

How can CSWs be confident in exams?



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Latest update April 2023



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This resource is not an official document and it has a limited range, but it may help to clarify, provide options for action and suggest best practice. It does not contain advice specifically for online or computer-based examinations. This is an area that has its own issues that will be dealt with at some point in the future in a separate document. It does not contain advice specifically for university, key skills or vocational examinations, although the general advice contained in this document will help there also.

Exams are an area of concern for many Communication Support Workers (CSWs). Many find themselves in compromised situations that cause them worry and frustration, and leave them out on a limb. Sometimes, the CSW is expected to work in extremely compromising exam situations at short notice, such as in the absence of an invigilator or being alone in a room with the candidate. On these points alone, a CSW must never be alone in a room with a candidate and an invigilator must be

present at all times. Note: *An examination centre is committing maladministration if an invigilator is not present in the examination room.* The CSW should make every effort to repair these and other situations, but should bear in mind that an attempt to repair the problems may result, at worst, in the candidate not being able to sit the exam, or at best, that the situation cannot be repaired without a scene. It is always best practice to anticipate problems and liaise before the event.

The overriding aim of the CSW in an examination situation is to provide the best possible environment and communication to facilitate appropriate access for the d/Deaf candidate. CSWs may feel discomfort because they may need to take control of the situation and inform people who are not d/Deaf aware, but appropriate access for the d/Deaf candidate is always the aim. If it is achieved, in whatever measure, the CSW will finish the assignment with a clear conscience and the candidate will have fairer access to the exam experience.

1. Preparation. Before the exam.

Briefly, there are potentially two very different roles a CSW may be expected to perform in the examination:

1 Communication Professional (CP). If you are a CSW and have been with the d/Deaf student through the course and used British Sign Language (BSL) in the classroom, this is similar to that regular role – you may sign the instructions and questions to candidates sitting written papers – but with a big difference: ***you must not clarify or support the candidate in any other way. You must not sign subject-specific words; you must fingerspell them only.***

If you are nervous because you are not a qualified interpreter, remember, this is a role, not a label. The regulations state that the person who acts in the role of CP must be:

- a. proficient in the use of the candidate's sign language, ideally being qualified to a minimum of BSL/ISL (Irish Sign Language) at Level 3 (and aspiring towards Level 6).
- b. at an appropriate level for the examination. It is advisable that the CP should also be a qualified Language Modifier (LM).
- c. familiar to the candidate and must always work at the candidate's pace.
- d. familiar with the subject being examined and the candidate's normal way of working. This will ensure that the meaning of the question is not changed and that technical and subject specific terms are recognised and fingerspelt.

CSWs regularly perform the role of CP in examinations because they are the best people to do so, bearing in mind the above and because of the fact that very few qualified interpreters work in education. If you are nervous about performing this role or concerned about the adequacy of your own skills, you **must** discuss this with your line manager.

2 Language Modifier (LM). This is for candidates who require a support worker to provide clarifications of carrier language. The CSW could **say** the word or phrase, use **manually coded English** (fingerspelling, Cued Speech or SSE [Sign Supported English]) **BSL** or **writing** to explain the meaning of a word or phrase. Whatever method is used must reflect the candidate's normal way of working. As with the CP role above, ***you must not explain subject-specific words; you must lipspeak/fingerspell etc only.***

If you don't know which role you are expected to perform, **do not assume anything**. Find out from the Examinations Officer (EO) well in advance which provision has been granted.

For more information about both these roles, the **Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ)** has all the information (www.jcq.org.uk). Bear in mind however, that the information is geared toward EOs, not CSWs. This document is for CSWs.

Be aware that if extra time, a separate room and other adjustments have been granted, they should already be in place. It is not your responsibility to make sure they are in place, but prior to the examination date, you can urge the centre to make the proper arrangements. To help you, try enlisting the aid of the Qualified Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People (QToD), the EO and other colleagues. For detailed information, see the JCQ: '[Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations](#)'.

For both roles, make sure you obtain a copy of the exam paper an hour before the exam starts. You normally obtain these from the EO. You can then look at the questions, prepare how to sign them and identify subject-specific words and phrases. A modified language paper should have been ordered for the candidate, so make sure you have the correct version. Note: LMs are often involved in the production of the standard paper to benefit all candidates, so a language-modified version may not have been produced, but do check with the EO.

Ensure you have a bottle of water, blank paper and pen before you enter the exam room. Remove the label from the bottled water. Locate the nearest toilet to the exam room and agree a time with someone to cover for you for a five-minute toilet break if required.

With these in place, you will not feel alone, and there will be back-up if needed. **However, do not take your phone in to the exam room, or any other unauthorised material such as books, notes and study aids.** A large percentage of malpractice issues arise from the presence of mobile phones. Frequently, an invigilator will have an exam centre's mobile phone that can be used, especially if the exam is in a separate building. It is best not to risk any problems.

