

# Access arrangements

Last year the **Scottish Sensory Centre (SSC)** and **BATOD** hosted a successful webinar on Exams and Access Arrangements specific to deaf learners. The webinar generated the following questions and answers

BATOD strongly urges members to continue to feedback to BATOD on what is working well and what needs improving with access arrangements across the UK.

## Is there separate guidance relating to Key Stage two SATs? (in England)

There is separate guidance, which was last updated in October 2021, produced by the Standards and Testing Agency. As far as access arrangements are concerned, there are not quite as many as would be needed for GCSE. But the main ones are still in place. You can ask for a reader, extra time, and any other arrangements that would be considered the candidate's normal way of working, such as a scribe; there is also the option of asking for compensatory marks for spelling for deaf pupils who may not be able to access the spelling; application is still completed online; it is a lot more straightforward in terms of what the staff have to do in primary settings. If the young person has a sensory need, you or the setting don't have to give as much evidence as is needed when it gets to GCSE level.

## Would a scribe have to be used as the normal way of working before arranging it in exams?

Definitely. However, the pupil would not have to have a scribe for every task that they are doing. Obviously, we still want them to be writing themselves as well, but the young person who struggles to get their ideas written down themselves in the classroom would benefit from having somebody to scribe for them so they do not have to write everything. A teaching assistant said "you know, actually, he just needs to sit and listen to the teacher when the other children are writing things down". Often, such children need to sit and listen to the teacher when other children in class are able to listen and make notes at the same time; this could be used as evidence of the child needing it as their normal way of working.

## When information is being shared by local authorities with parents of children who are deaf, which cohorts of children should receive information about exam access arrangement advice? Should the access arrangements letters be shared with individuals who have unilateral losses, for example?

My service does annual reports, including even for children and young people with a monaural loss. We would be supplying those reports that are copied to

**SSC**  
scottish sensory centre

**BATOD**  
British Association of  
Teachers of the Deaf

homes and settings. So, yes, we always include advice and recommendations when we're talking about exam access arrangements for those young people. For example, it might be that they're doing listening assessments for which they need certain arrangements in place, including seating arrangements. So it's always worth considering for any young person with any sort of loss, even if it's a temporary loss; it might be that they've got a temporary loss and they will need some things putting in place for it. And it's not a problem if it's a

temporary thing, maybe caused by injury or something like that. There is actually guidance in the regulations about that, and the settings still need to make those reasonable adjustments for those young people as well. As pupils may be faced with listening assessments throughout their school career, it is important to consider the needs of all deaf children. Considering seating arrangements will also be important for a pupil with any degree of deafness, as well as for pupils with temporary deafness (please see the regulations for more advice regarding this). Each pupil's hearing needs should be considered carefully on an individual basis and it may be that they would benefit from additional arrangements that are related to their other learning needs. Access arrangements for additional learning needs would need to be assessed by the setting. Qualified Teachers of the Deaf (QToDs) can only provide evidence and advice regarding access arrangements that are pertinent to the pupil's hearing needs.

## How can we provide access to those who may have language deprivation scores slightly higher than 70 but will not be able to access the exam papers without language modification?

A Language Modifier (LM) is not available with Access Arrangements Online but centres can apply directly to the awarding body (AB). Details can be found in the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) regulations. Centres might try to argue a case for someone scoring slightly above 69 on a relevant standardised test, but they should be aware that it has become harder to qualify for an LM in recent years as a result of AB concerns. LM is described in JCQ regulations as "an arrangement of last resort".

## I understand at the moment that a pupil who has British Sign Language (BSL) as their first

### **language cannot be included in the speaking and listening GCSE exams. Are there reasonable adjustments we can make if the student does not wish to be exempt?**

I assume you are referring to the non-exam assessment of speaking and listening in English GCSE.

