed — remember to take account of the need for any additional invigilation.

Example

Steven has cerebral palsy. They have no use of their hands and have very indistinct speech, which prevents them using voice recognition software effectively. In their external exams, they use a scribe who works with them on a regular basis and who understands their speech.

Information for scribes: what to do (and what not to do)

You should ensure that the learner is clear about your exact role in the assessment. For example, you might say:

♦ 'I can only write down or type what you dictate to me.'
♦ 'I cannot explain anything to you, but you can tell me to change anything I have written.'

Before you start, decide, along with the learner, which side you will sit on so that you are both comfortable.

You should ensure you are familiar with any technical terms (including place names, names of characters in literary texts, terminology used to describe the way a modern language is written) the learner is likely to use. For Modern Language and Gaelic (Learner) writing assessments, you cannot use your discretion with the spelling of words in the language being assessed..

You must only record responses exactly as they are dictated by the learner. You may use your discretion regarding spelling (except in the assessment of writing in Modern Languages and Gaelic (Learners)) and, where necessary, punctuation. You may read back what you have written when asked to do so by the learner.

You must not:

♦ Give any advice on which questions to answer, which order the questions should be answered in, and so on.
♦ Enhance or refine the learner's dictated responses.
♦ Use your discretion with the spelling of words in a modern language — in these assessments, learners are required to spell each word in the language being assessed for you to record.
♦ Produce any diagrammatical or graphical material — if the learner is unable to draw maps, graphs, diagrams, etc, you may be allowed to assist, but this must have been agreed beforehand with us.

Remember: The learner may choose to write some responses and dictate others — it is entirely their choice whether they wish to write their responses independently or dictate them to be scribed.

An SQA-appointed invigilator must be present when a scribe is used in the external exam and the invigilator may need to be positioned beside you. You should discuss this with the invigilator before the start of the assessment.

In subjects where there is a multiple-choice-question answer grid in the question-and-answer booklet, for example in National 5 Biology, it is important that you ensure that all assessment materials are placed behind the question-and-answer booklet that contains the learner's responses to the multiple-choice questions. Please do this before passing the assessment materials to the invigilator at the end of the assessment.

You must refer any problems during the assessment to the invigilator.

Separate accommodation

Separate accommodation is an assessment arrangement for learners who need to complete an assessment in a separate room. This is particularly important for learners who have other assessment arrangements, such as a prompter, reader, scribe or signed response, where dialogue may be required and may cause a disturbance for other learners. This arrangement can also be requested as a standalone assessment arrangement, depending on the learner's needs.

There are two types of separate accommodation: individual accommodation and small group accommodation. It is important that you consider the most suitable type of accommodation for learners, based on the availability of rooms for assessment purposes, and the level of disruption to other learners.

'Separate Accommodation' should be selected on the AAR system for learners requiring either individual or small group accommodation.

Remember: in each case, you must ensure that your learners are clear about what to expect on the day for each exam. This should mirror the arrangement (and where possible, the room) they are provided with in class tests, prelims and internal assessments. You must also obtain their agreement (and where required, from their parent/carer or guardian) to this type of accommodation.

Individual accommodation

Individual accommodation should be used where the assessment arrangement requires dialogue between the learner and a support assistant, for example a prompter, a reader or scribe, or when a learner's assessment environment is different, for example using sign language to communicate. A learner with extreme anxiety and who is unable to complete their assessment in a room with others may also need to be in individual accommodation.

Individual accommodation can also be used to support learners who need access to other amenities during an assessment, for example learners who are diabetic and need to check blood sugar levels or take food and drink into an exam, or those who are coeliac.

Small group accommodation

Small group accommodation may be suitable for learners who find the main hall overwhelming due to anxiety or stress but are able to complete an exam in a small group setting. This type of accommodation may also be suitable for learners using headphones or earphones to access software such as a screen reader or text-to-speech software on ICT. It is important that you consider the maximum number of learners that can be accommodated in each room to minimise disruption to other learners as much as possible.

To protect the integrity of our external assessments, this arrangement must **not** be considered where the assessment arrangement requires dialogue between the learner and a support assistant, for example a prompter, a reader or scribe, or when a learner's assessment environment is different, for example using sign language to communicate.

Using sign language in SQA assessments

With the exception of English, ESOL, Gàidhlig, Gaelic (Learners) and Modern Languages, d/Deaf learners may have the instructions and contents of a question paper or assessment task signed to them by a sign communicator in any external assessment. The learner can ask for this to be repeated if necessary.

