



Using Sign in SQA Assessments

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Introduction

This document contains information for centres, teachers of the deaf and candidates who use sign language in SQA assessments. It was written in conjunction with the Scottish Sensory Centre (SSC) and qualified teachers of the deaf.

It explains SQA's mandatory guidelines and also provides advice, templates, and checklists. It aims to remind everyone of their responsibilities when using sign in SQA assessments. This information must be read in conjunction with the *Assessment Arrangements Explained: Information for Centres* (Publication code: FA4378) on the assessment arrangements webpages.

Where sign is used as an assessment arrangement in an SQA assessment it is subject to the same quality assurance requirements as all other assessment arrangements, and it is important that all practitioners involved are aware of their responsibilities in this regard.¹

¹ See Quality Assurance of Assessment Arrangements Guidance for more detail

Assessing deaf candidates

When a candidate who uses sign is being assessed, the subject teacher and the teacher of the deaf will need to work closely together.

Oral evidence

When a candidate is signing a talk or presentation in any subject the teacher of the deaf (or sign communicator) provides the 'voice', allowing the subject teacher to access the content of the talk or presentation

The subject teacher should be facing the candidate and must assess the candidate in the same way as they would assess their peers.

Written evidence

If a candidate who uses sign wishes to write their responses to an assessment they should do so and it should be assessed in the same way as others.

If a candidate who uses sign wishes to sign their responses to an assessment, then this should be filmed and a transcription produced for the assessor to mark (Both the film and the transcription should be kept for verification purposes).

In an internal assessment, if the deaf candidate doesn't pass the assessment, review the arrangements you have put in place. Make sure that the arrangements are right for your particular deaf candidate and have not caused any disadvantage.

See our [Supportive practices for National Literacy Units web page](#) for further guidance on assessing deaf candidates in the Literacy Units. In Appendix 3 there is further general guidance on good practice in assessing deaf candidates in talking and listening in English & Literacy.

Extra time

As you begin to work with your candidate (in some cases from S1 onwards) you will start to understand their individual needs. As this process continues you will also be able to gather appropriate evidence from class work, class assessments, to help you determine how much extra time will be need in SQA unit assessments and, where appropriate, eventually prelims and the external examination.

Remember you must

- ◆ give your candidate sufficient time to complete their assessments and where they wish to, to review their signed assessment responses
- ◆ allow yourself extra time for the technical requirements involved when candidates review their signed assessment responses (this time does not count towards the time allowed for the assessment concerned)

Candidate fatigue: assessments that last a very long time can cause tiredness and may ultimately disadvantage the candidate.

To help with this, SQA can allow you to re-arrange timetabled assessments if necessary, although candidates must be supervised during any breaks in the assessment. This must be agreed beforehand with the Assessment Arrangements Team. Please email aarequests@sqa.org.uk

Using sign in internal assessments: mandatory guidelines for centres

You are responsible for providing the sign communicator and you must ensure that:

- ◆ the sign communicator has the appropriate level of skill in sign language and a good working knowledge of the subject being signed. For example, in National 5 Physics there are a number of unit assessments. The sign communicator's skills need to be sufficient to reflect the subject-specific language and the candidate's breadth of knowledge and ability
- ◆ both the candidate and the sign communicator are sufficiently well prepared for this arrangement
- ◆ you record each candidate's signed assessment responses in all unit assessments and clearly label them
- ◆ you retain filmed evidence, with the translation attached, for verification purposes

Filming

You are responsible for the filming of candidate's signed assessment responses in all unit assessments. This means you are also responsible for:

- ◆ providing appropriate filming equipment (camera and playback facilities) and for its operation during the assessment
- ◆ ensuring that candidates, and where appropriate, parents/carers, have agreed to the filming of the assessment
- ◆ ensuring that the candidate is comfortable with, and has had practice of, being filmed
- ◆ providing suitable and separate accommodation for the assessment
- ◆ ensuring the candidate has an appropriate amount of time to complete the assessment
- ◆ considering the need for any additional time required to deal with any technical issues which may arise during the filming

Translation/transcription

A transcript in English of each candidate'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. These transcripts must be kept (along with any supplementary assessment material eg graphic material) for verification purposes. Centres must retain candidate assessment evidence for new National Qualifications until the end of the academic session (31 July). Assessment evidence must be stored securely, in a retrievable format and made available to the external verifier and SQA on request. This applies to all new National Qualifications, including National units, coursework and new Awards.²

² Further information on retention of evidence can be found here
<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/74668.6220.html>

Using sign in internal assessments: mandatory guidelines for sign communicators

Are you a sign communicator? Do you know that there are certain things you should and shouldn't do?