2. General best practice. During the exam.

You must provide proof of what you have done to support the candidate. It is the EO's responsibility to supply you with **Form 6: Communication Professional Cover Sheet**, or **Form 6a: Language Modifier Cover Sheet**.

Prepopulated Cover sheets.

Cover sheets on which the examination centre and candidate details are already printed can be obtained by EO when an LM application is made and approved online, and where a CP has been granted. CSWs will not be able to obtain these prepopulated sheets because the online application system is password protected. CSWs must therefore liaise with the EO to obtain a prepopulated cover sheet. This will show that the provision of LM has been granted by the awarding body. If CSWs are not in direct contact with the EO, they should request the prepopulated sheet from the QToD or their line manager, who will then contact the EO. However, in the event that the sheet is not available, download an unpopulated sheet, complete it as directed and give to the EO (or the invigilator or whoever has asked you to support the candidate) at the end of the exam.

Make sure that you have the correct cover sheet before the exam starts. If the cover sheet is not to hand for any reason, make sure you have an unpopulated cover sheet ready (downloaded from www.jcq.org.uk). As a last resort, use a plain sheet of paper. Write the date, your name, the candidate's name, details of exam reference, module, exam awarding body etc. Then proceed to record *everything* you do: if you are in the role of CP and the candidate asks you to sign a question, write on the paper, "Signed the whole of question number... etc"; if you are in the role of LM and the candidate asks you to sign a word that is not subject specific, detail it. You must also underline **on the examination paper itself** the parts of the question paper that you explained or rephrased.

The cover sheet must be submitted with the candidate's script and your annotated exam paper along with form 6/6a, to the EO or invigilator or whoever. Ask them to sign for it.

Filming the examination. Some educational institutions provide a camera and tripod in the exam room as a matter of course. Everything is filmed for these reasons:

- a) Should there be any issue arising from the CSW or the candidate, or if there is an application for a retake, a viewing of the recording will provide evidence for an informed decision. For video evidence to be used in an appeal, however, an agreement must have been made prior to the exam that filming can take place.
- b) The CSW will be constantly reminded that their actions are being scrutinised. It is an added reminder to make sure that everything is done with the utmost care.

3. Responsibility. After the exam.

When the exam has finished, make a photocopy of the Form 6 (CP) or Form 6a (LM) and everything you have written and keep one for your records.

IMPORTANT: Make sure that the forms are given to the EO or invigilator responsible for the examination. If they are absent, obtain a name and signature from someone within the exams office or general school office. Do not leave paperwork on someone's desk. Make sure that the responsibility does not rest with you. Get a name and signature.

General notes.

1. Do not look at the candidate's answers.

CSWs should consider carefully whether to view the candidate's answers. There are many reasons:

- a. You may feel disappointment because a view of the answers might betray the fact that the candidate may fail.
- b. You may feel frustrated and think, "Maybe I haven't done my job properly", and will be tempted to help the candidate. **CSWs must not do that.**
- c. The temptation will be strong for the CSW to suggest that certain answers could be looked at again and possibly changed. **CSWs must not do that.**

2. The candidate asks you the meaning of a word.

If you are in the role of LM, the candidate may not necessarily ask you to sign the whole of a question but may ask you to sign one word. Remember, if the word is technical or subject-specific, you cannot sign the word. You must fingerspell/lipspeak etc only. Also, if you sign a non-technical or subject-specific term, you must bear in mind that you should not change the meaning, add additional information or explain what the question requires.

Use the following strategies:

- a. Preparation is all-important.** Make sure when you accept the assignment that you have been briefed sufficiently for the task. During the hour before the exam, you have the opportunity to read the exam paper and identify any possible technical or subject-specific terms.
- b. Caution is the best action.** If you give anything away, it will compromise the student and yourself. If in doubt, simply fingerspell/lipspeak etc the word and make a note of what you have done.

Note. The best way to solve this issue is preparation. All courses have technical or subject-specific terms. As early as possible on the course, the words should be made into a glossary with simple meanings. The glossary can then be reinforced and repeated through the course. Signs for keywords can be agreed and used throughout the course, but please bear in mind that signs for technical or subject-specific terms are not allowed to be used in the exam itself (fingerspelling/lipspeaking etc. only should be used). That is why a glossary with spellings and meanings is vital, so the candidate is aware of the spelling of keywords. It will also help a CSW who could be covering for you in the exam. Note: The candidate must not see the glossary during the examination.

3. The d/Deaf candidate (or another candidate in the exam) cheats.

BATOD and **JCQ** official policy is to always report malpractice. Do not delay and worry and weigh up the pros and cons – act without delay.