Deaf learners may also sign their exam responses, which must be recorded, translated and transcribed before their scripts are submitted to us for marking.

Using Sign language is a very flexible arrangement: a d/Deaf learner can ask for some parts of the question paper to be signed and may want to read other parts; they may wish to sign some responses and write or complete tables or draw other parts.

You must submit a request to use sign language through our Assessment Arrangements Request (AAR) system.

You do not need to seek approval from us to sign the content of internal assessment materials to a learner, or for them to sign their responses, unless to do so changes the assessment criteria.

Where a sign communicator is used, separate accommodation will be necessary. The accommodation must be suitable for signing and video-recording. This means that there should be adequate space and appropriate lighting to film the learner in the most unobtrusive way possible.

♦ You should prepare one video per learner per subject/level and clearly label it with centre, learner, and subject and level details. The learner must be comfortable with, and have had practice of, being videoed.
♦ A transcript in English of each learner's signed assessment responses as recorded should be prepared. This translation/transcription should be carried out within the centre by someone with the appropriate level of skill in signing.
♦ As learners may also supplement their signed responses with additional written or graphic material, these must also be submitted to us along with the transcript of the signed assessment responses for marking.

It is important that the learner is aware of, and has been prepared to work within, the time constraints of the external assessment (including any agreed extra time allowance).

We require the transcriptions, any additional material written by the learners, and the recording, to be submitted within seven calendar days of the assessment date. We will provide all the required stationery, such as envelopes for submitting the media containing the video recording, learner consent form.

You must ensure that the learner's video evidence is enclosed in the padded envelope provided and returned using the pre-paid and addressed return poly-envelope.

A team of reviewers, with appropriate skills in signing, will review a sample of translations / transcriptions from each centre alongside the video evidence, to ensure that signed responses have been accurately transcribed.

Guidelines for centres

You are responsible for:

♦ Providing sign communicators with the appropriate level of skill in sign language and a good working knowledge of the subject — for example, in a Higher Chemistry exam, the sign communicator's skills need to be sufficient to reflect the subject-specific language of the question paper and the learner's breadth of knowledge and ability.
♦ Making the necessary arrangements for providing a skilled sign communicator.
♦ Making sure that both the learner and the sign communicator are advised of, and sufficiently well prepared for, this arrangement.
♦ Providing all the filming equipment (camera and playback facilities) and for its operation during the external assessment.
♦ Ensuring that the submitted material is able to be viewed by us.

As part of your quality assurance procedures, you should ensure that candidates, and where appropriate, parents or carers, have agreed to the filming of the assessment and are aware of how it will be used by us.

Information for sign communicators: what to do (and what not to do)

It is very important that you have had the opportunity to prepare for signing in any assessment. This preparation should be done well in advance of the exam, using past papers, prelims, unit assessments and class tests.

You may be allowed (under supervision of an invigilator) to have access to the question paper or assessment task up to 60 minutes before the start of the assessment. This is to allow you, if necessary, to scan the question paper to check and identify any problematic vocabulary or contexts. (If you think you may need more time for a particular paper, this must be negotiated with us beforehand. The centre's SQA co-ordinator can contact us to discuss this.) During this preparation time you may consult with another sign communicator if you are uncertain, or if you have any concerns about any aspect of the signing of the assessment.

Remember: you can also practice by accessing past papers and specimen question papers in the subject and level concerned.

To carry out the role of sign communicator successfully, you must:

♦ Be able to communicate effectively with the learner.
♦ Have a good working knowledge of the subject you are being asked to sign.
♦ Only sign under instruction from the learner — the learner can ask for parts of the assessment to be signed again as often as they need to.
♦ Allow the learner to study and interpret any reference maps, diagrams or graphs independently, but you may sign any labels or text connected with such material.
♦ Discuss with the invigilator what your role is as the sign communicator and highlight any issues you think may concern them.
♦ Take time to prepare your learner so that they are aware of the invigilator's role.

You must not:

- ◆ Take the lead or initiative in terms of directing the learner, including suggesting or which parts of the assessment to sign again.
- ◆ Give any additional explanation or assistance.

Examples of advice, checklists and templates that may be useful to you, such as exam arrangements information sheets and have been included as appendices at the end of this document.

You can also contact our Assessment Arrangements Team (aarequests@sqa.org.uk) for further support.

