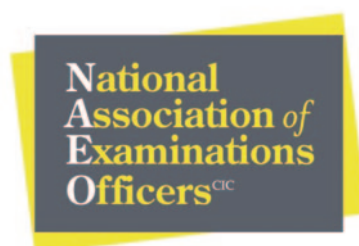
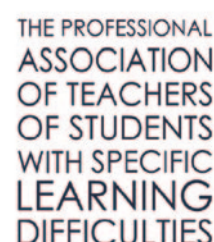
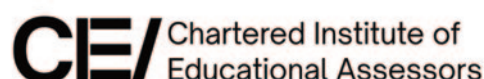


Language of Examinations

Guidance for accessible language in education and assessment



4th Edition

September 2026

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To reference this publication use:

Quail, T, Heppenstall, D, O'Neill, R, McBride, S, Ebbels, S. and Reay, S. (2026) *Language of Examinations: Guidance for accessible language in education and assessment*. 4th edn. British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (BATOD)

Foreword

Language is central to learning, teaching, and assessment and may be expressed and accessed in different ways. Assessments should enable learners to demonstrate what they know, understand, and can do without being disadvantaged by unnecessary linguistic barriers.

Language of Examinations has a longstanding history of promoting greater linguistic accessibility in assessment. Earlier editions focused primarily on improving access for deaf learners and established principles of language modification that have influenced practice over many years.

This fourth edition builds on that important foundation while reflecting developments in research, policy, and professional practice. It reflects the growing evidence that the language used in examinations and other assessments may also present barriers for learners with developmental language disorder (DLD); language disorder associated with a biomedical condition; autism; speech, language and communication needs (SLCN); specific learning difficulties (SpLDs), and other learners who experience language and communication barriers in assessment.

This edition also reflects an important development in approach. Rather than considering accessibility only after an assessment has been produced, it promotes **accessibility by design**: anticipating and reducing unnecessary linguistic barriers, throughout teaching, learning, and the assessment-development process. This supports continuity with a learner's normal way of working so that appropriate language accessibility is embedded in everyday educational practice rather than introduced only at the point of formal assessment. This does not replace modified papers or other reasonable adjustments, which remain essential for some learners, but provides an opportunity to improve **language accessibility from the earliest stages of teaching and learning through to formal assessment**.

Normal or usual way of working

The term 'normal way of working' is used within JCQ arrangements, while 'usual way of working' is the terminology used in Scotland. Both describe the established support or arrangements that a learner routinely uses to access teaching, learning and assessment.

Normal or usual way of working should be informed by a range of evidence, which may include internal screening, the learner's views, teacher observations, school or college data and, where appropriate, assessment by relevant professionals.

For qualifications covered by JCQ arrangements, evidence for access arrangements should be gathered in accordance with the current JCQ requirements, including the relevant requirements relating to assessment from Year 9 (Year 10 in Northern Ireland) onwards. In Scotland, the terminology, evidence requirements and procedures of the relevant assessment framework should be followed.

Normal or usual way of working demonstrates that an arrangement is routinely and effectively used in teaching, learning and internal assessment and supports the learner to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills in external assessment without changing the demands of the assessment.

For the purposes of this guidance, the term 'normal way of working' will be used throughout.

The guidance draws on research, professional expertise and practical experience across education, health and other agencies. It has also been informed by collaboration between awarding bodies, regulators, practitioners and organisations.

This reflects a shared commitment to improving accessibility while maintaining the construct, academic demand, validity, reliability, and integrity of assessment.

Language accessibility is not an exact science, and this publication is not intended to prescribe a single way of writing or modifying every assessment question. Instead, it provides principles and practical guidance to support thoughtful, evidence-informed decision-making.