Preparation

It is very important that you have had the opportunity to prepare for signing in any assessment.

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

- ◆ be able to communicate effectively with the candidate
- ◆ have a good working knowledge of the subject you are being asked to sign
- ◆ only sign under instruction from the candidate
- ◆ allow the candidate to study and interpret any reference maps, diagrams, visual material, graphs independently, but you may sign any labels or text connected with such material
- ◆ ensure that the candidate has an appropriate amount of time to review his/her signed assessment responses

You must not:

- ◆ take the lead or initiative in terms of directing the candidate
- ◆ give any additional explanation or assistance over and above that which is available to all candidates

Remember

You should have had previous practice in working with the candidate, and both of you should be well prepared for working together under the assessment conditions that apply.

Using sign in internal assessments: mandatory guidelines for candidates

Are you working with a sign communicator? Do you know that there are certain things you should and shouldn't do?

You should have had previous practice in working with your sign communicator, and both of you should be well prepared for working together in your assessment.

You must:

- ◆ clearly indicate to your sign communicator which parts of the assessment you wish to have signed. You can ask for it to be signed again as often as necessary, but the sign communicator cannot suggest or choose which parts
- ◆ study and interpret any reference maps, diagrams, visual material or graphs etc., on your own. Your sign communicator can sign any labels or text to you

You will:

- ◆ have the option of writing some assessment responses and signing others. You may also supplement your signed responses with additional written or graphic material.

If you choose to sign your responses in your assessments, SQA will require your signed responses to be filmed, so you must be comfortable with, and have had practice of, being filmed.

Remember

Your sign communicator will take great care when signing an assessment to you. No additional explanation or assistance will be given. Remember that what your sign communicator is allowed to do in an assessment may be different from what he or she does in the classroom.

Using sign in external assessments: mandatory 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 examination, the sign communicator's skills need to be sufficient to reflect the subject-specific language of the question paper and the candidate's breadth of knowledge and ability
- ◆ making the necessary arrangements for providing a skilled sign communicator
- ◆ making sure that both the candidate and the sign communicator are advised of, and sufficiently well prepared for, this arrangement

Filming equipment

You should prepare one film per candidate per subject and clearly label it with centre, candidate, and subject and level details. The candidate must be comfortable with, and have had practice of, being filmed.

You are also responsible for:

- ◆ 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 SQA

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 SQA.

Accommodation

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

Invigilation

When a sign communicator is used in an external examination, additional invigilation will be required.

Translation/transcription

A transcript in English of each candidate'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 candidates may also supplement their signed responses with additional written or graphic material, this must also be submitted to SQA along with the transcript of the signed assessment responses.

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

External review of the translation/transcription

We require the transcriptions, any additional material written by the candidates, and the recording, to be submitted within one week of the assessment. All the required stationery, such as envelopes for submitting the DVDs, will be provided.

You must ensure that the candidates' filmed evidence is enclosed in the envelope provided and is either available for pick up by an SQA-appointed carrier or is posted using pre-addressed labels.

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

Using sign in external assessments: mandatory guidelines for sign communicators

Are you a sign communicator? Do you know that there are certain things you should and shouldn't do?

Preparation

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

Please note that for the external assessment you may be allowed (under supervision of an invigilator) to have access to the question paper or assessment task up to one hour 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 SQA beforehand.) 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.

In the external assessment

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

- ◆ be able to communicate effectively with the candidate
- ◆ have a good working knowledge of the subject you are being asked to sign
- ◆ only sign under instruction from the candidate
- ◆ allow the candidate to study and interpret any reference maps, diagrams, graphs independently, but you may sign any labels or text connected with such material

You must not:

- ◆ take the lead or initiative in terms of directing the candidate
- ◆ give any additional explanation or assistance

You should have had previous practice in working with the candidate, and both of you should be well prepared for working together under the assessment conditions that will apply.

Remember

Candidates can ask for parts of the assessment to be signed again as often as necessary, but you must not suggest or choose which parts.