It's been some years since I worked in school and all my deaf students had English as their first language. At the time, speaking and listening made up part of the English GCSE grade. There were problems with the audience understanding the deaf student's speech and with the deaf student understanding questions from the audience. We got round this by using a PowerPoint presentation with bullet points and images that the speaker could address in their presentation, and by using me as a go-between to present questions and comments from the audience to the speaker. This was acceptable to the exam board and always worked very well. See also:

[www.batod.org.uk/information/gcse-english-language-spoken-language-endorsement-advice-to-teachers](http://www.batod.org.uk/information/gcse-english-language-spoken-language-endorsement-advice-to-teachers)

I did quite a few arrangements around GCSE modern languages. What we did was that sometimes, when we didn't have two speakers, we had two pictures – let's say a man and a woman if that's what the dialogue was – and we would just point to them. We were also allowed to use fingerspelling of the initial name of the person as the start, and also, I think, for proper nouns. So, those were arrangements that were possible with modern foreign languages (MFL) in England.

### **What examples of assessments would you recommend for assessing language to use for evidence?**

It is quite difficult to find those standardised tests that give a score of 69 or less that Qualified ToDs can actually administer. One option is the Gray Oral Reading Test or the Gray Silent Reading Test, which can generate a score of 69 or less. Other tests can be used to paint a picture of need, and it would be useful to include in a report any other tests that have been administered, even if they do not give a score of 69 or less, as they will help to paint a picture of need for the young person. For example, a lower than average British Picture Vocabulary Scale (BPVS) test result may demonstrate a weakness in receptive vocabulary. If applying for a LM, however, the test used must give a score of 69 or less.

### **Would the York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension (YARC) be suitable?**

This is from a colleague in Scotland.

It is worth looking at the manuals and checking just to see whether the YARC will produce a score of less than 70. As long as it's looking at those areas that need to be assessed then it would be fine. It is always worth going to the awarding body and talking with them if you think that there is a young person who would really benefit from a LM but they do not have a score of 69 or less. They use YARC in Northumberland. The Edinburgh Reading test may also be useful.

### **In Scotland, have their regulations about using**

### **subtitles in English assessment changed or are they still not allowed?**

I think that the main guidance is what happens in class normally. If that happens in class normally then that's what you ask for and it is quite possible to negotiate with

Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). It is not quite so fixed as it is in the rest of the UK. See:

[www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files\\_ccc/Good-Practice-Guidelines.pdf](http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/Good-Practice-Guidelines.pdf)

### **A level Spanish – all sections including listening are within one paper; does anyone have any experience of access arrangements for MFL exams in this format?**

I assume that if a live speaker is needed for the listening section, then separate accommodation will be needed for the whole exam and the candidate will then be able to access the listening at any time they wish during the exam time.

Rather than doing four separate papers, listening, writing and reading are put together, and so, effectively, the students can go back to the reading if they are stuck or go forward onto the writing, and then go back to their listening. It's just how to manage that, I think, but we should not put the deaf students at a disadvantage by saying you'll have a live speaker in this part but then not have access to that later on during the exam.

If they were being accommodated separately, would that help with the problem? They could sit the entire exam but there they have separate invigilation so it wouldn't matter perhaps if there was a live speaker for the listening element? It would be giving them access and in the same way, as you know, making it fair.

### **For a candidate with BSL what are the access arrangements for the speaking and listening component in GCSE English?**

See: [www.batod.org.uk/information/gcse-english-language-spoken-language-endorsement-advice-to-teachers](http://www.batod.org.uk/information/gcse-english-language-spoken-language-endorsement-advice-to-teachers)

### **For a BSL student who wishes to take GCSE English speaking and listening, can any adjustments be made?**

Not in my experience. We weren't able to find a way of making adjustments that would maintain the validity of the exam. So, the students were disappplied from that section.

I had students who did have speech as well as BSL but the speech couldn't always be understood by other people in the group. So, an adjustment that I gained from the exam board was to have myself or another person who knew the student well, working as an electronic note taker working to screen so the other students could check the spoken English of the deaf candidate. And this was the same with the questions, in case the deaf student was not able to understand them as they came in from the rest of the group, this was allowed several times, not just once. So, I feel it is something you could try.

I did a similar thing with oral deaf students a few years

ago in that they were allowed to use a PowerPoint presentation to back up what they were saying because their speech wasn't very easily understood. The questions were put through me as an interpreter, if you like and that was regarded as acceptable.