We hope this fourth edition will support awarding bodies, regulators, assessment writers, language modifiers, teachers, speech and language therapists, specialist professionals, and others involved in teaching, learning, and assessment to work collaboratively towards a shared goal, **enabling learners to demonstrate what they know, understand, and can do without unnecessary linguistic barriers.**

Acknowledgements

The fourth edition of *Language of Examinations* has been developed through the collective expertise, commitment, and collaboration of professionals and organisations dedicated to improving the accessibility, fairness, and validity of examinations and assessments.

This edition builds on the longstanding work of the British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (BATOD), whose earlier editions established important principles of language modification and accessible assessment practice for deaf learners, and helped shape approaches to accessible assessment across the United Kingdom (UK).

The editors would like to acknowledge the outstanding contribution of Derek Heppenstall, whose authorship of previous editions and longstanding expertise in language modification have provided the foundation for this guidance. As a Qualified Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People (QToD), BATOD Accredited Language Modifier (BALM), and Chartered Educational Assessor, his work with awarding bodies and in professional training has made a significant contribution to the development of language modification practice. We also gratefully acknowledge the work of Rachel O'Neill, Maureen Jefferson, Jenny Baxter, Carrie MacHattie, Paul Simpson, and Nicky Weightman, whose contributions to earlier editions have helped shape its development over many years.

The development of this edition was shaped by a wider programme of collaborative work on accessible examinations. In 2025 the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) convened a UK-wide multidisciplinary working group to examine the accessibility of public examinations for learners with DLD. The group's report recognised the important contribution that previous editions of *Language of Examinations* had made to accessible assessment practice and highlighted the value of building on these established principles.

The discussions that followed brought together organisations and professionals with expertise in deaf education, speech and language therapy, specialist teaching and assessment, specific learning difficulties, accessibility, and inclusive practice. This collaboration informed the development of the fourth edition, retaining the important foundations of earlier editions while broadening its scope and reflecting current research, policy, and professional practice.

We extend our sincere thanks to the partner and supporting organisations whose expertise, experience, and commitment have contributed to this edition:

- Afasic
- British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (BATOD)
- British Dyslexia Association (BDA)
- Communicate-ed
- Moor House School & College
- National Association of Examinations Officers (NAEO)
- National Association of professionals supporting language and communication (DLD) (NAPLIC)
- National Association of Special Educational Needs (nasen)
- Professional Association of Teachers of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties (Patoss)
- Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT)
- Speech and Language UK

We are also grateful to colleagues from awarding bodies, regulators, and other organisations who have generously shared their expertise, provided constructive feedback, and supported this guidance.

Above all, we recognise the commitment of the many QToDs, SaLTs, specialist teachers, specialist assessors, classroom teachers, special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs), additional learning needs coordinators (ALNCOs), learning support coordinators, support for learning teachers, educational psychologists, researchers, examination writers, language modifiers, and other educational professionals whose knowledge and experience continue to advance accessible assessment practice across the UK.

Editorial group

The fourth edition has been developed by a multidisciplinary editorial group representing expertise in assessment; deaf education; speech, language and communication; specific learning difficulties; accessibility, and inclusive practice.

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Contributors

The Editorial group would like to thank the individuals who reviewed and provided feedback on this edition. Sharing invaluable specialist expertise and helping to ensure that it reflects current evidence and multidisciplinary practice.

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This publication represents a **joint consensus**. While individual organisations and contributors bring expertise relating to particular learner groups and professional perspectives, the principles and recommendations within this guidance reflect a shared commitment to improving linguistic accessibility for learners while maintaining the validity, reliability, and integrity of assessment.

AI use statement

Generative AI tools were used on a limited basis to support editorial tasks, including refining wording, improving concision and identifying repetition. All substantive content, evidence, professional judgements and final editorial decisions were reviewed and agreed by the authors and editorial team.

Executive summary

Language is fundamental to learning, teaching, and assessment. Every assessment requires learners to understand what is being asked before they can demonstrate their knowledge, understanding, and skills. Where assessment language is unnecessarily complex, it can create linguistic barriers that are unrelated to the construct being assessed and may affect the accessibility, fairness, and validity of assessment.