Guidelines for sign communicators: liaising with the examination invigilator

You may find it helpful to use the sheet overleaf to provide the chief invigilator with information on individual candidates. The 'Other relevant information' box can be used to give the invigilator information about the conduct of the exam, for example:

- ◆ that the candidate may ask for the recording to be stopped and restarted in order to review a signed assessment response
- ◆ details of the early opening of an examination question paper, if approved by SQA

Before the examination, discuss with the invigilator what your role is as the sign communicator. Highlight any issues that you think may concern him/her — for example, you may have to repeat a question several times if asked to do so by the candidate.

If in any doubt, clarify with the chief invigilator exactly what the role of the invigilator is in an assessment where questions and responses might be signed.

Take the time to prepare your candidate so that they are aware of the invigilator's role.

Examination arrangements information sheet³

Candidate details

--

Extra time

--

Other relevant information

--

³ You may find it helpful to use this to give the chief invigilator information on individual candidates. The 'Other relevant information' box can be used to give the invigilator information about the conduct of the examination.

Using sign in external assessments: mandatory guidelines for candidates

Are you working with a sign communicator? Do you know that there are certain things you should and shouldn't do?

You should have had previous practice in working with your sign communicator, and both of you should be well prepared for working together under the assessment conditions.

You must:

- ◆ clearly indicate to your sign communicator which questions (or parts of questions) in a question paper you wish to have signed. You can ask for parts of the question paper to be signed again as often as necessary, but the sign communicator cannot suggest or choose which parts
- ◆ study and interpret any reference maps, diagrams, graphs etc., on your own. Your sign communicator can sign any labels or text to you

You will:

- ◆ have the option of writing some assessment responses and signing others. You may also supplement your signed response with additional written or graphic material

If you choose to sign your responses in your assessments, SQA will require your signed responses to be filmed, so you must be comfortable with, and have had practice of, being filmed. A completed consent form is required.

Remember

Your sign communicator will take great care when signing a question in a question paper to you. No additional explanation or assistance will be given. Remember that what your sign communicator is allowed to do in the exam may be different from what he or she does in the classroom.

Filming candidates who use sign

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

- 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 tape/disk 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 candidate. Before the start of the assessment, you should check the candidate 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 — candidate's name, Scottish Candidate Number, centre name and number, assessment and level/paper known as the clapperboard — should be presented to camera at the start of the examination (see example in Appendix 1). If the label on the DVD later becomes detached, this is an effective way of identifying both candidate and assessment.
- 8 If an audio technician is available, he or she should check the equipment before the assessment starts. If it is at all possible, he or she should be on standby in case the equipment breaks down.

Checklist for filming deaf signing candidates:

ACCOMMODATION

- | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|
| | | ✓ |
| 1 | Is the room being used for the assessment large enough? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 | Is the room well lit? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 | Can the curtains/blinds be drawn to avoid sun/glare? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 | Are there enough chairs and tables for all personnel? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 | Are the walls plain and free from distracting information? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6 | Is the camera clock set at zero? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7 | Is an 'Assessment in progress' sign attached to the door? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8 | Is the appropriate clapperboard available, and does it match the assessment? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9 | Is the distance from camera to candidate about 4–5 metres? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10 | Is the distance from candidate to sign communicator about 1–2 metres? | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Checklist for filming deaf signing candidates:

CAMERA OPERATIONS

(In some centres the audio technician will set and check equipment prior to the examination starting. However, not all centres will have this option available.)

- | | | |
|----|---|--------------------------|
| | | ✓ |
| 1 | Are you familiar with the on/off controls of the camera? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 | Have you enough disk space? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 | Do you have the right disks for your recording? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 | Have you double-checked that the camera works prior to the start of the assessment? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 | Have you set the camera on a tripod? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6 | Do you know where to plug in or charge the equipment? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7 | Do you have extension cables and safety pads (if you need them)? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8 | Have you set to record in 'long play', if available? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9 | Have you set the tape counter to zero? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10 | If you are using batteries, do you have spares? (Avoid using old batteries) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11 | Is the appropriate clapperboard available? | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Checklist for filming deaf signing candidates:

CANDIDATE PREPARATION

Has your candidate



- 1 Practised signing to camera?
- 2 Signed the declaration sheet (see over the page)?
- 3 Practised reviewing their responses to camera?