Supervised breaks or rest periods in a timed assessment

Rest periods and supervised breaks are permitted to allow the learner to stop work working during a timed assessment. This arrangement may be appropriate for learners who need breaks due to a physical difficulty, or, for example, learners with anxiety. The time taken for the break does not count towards the time allowed for the assessment.

Learners may require extra time as well as rest periods or supervised breaks as a result of their difficulty. It is important that you carefully consider the type of assessment arrangements requested to ensure the learner will not become fatigued by a long assessment.

Rest periods

Rest periods are breaks taken in the room where the assessment is being conducted. This may be suitable for learners who are in separate individual accommodation, or for those in the main exam hall who do not need to leave their allocated exam desk.

Supervised breaks

Supervised breaks may be more suitable for learners who experience anxiety and need to leave for fresh air, or those who need access to other amenities during an assessment — for example, learners who are diabetic and need to check blood sugar levels or consume food and drink, or those who are coeliac. It is your responsibility to ensure that a member of centre staff is available to supervise the learner when they leave the assessment room. This is **not** the invigilator's responsibility.

Example 1

Arden has chronic fatigue. They were given rest breaks of 15 minutes in the hour for each of their prelims. This worked well for Arden, even though the extended time was tiring. The school decides to request this arrangement for Arden's exams.

Example 2

Amar experiences mental health difficulties. He has increased anxiety levels, difficulties with concentration and his condition also involves ritualised behaviour. He sometimes spends extended periods checking and rechecking work. This means that he has limited time within an assessment to produce answers. Having carefully considered his assessment needs, his college does not provide him with extra time because, for Amar, an extended assessment period exacerbates his concentration difficulties and increases the amount of time he spends checking and rechecking work. Instead they provide rest periods, or 'stop the clock breaks' during the course of the assessment. This is the most appropriate arrangement for Amar.

Example 3

Lesley is severely dyslexic and requires 25% extra time to complete her exams. This means that she becomes very tired due to the extended length of some of her National 5 exams. Her centre requests that Lesley be allowed to have supervised breaks, in addition to her 25% extra time, during her exams.

Example 4

Sunny has diabetes. Sunny's centre informed the invigilator of their condition. Sunny can have hypoglycaemic attacks, which means they need time to bring their blood sugar levels back up before they can continue with the assessment. The centre requests that Sunny be allowed separate accommodation (individual), and access to food and drink — if Sunny has low blood sugar, their cognitive ability may be affected and they will need time to recover. The centre has requested rest periods in individual accommodation and for Sunny to indicate to the invigilator if they will be well enough to continue with the exam. The invigilator will ensure that Sunny is well enough to continue with the exam, after recovering from a hypo, and if this is possible, that they are given the full amount of time lost.

Transcription with correction of spelling and punctuation

The key purpose of transcription with correction is to remove the illegibility or the 'unreadability' of a learner's written responses because of a difficulty with spelling and/or punctuation. This arrangement aids in the marking of the learner's script in an external assessment.

This arrangement can be requested for learners who have been identified as having substantial difficulties with writing. In particular, it is useful where a learner's written work is illegible due to the very high frequency of spelling and/or punctuation errors, and where a marker would have difficulty in deciphering the learner's intended exam responses.

Transcription with correction is **not** permitted in assessments where the overall quality of the written language, including spelling accuracy, is being assessed (for example, in the writing assessment in Modern Languages and Gaelic (Learners)) or in skills-based practical assessments (for example, the National 5 Administration and IT exam).

The transcriber must be familiar with the learner's handwriting and is only allowed to correct errors of spelling and punctuation. The transcript must otherwise be an ***exact copy*** of the learner's original script. It is important to note that where it appears a learner may have recorded a word that does not fit the context, but there is no error in its spelling, the transcriber **must not** correct this. The transcriber cannot enhance or refine the learner's written responses.

In a number of external exams, subject-specific answer booklets are available for the transcriber to use and can be downloaded by the centre in advance of the exam from our website. We recommend that the transcriber should use these paper-specific answer booklets in the external exam.

