



Speech recognition technology in SQA exams and assessments

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Introduction

This guidance document provides detailed information on using speech recognition technology in SQA's external exams. This information must be read in conjunction with Assessment Arrangements Explained: Information for Centres on the [Assessment Arrangements webpage](#) of our website.

The use of speech recognition technology in SQA's internal and external assessments is regarded as an assessment arrangement and as such any centre requesting its use for a learner must follow SQA's principles. The technology can be used by disabled learners and those with additional support needs.

Speech recognition in exams and assessments

Speech recognition can be a suitable assessment arrangement for learners with writing or spelling difficulties, visual impairment or physical disability. Learners must be confident, competent users of the technology before it is used in an assessment or exam.

Can speech recognition be used in any exam?

Speech recognition can be used in most exams and assessments (including National 3 and 4 Literacy units and National Courses in English). However, in Modern Language and Gaelic (Learners) writing assessments, it is the overall quality of the written language, including spelling accuracy, that is being assessed. Use of speech recognition technology (which always uses correctly spelled words) would compromise the integrity of the assessment and would not be allowed in these exams.

Which speech recognition technologies can be used in an exam?

Any speech recognition technology (including online speech recognition such as Google Voice Typing, iOS Dictation and Windows Dictate) can be used in an exam or assessment, provided that the security of the assessment is maintained. Further information on our ICT security requirements can be found in our ICT Security Checklist on our [secure website](#).

The most common speech recognition tools are listed below.

Speech recognition technology	Devices	Requires internet?
Windows Voice Typing	Windows	Yes
Microsoft Office Dictate	Windows, Chromebook, iPad	Yes
Windows voice access	Windows 11	No
Dragon Professional	Windows	No
Dictation on iPad	iPad / iPhone / Mac	Yes
iPad Voice Control	iPad / iPhone / Mac	No
Chromebook Dictation	Chromebook	Yes
Google Docs voice typing	Chromebook, Windows (in the Chrome browser)	Yes

Requesting an assessment arrangement to use speech recognition in an exam

Where a learner is using speech recognition software along with the paper copy of a question paper in the external exam, centres should request this using the Assessment Arrangements Request (AAR) system. Centres should select the 'Use of ICT' option and insert more information in the 'Other' field, for example, 'Chromebook Dictation', 'Google Docs voice typing', 'iOS Dictation', 'Windows Voice Typing', 'Office Dictate' or Dragon NaturallySpeaking' and the name of any screen or text reader software, if this is also used.

Where a learner is using speech recognition technology along with a digital question paper, centres should select the Digital Question Paper option and insert more

information in the 'Other' field, for example the name of the speech recognition technology and details of any screen or text reader software if this is also used.

There is no need to contact us where speech recognition is used in internal assessments.

Security

Learners can use online speech recognition technology, provided they adhere to our security requirements, as detailed in the ICT security checklist. For example, they must not be able to access information or files stored on the internet, including a local drive or cloud storage. In practice, there are two options to ensure that learners cannot access information via the internet when using speech recognition:

1. Use speech recognition that does not require an internet connection such as Dragon, Voice Access or Voice Control.
2. Use online speech recognition, but configure the device so that the learner can **only** use the speech recognition function. They must not be able to access anything else online.

The device used in an exam should be configured and checked by centre staff to ensure that it is secure and that our security requirements as detailed in the ICT Security Checklist are adhered to. The ICT Security Checklist can be found on our [secure website](#) under NQ, then Assessment Arrangements. The speech recognition system must be checked by the learner before it is used in an assessment including SQA exams. You must also ensure that the required technical resources are available and that our technical and security requirements on the ICT security checklist have been met.

Macros and abbreviations

With some speech recognition technology, 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.

Spellchecker

It is not necessary to disable any spellcheckers as speech recognition always uses correctly spelled words.

Correction of speech recognition errors

Speech recognition is never 100% accurate, so there will always be some degree of misrecognition of the text dictated by the learner. Some learners can identify and correct misrecognitions, but other learners 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 recognition errors. The way in which this will be carried out, based on the individual needs of the learner, must be discussed and agreed with us by contacting the [Assessment Arrangements Team](#) in advance of the assessment.

Extra time

While speech recognition is usually a much faster method of generating text than typing or handwriting, the learner still needs to read and interpret questions, and plan and compose answers. In addition, the learner may require time to proofread and correct recognition errors. The use of extra time should be considered, following our principles of assessment arrangements as set out in *Assessment Arrangements Explained: Information for centres* which can be found on the [About assessment arrangements](#) page of our website.

Separate accommodation

Separate accommodation should be requested in order to prevent the learner's spoken answers being overheard by other learners.

Contingency arrangements

The contingency arrangements that apply in all exams apply also to learners using speech recognition technology. If any technical difficulties occur during the exam, a designated teacher or technician can be allowed into the exam room to repair or provide another machine, or to advise on software solutions to enable the learner to complete the exam. The learner will be given an additional allowance of time equal to the time lost, and should be advised of this at once to alleviate any anxiety.

If the problem is solved by repair or replacement of the device, and the allowance of additional time, the matter should simply be reported to SQA by the invigilator. If a fault spoils or changes the learner's work, a brief report should be prepared by the invigilator. This should be sent to the Assessment Arrangements Team.

Remember: If there are any technical difficulties, a scribe or reader should be available as a contingency if the learner requires this type of support. You do not need to record this on the AAR system.

CALL Scotland has some excellent advice on [speech recognition software](#).