Language is expressed and accessed through different modalities, including spoken, written and signed language. Language accessibility therefore extends beyond the words printed on a page and includes how learners understand and use language across teaching, learning, and assessment.

The principles underpinning Language of Examinations have developed over several decades. Early work on language modification emerged from concerns about the accessibility of examinations for deaf learners, with discussions beginning in the 1970s and the first edition of Language of Examinations subsequently published in 1989. Since then, understanding of linguistic accessibility and inclusive assessment has continued to develop.

This evolution has taken place alongside significant developments in disability, equality, and special or additional educational needs legislation across the UK. The legislative frameworks differ across the four nations. In England, Wales, and Scotland, the Equality Act 2010 provides the principal equality framework, while Northern Ireland operates under separate equality legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended). Each nation also has its own legislation relating to special or additional educational needs and disability. Together with developments in education and assessment policy, these frameworks have strengthened expectations around accessibility, inclusion, and reasonable adjustments.

Over time, awarding bodies and assessment organisations have increasingly considered accessibility within the design and development of assessments, rather than solely through adjustments made after assessment materials have been produced. At the same time, research and professional practice have increased understanding of the range of learners who may experience linguistic barriers in assessment.

This fourth edition reflects these developments while retaining the fundamental principles established through earlier editions. It promotes **accessibility by design**, in which

linguistic accessibility is considered throughout the assessment development process, from initial question writing and item review through to quality assurance and final approval.

A practical application of this approach is modification at source: applying accessible language principles during development so that unnecessary linguistic barriers can be identified and addressed before assessment materials are finalised.

Improving linguistic accessibility is **not about making assessments easier**. The intended construct, knowledge, concepts, technical vocabulary, assessment objectives and cognitive demand must be maintained. The aim is to reduce unnecessary demands created by the carrier language of an assessment so that learners have a fair opportunity to demonstrate what they know, understand, and can do.

Accessibility by design does not remove the need for reasonable adjustments. Some learners will continue to require modified papers and other appropriate access arrangements where their individual needs cannot be fully addressed through assessment design alone. Accessible assessment design, modification at source, and reasonable adjustments should therefore be understood as complementary approaches within an inclusive assessment system.

The principles within this guidance are also relevant beyond public examinations. They can inform classroom teaching, instructions, learning materials, tasks, and everyday assessment, supporting greater consistency in language accessibility across teaching, learning and assessment.

Developed through multidisciplinary collaboration, this fourth edition draws on current research, professional expertise and practical experience.

This resource is presented in two parts. **Part A** develops understanding of language accessibility by setting out the key concepts, evidence, professional expertise and assessment, and regulatory context. **Part B** focuses on application, providing practical principles, guidance, worked examples and tools to support accessible assessment practice. Readers may use the resource sequentially or refer directly to the sections most relevant to their role and purpose.

Key recommendations

This guidance recommends that those who design, develop, regulate, and deliver assessments should:

- embed **accessibility by design** from the earliest stages of assessment development through to quality assurance and final approval
- apply **modification at source** wherever possible to reduce unnecessary linguistic barriers and the need for post-production adaptations
- ensure that improvements to linguistic accessibility do not alter the intended construct, assessment objectives, technical vocabulary, cognitive demand, or standard of assessment
- draw on multidisciplinary expertise, including QToDs, SaLTs, specialist teachers, specialist assessors, assessment specialists, and people with lived experience
- continue to provide modified papers, appropriate reasonable adjustments, and access arrangements where barriers cannot be fully addressed through assessment design alone
- recognise linguistic accessibility as an integral component of fair, valid, and high-quality assessment.

The central principle remains that assessment language should enable learners to understand what is being asked without removing or reducing what the assessment is intended to measure.