Note. Consider, under the guidance of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO), QToD etc holding a short meeting for groups of d/Deaf candidates, well before the exam date. The meeting can discuss many issues around exams and can include what will happen if cheating occurs. This means that a warning about cheating should not be given minutes before the exam starts, when candidates may be stressed. Candidates should be made aware of the content of JCQ '*Notice to Candidates*' and '*Warning to Candidates*'.

Before the exam: Clarify your role with your line manager, invigilator, course tutor and candidate. Use the sheet entitled, 'Information for examination Invigilator' on page 14 of this document. That sheet will explain your role and the invigilator's role and clarify what you are expected to do if cheating happens. It is your responsibility to make sure your role is clear before the examination starts.

If you spot an infringement and delay and worry and do nothing until after the exam has finished, it will be impossible to do anything about the situation. Candidates will be leaving the room, the papers will have been collected, evidence will have been taken away, and possibly nothing can be proved. However, be aware that when you inform the invigilator, it must be done as confidentially as possible to prevent a scene taking place that will ruin the exam environment for all the candidates. Therefore, the best course of action is the following:

Action:

- a. Pass the responsibility to the invigilator as soon as you spot anything untoward. The best way of doing this is to write a note containing all the details of the infringement and give it to the invigilator as soon as possible, with as little fuss as possible, and take your seat.
- b. If you are not sure that an infringement has taken place, write a note to the invigilator explaining the details, explaining that you are not sure, and ask them to keep an eye on the situation. Again, pass the responsibility to the invigilator.

Note. Be aware that **all** personnel in examinations are potential perpetrators of malpractice. Be careful of your own actions.

Note: Any infringement should be treated in the same way – not specific to these access arrangements; therefore, the CSW must follow the procedures that apply in all such cases and doesn't have to decide to do anything separate or different.

3. There is no invigilator.

Action: **Do not support the candidate when there is no invigilator present.** This cannot be stressed enough. Many CSWs support candidates in exams without an invigilator as a matter of course. They must not continue to do so.

If you have been told you must explain the following:

1. It is unethical to perform the two roles at the same time.
2. It is **JCQ** and **BATOD** policy that CSWs do not work alone in exams.
3. There must be safeguards for your performance. Without an invigilator, should an issue arise later, you will have no third party witness of what you have done.
4. The candidate's rights must be considered. Proper invigilation must be in place.

The best course of action is to prepare in good time for this issue. Inform relevant personnel that an invigilator must be present, and that you cannot work alone. That way, enough time is given for provision to be in place, and there will be no risk of the candidate either: a) taking the exam without language support, or b) not taking the exam.

If you have been asked to support a d/Deaf candidate in an exam because a CSW has refused to work without an invigilator, do not accept the assignment unless an invigilator is there. Do not make the situation worse for colleagues who are attempting to solve a difficult situation.

If the invigilator leaves the room, follow the invigilator out. Invigilators should not only have had training in general procedures for examination halls, etc but also additional training in examinations for children and young people with special educational needs. Work with the invigilator as closely as you can.

4. You have been asked to support several candidates at the same time.

Action: Do not support several candidates at the same time if you can help it. Although you may be asked to, in practice, it is potentially a very difficult scenario to administer.

If you have been told you must, consider doing the following:

- a) Make sure all the candidates sit in proximity to each other (so you are not rushing around the room).
- b) Ask the invigilator for extra copies of the exam paper. One extra paper for each candidate (if you have two candidates, ask for two extra papers for yourself). This is because each one will proceed at a different pace. Place the papers in front of you and keep up with each candidate, turning the pages of each of the papers to be at the same place as each candidate. This means that when you are asked a question, you are ready to find it quickly without rustling and lots of panic.
- c. If one candidate takes up a lot of your time, make sure you respond immediately if another requires your attention.
- d. Fill out Form 6 (CP), Form 6A (LM) for each candidate and submit each to the EO (the forms supplied depend on which access arrangement is in place).
- e. When you have finished, review your actions, inform the relevant personnel of the inappropriate situation and make a note for the future.

5. Review what you have done.

It is good practice to review, reflect and evaluate using the following criteria:

- 1. Your own actions.** Your practice and performance.
- 2. The scenario.** The exam setting and personnel.
- 3. Your team.** Supervision and support systems.

Consider what went well, what went not so well and areas of concern. Consider actions for the future, for yourself and others in your team. Make sure you inform all relevant professionals of areas for concern, and be assured that the experience will put you in good stead for the future. If you know of a better way, or can offer good advice, please feed back to BATOD.



www.batod.org.uk

A wealth of legislation, access arrangements, forms and guidelines are available from the Joint Council for Qualifications website:

www.jcq.org.uk

For information about the Language Modifier role, there are some excellent resources on the Institute of Educational Assessors website:

www.ciea.org.uk

Always adhere to the CSW Code of Practice, which can be found on the BATOD website:

www.batod.org.uk

For a wealth of information on the role of Teacher of the Deaf and related issues see also the BATOD website:

www.batod.org.uk

Acknowledgement:

JCQ has been consulted in the compiling of this document.

