

Good Practice in Assessing deaf candidates in Talking and Listening Components in English National 3 – 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 deaf* 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 classmates† (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 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

* 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.

† Appendix 1 contains some helpful bullet points for other hearing candidates

group‡. 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/ 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.

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.

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

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