Part A

Understanding language accessibility

Chapter 1. Introduction

History of this guidance

The principles of language accessibility described throughout this guidance have evolved over several decades through collaboration between educators, specialists, awarding bodies, and regulators.

In 1976 a small group of QToDs working in further education met to share professional experience and to address the barriers that deaf learners encountered when undertaking public examinations. Convened by Peter Greenwood, headteacher of a school for deaf children, the group initially focused on collating examination arrangements and identifying common challenges experienced by learners.

As interest grew, regional meetings developed into a national network, leading to the establishment of the National Study Group in Further Education for the Hearing Impaired, with Joyce Sutton as chair. In 1984 the group became the National Association of Teachers of the Deaf in Further and Higher Education (NATED).

NATED worked closely with awarding bodies to improve access for deaf learners and played a significant role in promoting clearer examination language. This work led to the development of guidance on language modification, culminating in the publication of the first edition of *Language of Examinations* in 1989. That guidance provided practical advice for language modifiers working with awarding body committees to ensure that the wording of papers was as accessible as possible and established many of the principles that continue to underpin accessible assessment.

Since the publication of the first edition, understanding of language accessibility has developed considerably. While the earliest work focused primarily on improving access for deaf learners, subsequent research and practice have demonstrated the relevance of language accessibility to a broader range of learners. These needs and the supporting evidence are considered in **Chapter 3**.

At the same time, approaches to assessment design have evolved. Accessibility is increasingly considered throughout assessment development rather than solely through modification after materials have been produced.

Language modification remains an important component of accessible assessment. It sits alongside approaches that consider linguistic accessibility during the development of the standard assessment, while modified papers and other reasonable adjustments continue to provide access for learners who require them.

Purpose of this guidance

The purpose of Language of Examinations is to support those involved in the design, development, review, and modification of assessment materials to identify and reduce unnecessary linguistic barriers.

This guidance focuses particularly on **carrier language**: the language used to present an assessment task rather than the knowledge, concepts, technical vocabulary, or skills that form part of what is being assessed.

The guidance provides practical principles and examples to support:

- the design and development of public examinations and other formal assessments
- the review and modification of assessment questions and materials
- the development of modified examination papers
- the design, adaptation, and review of classroom tasks, assessment materials, and other materials used in teaching and learning.

The guidance is intended as an evidence-informed reference and as a practical resource. Readers may use individual chapters according to their role and purpose; those seeking practical guidance on assessment writing and modification may wish to refer directly to **Chapters 6–9** and the checklist in **Appendix 3**.

Scope

This guidance applies to the design, development, review, and modification of assessment materials across subject areas and qualification levels. While it retains a particular focus on public examinations, its principles have wider relevance to teaching, learning, and assessment.

Language may be expressed and accessed through spoken, written, and signed modalities. The principles are therefore relevant across teaching, learning and assessment.

The guidance complements, rather than replaces, subject-specific guidance and requirements relating to access arrangements and reasonable adjustments. It should be read alongside current guidance produced by relevant awarding bodies, regulators, and professional bodies.

The language modifier used as an access arrangement during a live examination is a distinct Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) role governed by specific requirements. This is considered in **Chapter 2** and should not be confused with the planned review or modification of assessment materials.

Intended audience

This guidance is intended for those involved in the design, development, review, modification, and delivery of assessments, including:

- awarding bodies and regulators
- assessment developers and question writers
- assessment reviewers, chief examiners, and revisers
- BATOD Accredited Language Modifiers (BALMs)
- accessibility reviewers
- Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (QToDs)
- speech and language therapists (SaLTs)
- specialist teachers and specialist assessors
- access arrangements assessors
- teachers and other education professionals involved in designing, reviewing, or adapting classroom tasks and assessment materials, including special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs), additional learning needs coordinators (ALNCOs), learning support coordinators and support for learning teachers
- senior leaders and curriculum leaders with responsibility for assessment design and inclusive practice.