Guidelines for centres

- The transcriber should be familiar with the learner's handwriting and the correct spelling of any technical terms (including, for example, place names, names of characters in literary texts) they are likely to use.
- The transcriber should be clear on their role and the limitations to this. They must not correct any words that have been spelled correctly (even if it is not being used in the right context) and they cannot enhance or refine the learner's written response in the transcription.
- The learner must not be present when the transcript is being produced, and the transcript must be produced under secure conditions as soon as possible after the assessment.
- In an external exam, an invigilator does not need to be present when the transcript is being produced. Where there is a delay in producing the transcript, the learner's exam scripts must be secured overnight and completed the following morning.
- The transcript may be handwritten or word-processed. If the transcript is to be handwritten, the transcriber must have legible handwriting. In either case, the transcriber must be able to correct spelling and punctuation accurately. This arrangement is not permitted in assessments where the overall quality of the written language, including spelling accuracy, is being assessed (for example, in the

National 5 Administration and IT exam and the writing assessment in Modern Languages and Gaelic (Learners)).

♦ Diagrammatical material must not be transcribed unless specific permission has been given by us. Assessment of such material will be based on the learner's own work.

Remember: the transcript must be produced separately and be a full word-for-word transcription of the learner's script, with only spelling and punctuation errors corrected. For external assessments, typed transcription pages should be placed as loose-leaf sheets behind the learner's answer booklet. If a separate answer booklet is used, this should be placed behind the learner's answer booklet. In the external exam, both the transcript and the learner's script must be passed to the chief invigilator for despatch in the normal way. The transcriber must not sign the transcript or mark the learner's script in any way that informs the marker of the reason why a transcription was necessary.

For internal assessments, the transcript should be attached to the learner's original work and retained for verification purposes.

Modern Languages, Gaelic (Learners), National Literacy units and National 2 and National 3 ESOL units

Please remember that, because writing (including spelling accuracy) is being explicitly assessed in these subjects, transcription with correction is **not** permitted for the writing assessment.

Example

Sarah has Asperger's syndrome and is both dysgraphic and dyslexic. They are unable to use ICT and insists on handwriting their responses in their Higher History and Higher Psychology exams. Learning support staff believe that a marker who is unfamiliar with their handwriting would struggle to decipher their handwritten responses. Their extremely poor spelling also makes their responses very difficult to understand. The college requests transcription with correction for both of their Higher external exams.

Transcription without correction

This arrangement is designed to meet the needs of those learners who have illegible handwriting as a result of an identified difficulty, and who are unable to use appropriate ICT. The purpose of this arrangement is to produce a full, legible copy of the learner's responses, **without** corrections to spelling or punctuation.

In a number of exams, subject-specific answer booklets are available for the transcriber to use and can be downloaded by the centre in advance of the exams from our website. We recommend that the transcriber should use these paper-specific answer booklets in the external exam.

Guidelines for centres

It is your responsibility to ensure that:

♦ Any errors of spelling and punctuation are **not** corrected — the transcript must be an exact copy of the learner's original work in full.
♦ Any diagrammatical material must **not** be transcribed — assessment of such material will be based on the learner's own work.
♦ The transcriber is familiar with the learner's handwriting.
♦ The learner is not present when the transcript is being produced.
♦ In an external exam, the transcript must be produced under secure conditions as soon as possible after the exam. An invigilator does not need to be present. Where there is a delay in producing the transcript, the learner's scripts must be secured overnight and completed the following morning.
♦ The transcriber does not sign the transcription of the external exam script or mark the learner's script in any way that informs the marker why a transcript was necessary.
♦ The transcript may be handwritten or word-processed — if it is to be handwritten, the transcriber must have legible handwriting.

Remember: the transcript must be produced separately and be a full word-for-word transcription of the learner's script, including any spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors. For external assessments, the typed transcript pages should be placed behind the learner's answer booklet. If a separate answer booklet is used, this should be placed directly behind the learner's answer booklet. In the external exam, both the transcript and the candidate's script must be passed to the chief invigilator for despatch in the normal way.

Who to contact for more information

If you have a query about a particular assessment arrangement, please contact the Assessment Arrangements Team on 0345 213 6890 or email them at aarequests@sqa.org.uk.

For further up-to-date information on assessment arrangements, please visit www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

If you have a general enquiry about SQA or its qualifications, please call our Customer Contact Centre on 0345 279 1000 or e-mail them at customer@sqa.org.uk.