What we've done up to now is the student has made a transcript of his speech and he has a full-time interpreter. So, the interpreter interpreted the student's speech that he presented in BSL. The interpreter, the student and I were videoed, so that somebody, another professional, could then access that and make sure that everything that the student was signing was accurately portrayed by the interpreter. So, do you think that would be acceptable? It just seems unfair that he had to be exempt when everybody else in the class had made arrangements for everything else to be so arranged that he could join in, but he wasn't able to do this part of the exam.

It is important to remember that this is not an exhaustive list. I think it's important to talk to the exam boards, really, and ask. They need to make reasonable adjustments and really want all pupils to have the same opportunities to demonstrate what they know and can do. Amendments are made to the regulations on a yearly basis. The professionals writing the arrangements are not trained ToDs, so that is why we have input to try and look at where the loopholes are and try and see what would work. Arrangements that are not listed but are the normal way of working for pupils, should be discussed with JCQ/ABs.

The ABs will be able to offer support and further advice.

You should go back to the AB describing in detail the student's issues with accessibility and the measures that

you have taken, also stating how you have tried to make them fair and equitable, and see what their response is.

### **Do you feel all further edition (FE) subject courses should be modified at source?**

I think they should, but at present only the ABs for general qualifications routinely have papers modified at source, and not all of them use BATOD-accredited modifiers. Another AB, the Northern Council for Further Education (NCFE), has employed me more and more in the last couple of years to modify papers in a wide range of subjects including functional skills in maths, English and science, child care, dental nursing, music technology and engineering. I have also recently modified a range of T Level (technical level) papers. Hopefully other ABs will follow NCFE's example of providing modification at source in an increasing number of exams.

If the questioner knows from experience or past papers that a paper might present language access issues to a particular candidate, they could ask the relevant AB if a language modified paper might be provided. Colleagues might also write to relevant ABs asking them to consider modifying papers at source.

The recording of the webinar is still available for purchase via this link

[www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk/courses/deaf/dsep21a.html](http://www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk/courses/deaf/dsep21a.html)

In order to be able to provide feedback to exam boards and Ofqual/SQA we very much need BATOD members to inform us about the quality of the examinations their students are sitting. If you have any queries about access arrangements that you would like to raise with BATOD's access arrangement working group please contact us via [exec@batod.org.uk](mailto:exec@batod.org.uk)

## **BATOD Tier 2 Online Language Modification**

**This course will be useful CPD for any Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (QToDs) who want to develop a specific understanding of how to make exam questions more accessible. It may be of interest to anyone working in the post-16 sector with an interest in writing accessible examinations. Cost: £200.**

For BATOD members, successful completion of Tier 2 can lead to a BATOD Language Modifier opportunity.

Visit the BATOD website for more details:

[www.batod.org.uk/resource/batod-tier-2-online-language-modification](http://www.batod.org.uk/resource/batod-tier-2-online-language-modification)

or contact us via [langmod@batod.org.uk](mailto:langmod@batod.org.uk)



## **Taylor & Francis Co-Editor Announcement**

**Taylor & Francis is pleased to announce Kristin Snoddon & Elizabeth Levesque as the new Co-Editors for Deafness & Education International!**

Kristin & Elizabeth have both served as Executive Editors for their respective regions on the D&EI Editorial Board since December 2018, and are a welcome addition to our Editor Team, joining standing Co-Editor-in-Chief, Jill Duncan. Taylor & Francis would also like to thank and acknowledge Rachel O'Neill for her many years of dedication and service to the journal, which span far beyond her 5 years as Co-Editor-in-Chief. We wish Rachel all the best and continued success with her next endeavours!



## BATOD Magazine

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The image shows the cover of the December 2022 issue of BATOD Magazine. At the top left is the BATOD logo with the text 'British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People'. To the right of the logo, it says 'MAGAZINE • Dec 2022 • ISSN 1336-0799 • www.batod.org.uk'. The main title 'Moving on' is in large orange letters. Below the title are four photographs: a woman and a child walking, a young girl holding a sign, a person presenting at a meeting, and two children with a gingerbread house. At the bottom, there is a green banner with the text 'Join BATOD to get THE Magazine for professionals in deaf education (0-25)'.

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### Moving on

**Hands 2 hear**  
**STRB and BATOD**  
**Cognition, language and the**  
**brain of deaf individuals**

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