Learners who may experience linguistic barriers in assessment

Unnecessarily complex assessment language may create barriers for a diverse range of learners. These include, but are not limited to, deaf learners; learners with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), including developmental language disorder (DLD) and language disorder associated with a biomedical condition; autistic learners; learners with specific learning difficulties (SpLDs), and other learners who may experience difficulties understanding or using language across teaching, learning, and assessment.

These needs may co-occur, and individual learners may experience overlapping language, literacy, processing, attention or communication difficulties.

The extent to which assessment language creates a barrier will depend on the individual learner's language and learning profile, the linguistic demands of the task, and the construct being assessed. Learners within the same diagnostic or educational category will not necessarily experience the same barriers or require the same adaptations.

Language, literacy, processing, attention and communication needs may also co-occur. The evidence relating to individual and co-occurring needs is considered in **Chapter 3**.

Terminology used throughout this guidance

Terminology relating to speech, language, communication, and special or additional educational needs differs between professional contexts and across the four UK nations.

Speech, language, and communication needs (SLCN) is used within both education and health, although its meaning and the way needs are identified and recorded can vary.

Within education, SLCN may be used as a specific category or descriptor of special or additional educational need.

Within health and speech and language therapy, SLCN may also be used as a broader umbrella term for needs affecting speech, language, and/or communication. These needs may occur on their own or alongside another condition or identified need.

Throughout Language of Examinations, both uses are recognised. A learner does not need to be formally identified or recorded within an educational SLCN category to experience speech, language, or communication needs that affect access to teaching, learning, and assessment.

Where a specific diagnosis, condition, or educational category is intended, this is named wherever possible.

Developmental language disorder (DLD) is a persistent language disorder that affects the understanding and/or use of spoken language and is not associated with a known biomedical condition.

Language disorder associated with a biomedical condition refers to language difficulties that occur as part of an identified biomedical condition, including autism or deafness, genetic conditions, and other medical conditions.

Autistic learners have diverse language and communication profiles. Some may experience linguistic barriers in assessment, particularly where questions rely on inference, ambiguity, figurative language, implicit contextual knowledge, or complex language structures, while others may not. Some autistic learners have language difficulties similar to those experienced by learners with DLD.

Specific learning difficulties (SpLDs) is used throughout this guidance as an umbrella term for neurodevelopmental differences that primarily affect specific aspects of learning. These include, but are not limited to, dyslexia, dyscalculia, developmental coordination disorder (dyspraxia), dysgraphia, and related specific learning difficulties. Individuals with SpLDs have diverse profiles of strengths and needs, and not all learners with an SpLD will experience language-related barriers in assessment.

NB: Terminology, definitions, and systems for identifying and recording these needs differ across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

Why language accessibility matters

Learners differ in how they access, acquire, process, and use language. These differences may affect access to vocabulary, grammar, instructions, written text, and other linguistic demands encountered in teaching, learning, and assessment. In assessment, these difficulties can interact with the linguistic demands of a question. A learner may have the required subject knowledge but experience difficulty understanding what the question requires. Where those language demands are not part of the intended construct, they may become an unnecessary barrier to demonstrating knowledge and skills.

The purpose is **not to make an assessment easier or provide an advantage**. Concepts, subject knowledge, assessment objectives, essential technical vocabulary, and cognitive demand must be maintained. The aim is to remove or reduce linguistic complexity that is unnecessary to what the assessment is intended to measure.

It should also be recognised that some learners may experience difficulty expressing their responses in standard written English despite having the required subject knowledge.

Key concepts

The following concepts provide a common framework for the guidance in subsequent chapters.

Accessibility by design

Accessibility by design is the overarching approach of considering linguistic accessibility throughout the assessment development process. By embedding accessible language principles from the earliest stages of question writing through review, quality assurance, and final approval, unnecessary linguistic barriers can be identified and addressed before assessment materials are finalised, rather than relying solely on adaptations made afterwards.