Does your candidate

- 4 Know their Scottish Candidate Number?
- 5 Know the dates and times of their assessments?
- 6 Know the location of their assessments?
- 7 Know the main people involved in the assessment, eg examination invigilator?
- 8 Have the correct equipment for the examination?

Have you

- 9 Checked that the clapperboard contains the correct information?
- 10 Checked that your candidate understands the procedure for requesting questions to be signed?



Filming of candidate's signed responses in SQA examinations

Candidate name	
Scottish Candidate Number	
Centre name	
Centre number	

I have completed a list of assessments, indicating the assessments in which I might sign my responses.

I have checked that the clapperboard containing my personal information is correct.

I agree to the filming of my signed responses in the assessments.

I understand that the DVDs will be sent to SQA.

I understand that persons unknown to me will review these DVDs.

Signature _____ Date _____

Translation/transcription: further guidance

- ◆ Transcribers must have an appropriate level of skill in signing.
- ◆ Transcription should take place when the assessment is finished. Only in exceptional circumstances should it be done during an assessment.
- ◆ Transcription should be translation from sign into the most reasonable and accurate English in the context of the subject. No additional information must be added.
- ◆ If a word is finger-spelled wrongly, transcribe it correctly, i.e. correct the spelling error.
- ◆ If at all possible, get a colleague to help with the transcription. One of you must be the subject specialist who has been working with the candidate.
- ◆ Annotate on the assessment or question paper if there is a break in the recording, eg candidate rest break, toilet break, fire alarm.
- ◆ Send a covering letter with the transcript if the candidate has specific signing skills, eg uses initials a lot of the time — this is incredibly helpful to SQA's reviewers.
- ◆ Remember to complete the flyleaf, detailing who acted as the sign communicator and who completed the transcription.
- ◆ If the transcription cannot be completed the same day as the assessment, the DVDs and assessments must be securely stored overnight.
- ◆ Do not involve the candidate in any way with the transcription.
- ◆ If possible, liaise with the head teacher regarding additional time to transcribe.
- ◆ Do not make or keep copies of the DVDs or the transcripts.
- ◆ A filming schedule for the assessment is incredibly helpful, for example, a list of the questions in a question paper that are signed. An exemplar is available in Appendix 2.

After the assessment: candidate responses and SQA's Sign Translation Review Group

After the assessment, candidates' transcribed assessment responses are sent out to SQA's teams of markers with all the other candidate scripts. They are then sent to our team of reviewers, who review the translations/transcriptions from each centre alongside the recorded evidence, to ensure that signed responses have been accurately transcribed.

Where concerns are raised by a reviewer about the transcription, eg if the transcript has missed out some pertinent points, this is noted and the scripts are sent to the appropriate principal assessor for further consideration and, where appropriate, marks are amended.

SQA's Sign Translation Review Group is made up of practising teachers of the deaf and experienced sign language interpreters from as wide a spread of geographical locations as possible. They have the appropriate skill and level in signing for the subject and level they review.

Further information

For help and information on assessment arrangements for deaf candidates, contact the Assessment Arrangements Team:

Assessment Arrangements Team

Tel: 0345 213 6890

aarequests@sqa.org.uk

For further details of SQA's Sign Translation Group and SQA's policy on the use of sign in SQA assessments, contact:

Annette Foulcer

Tel: 0345 213 5559

annette.foulcer@sqa.org.uk

Patricia McDonald

0345 213 5558

patricia.mcdonald@sqa.org.uk

Appendix 1: Clapperboard⁴

Name			
Candidate number			
Centre name			
Centre number			
Assessment title			
Level		Date	

⁴ This should be filmed along with the candidate's piece of work in case the DVD label becomes detached

Appendix 3: Good practice in assessing deaf candidates in talking and listening components in English National 3 to Higher (including Literacy)

Introduction

This guidance will share methods and examples of good practice in assessing deaf candidates in the listening and talking components in English (including Literacy). The guidance will also explain more about how to manage the group dynamics so other candidates, and support staff, understand how to work with the deaf⁵ candidate.

Preparing deaf candidates for assessment

Because deaf pupils often prefer to investigate new subject areas using visual resources on the internet (for example Google Images) you should try, wherever possible, to ensure that deaf candidates have access to internet resources — especially as many signed dictionaries are online.