Appendix 1: Exam arrangements information sheet

Candidate details

Extra time

Other relevant information

You may find it helpful to use this to give the chief invigilator information on individual candidates. The 'Other relevant information' field can be used to give the invigilator information about the conduct of the examination.
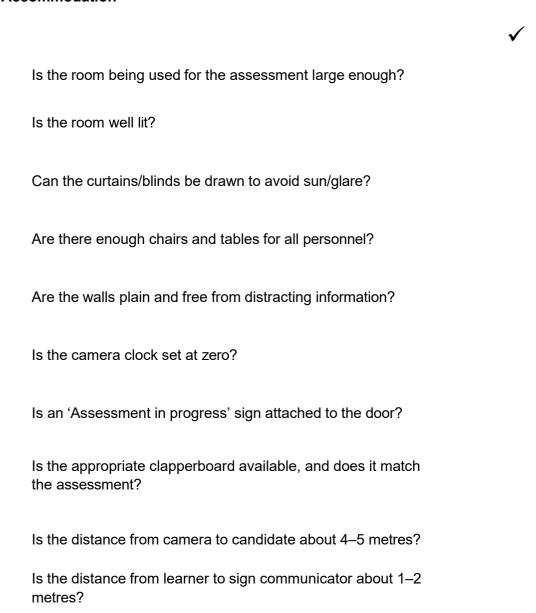
Appendix 2: Recording learners who use sign

The following advice, checklists and templates, although not mandatory, have been devised to facilitate filming of deaf signing learners.

1   The room must be well lit and large enough for the filming to take place. Be aware of the sun and, if necessary, close curtains or blinds to prevent glare.

2   Check you fully understand how to operate the camera — eg knowing how to switch on and off, load and unload recording media — and that you have enough storage space for the duration of the assessment.

3   The use of a tripod will prevent shudder and loss of focus.

4   The ideal position of the camera should be 4–5 metres from the learner. Before the start of the assessment, you should check the learner is in focus and fits the frame. No one else needs to be in the frame.

5   Background noise should be reduced to a minimum. Walls ought to be plain, with no distracting information.

6   If your camera has a timer or counter, please set it to zero.

7   A piece of work with the key information — learner's name, Scottish Candidate Number, centre name and number, subject/level and paper known as the clapperboard — should be presented to camera at the start of the exam. If the label attached to any media storage becomes detached or the file name of the recording has been changed, this is an effective way of identifying both learner and assessment.

8   If an audio technician is available, they should check the equipment before the assessment starts. If it is at all possible, they should be on standby in case the equipment breaks down.

Appendix 3: Checklists for video-recording deaf signing learners

Accommodation

	✓
Is the room being used for the assessment large enough?	
Is the room well lit?	
Can the curtains/blinds be drawn to avoid sun/glare?	
Are there enough chairs and tables for all personnel?	
Are the walls plain and free from distracting information?	
Is the camera clock set at zero?	
Is an 'Assessment in progress' sign attached to the door?	
Is the appropriate clapperboard available, and does it match the assessment?	
Is the distance from camera to candidate about 4–5 metres?	
Is the distance from learner to sign communicator about 1–2 metres?	

Camera operations

(In some centres the audio technician will set and check equipment before the exam. However, not all centres will have this option available.)

✓

Are you familiar with the on/off controls of the camera?

Have you enough storage on the device?

Do you have the right disks for your recording?

Have you double-checked that the camera works prior to the start of the assessment?

Have you set the camera on a tripod?

Do you know where to plug in or charge the equipment?

Do you have extension cables and safety pads (if you need them)?

Have you set to record in 'long play', if available?

Have you set the tape counter to zero?

If you are using batteries, do you have spares? (Avoid using old batteries)

Is the appropriate clapperboard available?

Learner preparation

Has your learner: ✓

Practised signing to camera?   ☐

Signed the declaration sheet (see over the page)?   ☐

Practised reviewing their responses to camera?   ☐

Does your learner

Know their Scottish Candidate Number?   ☐

Know the dates and times of their assessments?   ☐

Know the location of their assessments?   ☐

Know the main people involved in the assessment, eg
invigilator?   ☐

Have the correct equipment for the exam?   ☐

Have you

Checked that the clapperboard contains the correct information?   ☐

Checked that your learner understands the procedure for requesting
questions to be signed?   ☐

Clapperboard

Name	
Scottish Candidate Number (SCN)	
Centre name	
Centre number	
Assessment title	
Level		Date	

Note: This should be filmed along with the learner's piece of work in case the media storage label becomes detached or the file name of the video recording is changed

Appendix 4: Filming schedule for exam transcription

Learner name		Scottish Candidate number	
Subject		Level	

Question number	Time stamp	Question number	Time stamp

Transcribed by: **Date:**