Accessibility by design complements, rather than replaces, modified papers and other reasonable adjustments for learners who continue to require them.

Accessible language

Accessible language enables learners to understand what a task or assessment requires without unnecessary linguistic barriers, while preserving the intended construct and level of demand.

Assessment command words

Assessment command words indicate what a learner is required to do in response to a question, for example, *identify*, *describe*, *explain*, *compare*, *analyse*, *evaluate*, or *justify*. They are an important part of assessment language because they communicate the nature and, in some contexts, the depth of the response expected.

Command words should not be changed simply to make a question appear linguistically simpler where doing so would alter the assessment objective, cognitive demand or expected response. Their meaning and use may also vary between subjects, qualifications, and awarding bodies, and should therefore be considered within the relevant assessment context.

As with subject-specific vocabulary, command words should be **explicitly taught, explained and revisited** as part of teaching and learning. Learners need opportunities to understand what different command words require and to practise responding to them within the context of individual subjects.

Where a command word is integral to the assessment objective, it should be retained. Language accessibility should focus on ensuring that the carrier language surrounding the command word is as clear and accessible as possible, without altering what the learner is being asked to demonstrate.

See **Appendix 1** for examples of commonly used assessment command words and considerations for teaching and accessible assessment.

Carrier language

Carrier language refers to the language used to present a question or task rather than the knowledge, understanding, or skills being assessed. It includes instructions, sentence structure, and supporting text.

Language modification focuses on adapting carrier language where appropriate without altering the concepts, technical vocabulary, or assessment objectives that form part of the assessed construct.

Language modification

Language modification is the process of reviewing and, where appropriate, adapting the carrier language of an assessment to improve accessibility while maintaining the intended construct, assessment objectives, and level of demand.

Language modification may take place during the development of the original assessment or subsequently, as part of producing a modified paper. Applying language-modification principles during development can improve the accessibility of the standard assessment, while some learners may continue to require a separate language-modified paper or individual access arrangements. The availability and form of such provision varies according to the relevant qualification framework and awarding body.

Any changes must not alter the meaning of a question, reduce subject demand, remove essential technical vocabulary, provide unintended clues, or weaken the relationship between the question and the mark scheme.

In this guidance, the term *language modification* describes a process and should not be confused with the specific JCQ examination access-arrangement role of *language modifier*. A language modifier provides support to an eligible learner during a live examination under specific rules and requirements. This distinct access arrangement is considered in **Chapter 2**.

Modification at source

Modification at source refers specifically to the application of language modification principles during the development of the original assessment, before assessment materials are finalised.

It enables potential linguistic barriers to be identified and addressed as part of mainstream question development rather than relying solely on post-production modification.

Modification at source enables linguistic accessibility to be considered alongside the intended construct, assessment objectives, technical vocabulary, level of demand, and mark scheme. It may also promote greater consistency between standard and modified assessment materials, where these are provided.

Subject-specific or technical vocabulary

Subject-specific or technical vocabulary may form part of the construct being assessed and should not normally be modified where learners are expected to know and understand them.

Each subject has its own vocabulary and ways of using language. Where subject-specific terminology forms part of the knowledge learners are expected to acquire, it should be **explicitly taught, explained, and revisited as part of teaching and learning**, so that learners have opportunities to develop and consolidate their understanding of both the terminology and how it is used within the subject.

Awarding bodies identify the technical vocabulary learners are expected to know through the relevant specification or assessment framework.

In assessment, language modification should therefore focus on the **carrier language surrounding essential technical terminology**, rather than replacing subject-specific words that form part of what is being assessed.

How these concepts relate

The terms used within this guidance are related but distinct:

Term	Role
Accessibility by design	Overarching approach
Language modification	Process
Language modifier	Specific examination access arrangement role (JCQ)
Modification at source	Application during development

Applying accessible language or language modification principles within assessment design does not in itself mean that an individual is undertaking the specific examination access-arrangement role of language modifier.