A teacher of the deaf can advise about different ways deaf candidates can access listening. For example:

- ◆ improve the listening environment
- ◆ reduce the group size
- ◆ use an FM system with a directional microphone
- ◆ use a soundfield system

For a deaf candidate who uses sign language, methods can include:

- ◆ reducing the group size
- ◆ checking that the candidate is comfortable with the member of staff who is signing
- ◆ doing some deaf awareness with the hearing classmates⁶ (so they are aware of the lag that exists when a deaf signing student is joining in a discussion)
- ◆ strong chairing of a group discussion by a pupil will help the deaf candidate make contributions
- ◆ deaf candidates can also access discussion by watching a note-taker work live (near verbatim) on a laptop

Group dynamics

You can decide, in consultation with your candidate(s) how best to arrange this. For example, one deaf candidate who uses speech may be best placed in a small group. You would need to then prepare by checking that the acoustic conditions

⁵ The term 'deaf' as we are using it here means any degree of hearing loss, in one or both ears, from mild to profound. The particular needs of deaf candidates will vary a great deal.

⁶ Appendix A contains some helpful bullet points for other hearing candidates

are suitable, or by providing a live note-taker if this is the method the candidate usually uses in class to follow discussion. If the deaf candidate's voice is not easily understood by the hearing classmates, it could be re-spoken by the teacher for deaf children or word-processed to screen. The hearing candidates will then not be disadvantaged by having a deaf candidate in their discussion group⁷. Practising this approach in class will ensure they are well prepared for their assessment.

When setting up a group discussion that includes a deaf candidate, you will need to pay attention to where support staff sit in relation to the other candidates. It is important to maintain sight lines in any discussion, so a horseshoe arrangement works very well. The sign language interpreter will usually sit opposite the deaf candidate. The deaf candidate should sit with their back to the window so that light falls on the interpreter and the candidate is not looking at someone signing against the light. Background noise can be minimised in the discussion room by choosing a room with a carpet and soft furnishings, closing windows and doors, turning off humming equipment such as overhead projectors and printers, and putting rubber feet on chairs and tables.

If the deaf candidate uses her or his own voice, it is important that the other pupils in the group can understand it. If they can't, it may be possible for a teacher of deaf children with good word-processing skills to do live note-taking to screen so that the hearing candidates can follow the deaf candidate's oral contributions.

Deaf candidates with a range of methods of communication will find group discussion difficult unless they have practised it. The hearing candidates in the group must also be well prepared about turn-taking when working with an interpreter or live note-taker. Hearing pupils and/or other deaf pupils in the group should be trained/ and encouraged to ask the deaf pupil to clarify what they are saying if it is unclearly expressed. They should be made aware that an interpreter, if present, will be unable to fulfil this role. In classwork leading up to the assessment, you should experiment with the deaf candidate taking on the chairing role; deaf pupils are rarely offered this opportunity in mixed deaf/hearing groups.

Assessment

Involve the teacher of the deaf in providing advice about preparation of the assessment. FM systems should be charged. The candidate should have spare batteries for personal hearing aids or implants. Where candidates require to be filmed for verification purposes, the video camera should be checked, and it is advisable to make sure that there's a backup camera.

The English teacher and the teacher of the deaf will need to work together in assessing the candidate.

⁷ If appropriate, hearing pupils in a group should be given the opportunity to be assessed at another time.

If the deaf candidate doesn't pass the assessment, review the arrangements you have put in place. Make sure that the arrangements are right for your particular deaf candidate and have not caused any disadvantage.

You can find more information on assessing deaf candidates in the Literacy Unit on our secure website. Ask your SQA co-ordinator for help.

Good practice in working with a sign language interpreter

Sign language is a visual gestural language that makes use of space and involves movement of the hands, body, face and head. Try not to be nervous when speaking through an interpreter, here a few easy things to remember when speaking to a deaf person:

- ◆ Always speak directly to the deaf person, never to the interpreter.
- ◆ Speak in your usual way; it's not necessary to speak loudly or to over-enunciate.
- ◆ Try not to be anxious, the interpreter will tell you if you need to repeat something or if you need to slow down.
- ◆ Make eye contact with the deaf person; remember natural facial expressions and gestures are an important part of sign language.
- ◆ When talking, don't cover your face and mouth. Avoid holding things near your mouth, eating, or waving your hands in front of your face — these things can be distracting.
- ◆ Interpreting is physically and mentally demanding, so there may be frequent breaks.