Note: This document is not a code of practice that must be adhered to by CSWs. It is simply advice and guidance in the general area of examinations. It may well raise more questions in people's minds, especially concerning the role of the Language Modifier. See the BATOD website.

CSWs' Handy guidelines for supporting d/Deaf students in examinations.

The Examinations Officer should supply you with **Form 6: Communication Professional Cover Sheet**, or **Form 6A: Language Modifier Cover Sheet**, which already contain the centre's and candidate's details. The forms supplied would depend on which arrangement had been agreed. These forms must be used for all written examinations. If the forms have not been supplied, download them from the JCQ website and complete all details, including details of the exam ie: specification details and codes. Whichever form you use, all interactions must be recorded on the form. The CSW may use the reverse of the sheet, and a separate sheet of A4 paper if needed. Date, number and sign each sheet used. The CSW must accurately write down the following:

1. What the candidate has signed by way of request for support.
2. What the candidate has signed in answer to a question. The CSW can write a single word answer when the candidate signed it, or when the candidate has fingerspelt the whole answer.
3. What the CSW has signed.
4. Any other information that might have a bearing on the examination process. This will aid the examiner or moderator.

The CSW must also write all the above **on the examination paper itself**.

If any problems in communication occur, the CSW must immediately refer to the invigilator. This may include when a candidate asks you to sign a word or phrase that is possibly subject-specific, and the CSW is unsure if signing is appropriate.

Note: BSL can be used to interpret the rubric/carrier language in English examinations although not of course the content of the examination questions themselves. If the

examination involves the candidate's English being assessed or in a foreign language exam, Sign language Interpreting is not permitted. Also, the LM is not permitted in components testing reading.

The CSW **may** do the following:

1. Sign the whole of any given question.
2. Sign a word or phrase in the question that is not subject-specific.
3. Repeat the signing of a question or phrase or word at the candidate's request.
4. Advise the candidate of time remaining.

The CSW **must** do the following:

1. Conduct the support of the examination process in accordance with the JCQ regulations.
2. In the event of a candidate cheating, the invigilator must be informed immediately.
3. In the event of malpractice by any other persons present in the exam, the invigilator must be informed immediately.
4. Give the forms (JCQ Form 6 or 6A) to the invigilator or the Examinations Officer for submitting with the examination paper.

The CSW **must not** do the following:

1. Aid the candidate by offering facts or suggestions.
2. Indicate when an answer is complete.
3. Advise the candidate which questions to answer.
4. Advise the candidate when to move to the next question.
5. Advise the candidate of the order in which questions should be answered.
6. Advise the candidate which questions to review for possible change.

Information for examination invigilator

This sheet has been given to you by a communication support worker (CSW). The CSW has been appointed (according to the awarding body regulations) to carry out communication tasks at the instruction of a candidate who has particular needs in accessing the examination. The title of this support role is one of the following:

Communication Professional or Language Modifier.

This sheet contains a brief overview of the role of a CSW so that you can be comfortable with the CSW being there, and so that the CSW can work with confidence.

The CSW **may** do the following:

1. Sign the whole of any given question.
2. Sign a word or phrase in the question that is not subject-specific.
3. Repeat the signing of a question or phrase or word at the candidate's request.
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The CSW **must** do the following:

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1. Aid the candidate by offering facts or suggestions.
2. Indicate when an answer is complete.
3. Advise the candidate which questions to answer.
4. Advise the candidate when to move to the next question.

5. Advise the candidate of the order in which questions should be answered.

6. Advise the candidate which questions to review for possible change.

All interactions between the candidate and the CSW must be recorded on a support sheet. The CSW must accurately write down: what the candidate has signed, what the CSW has signed and any other information that might have a bearing on the examination process.

The Invigilator.

The CSW will regard the invigilator as a colleague in the examination environment.

Should any problems occur that the CSW cannot solve, the invigilator will be referred to. This may include the following:

1. The examination environment is not suitable for the successful performance of the duties of a CSW. The invigilator may be asked to help solve the problem.

2. Malpractice by a candidate. The CSW will write a note and give it to the invigilator.

IMPORTANT: The invigilator should be aware that the reporting of malpractice by a CSW can potentially cause a difficult situation, both in the examination and subsequently, and therefore must make every effort to protect the identity of the informant, both at the time of the incident, and if the identity is asked for when a report is made.

At the close of the examination, the CSW may give the invigilator **Form 6: Communication Professional Cover Sheet** or **Form 6A: Language Modifier Cover Sheet**. These are to be submitted with the examination paper. Please make sure these sheets are given to the Examinations Officer. The CSW will ask for a signature.