

## **Commonly asked questions on the use of a scribe in the assessment of writing in Modern Languages and Gaelic (Learners)**

### **What is a scribe and what does a scribe do?**

A scribe is someone who writes down a candidate's dictated response in an examination or assessment. Depending on the subject's published assessment criteria, SQA have specific regulations in relation to what a scribe is, and is not, allowed to do when writing down a candidate's dictated response.

### **Can a scribe be used in Modern Languages and Gaelic?**

Yes, when a scribe is used in the assessment of both Reading and Listening, the candidate dictates his/her response in English and is not required to spell out any words. The scribe can use discretion with regard to spelling when writing down the candidate's dictated responses. This is because spelling is not being assessed in Reading and Listening.

**However**, when a scribe is used in the assessment of Writing, the candidate dictates his/her 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. For example, in dictating the French word 'voix', the candidate would have to make it clear to the scribe that they mean 'voix' and not 'voie'. The scribe cannot use discretion with regard to spelling when writing down the candidate's dictated response. This is because spelling in the target language is being assessed in Writing.

### **If a scribe is allowed, is this really a writing assessment or simply another speaking exercise (and does this not therefore compromise the integrity of exercise)?**

In using a scribe in the way described above with the candidate spelling out the foreign word to the scribe, SQA is satisfied that the purpose of the assessment objective is still being met by the disabled candidate, albeit in an alternative way. The candidate 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.

### **Under what circumstances would the use of a scribe in a Writing assessment in Modern Languages or Gaelic (Learners) be appropriate?**

SQA's assessment arrangements policy is needs-led; therefore we require centres to have robust evidence of a candidate's need for a particular assessment arrangement and not only the diagnosis of a particular disability or difficulty. While we do not assign assessment arrangements to specific categories of disabilities or difficulties, we do recognise that the requirement that a candidate spells out words to the scribe in a Modern Languages or Gaelic (Learners) Writing assessment may only be appropriate if

the candidate is capable of doing so. For some candidates, this is not possible because of the effect of their particular disability. For example, a candidate who has a significant difficulty with spelling.

**Why does a candidate need to spell out words to the scribe in the assessment of Writing in Modern Languages and Gaelic (learners) but does not have to spell out words to the scribe in the assessment of Writing in English, when technical accuracy is being assessed in both?**

In the assessment of Writing in Modern Languages and Gaelic (Learners), the purpose of the assessment objective of Writing is concerned with assessing the candidate's ability to write in the target language with technical accuracy. It is for this reason that it is essential that when a scribe is used, the candidate spells out words.

In English, while technical accuracy is part of the assessment criteria, the purpose of the assessment in Writing in English is different. For example, candidates are required to write to demonstrate their ability to understand, analyse and evaluate previously studied texts as well as being sufficiently accurate with regard to expression. This is the key purpose of the assessment of writing and the reason why candidates are not required to spell out all words when dictating their piece of Writing to the scribe.

**What other arrangements or reasonable adjustments could be made in the assessment of Writing in Modern Languages and Gaelic (Learners) for disabled candidates who experience significant difficulties with writing and who are unable to spell out each word to a scribe?**

Other assessment arrangements such as the use of extra time and/or the use of ICT may enable the candidate to demonstrate their attainment.