Core principles

The guidance throughout this publication is underpinned by five core principles.

1. Learners should be assessed on what they know and can do, not on their ability to decode unnecessarily complex language.

Language accessibility should reduce barriers that are unrelated to the intended construct so that assessments measure the knowledge, understanding, and skills they are designed to assess.

2. Language accessibility improves fairness without making assessments easier.

The concepts, assessment objectives, technical vocabulary, and cognitive demand of an assessment must remain unchanged. Accessible language reduces construct-irrelevant linguistic barriers while maintaining the validity, reliability, and integrity of assessment.

3. Accessibility by design should be embedded throughout assessment development.

Linguistic accessibility should be considered throughout assessment development rather than only after materials have been produced.

4. Modified papers remain an important reasonable adjustment.

Accessibility by design complements, but does not replace, modified papers and other reasonable adjustments for learners who require them, where these are available within the relevant assessment framework.

5. Language accessibility is a component of high-quality assessment.

Producing assessments that are fair, valid, and accessible benefits a wide range of learners and represents good assessment practice. Language accessibility should therefore be regarded as an integral component of assessment quality rather than an additional consideration.

Key message

Accessible language does not make an assessment easier. It removes unnecessary linguistic barriers so that learners have a fair opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge, understanding, and skills the assessment is intended to measure.

Chapter 2. Language modification in public examinations

Language modification has an established role in supporting access to public examinations. It may be applied at different stages of the assessment process, from the development and review of examination papers to individual JCQ access arrangements for eligible candidates.

As outlined in **Chapter 1**, it is important to distinguish between **language modification as a process**, the role of **BATOD Accredited Language Modifiers (BALMs)** in assessment development, and the specific examination access-arrangement role of **language modifier**.

Although related, these are not interchangeable.

Language modification as a process

Language modification may be applied:

- during development of the original assessment as **modification at source**
- subsequently during the production of a **language-modified paper**
- within the specific examination access-arrangement role of **language modifier**, where permitted under the relevant regulations.

The context in which language modification takes place determines the professional roles, requirements, and procedures that apply.

BATOD Accredited Language Modifiers

BATOD Accredited Language Modifiers (BALMs) are professionals who have undertaken specialist training and accreditation in language modification through BATOD. They may contribute specialist linguistic-accessibility expertise to the development, review, and modification of assessment materials. Their modifications may apply to all candidates sitting that paper. Their role, and its relationship with other professional experts, is considered further in **Chapter 4**.

The language modifier access arrangement

As a JCQ access arrangement, the language modifier works with an individual eligible candidate within the requirements and restrictions established by the relevant awarding arrangements. Centres applying for language modification as an access arrangement must always also apply for a language-modified paper.

As a JCQ access arrangement, the language modifier works with an individual eligible candidate within the requirements and restrictions established by the relevant JCQ requirements. **Language modification is provided** when the individual has made a specific request during the examination.

Where the language modifier access arrangement is used, centres must follow the current JCQ requirements, including any requirements relating to the use of a language modified paper.

For qualifications covered by JCQ, the requirements governing access arrangements and reasonable adjustments, including the language modifier arrangement, are set out in JCQ guidance. JCQ has historically published an updated Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (AARA): Adjustments for candidates with disabilities and learning difficulties document for each academic year. As these requirements are updated periodically, professionals should refer to the current edition rather than relying on requirements reproduced in this publication.

At the time of publication of this fourth edition, **JCQ is undertaking a review of its access-arrangements requirements and guidance.**

The review includes consideration of evidence requirements and thresholds, eligibility, normal way of working expectations, the clarity and readability of the published requirements, and associated supporting documentation.

For this reason, this guidance does **not reproduce detailed eligibility criteria, evidence thresholds or procedural requirements for the language modifier arrangement.** These may change as regulations and guidance develop.

Centres and professionals should always consult the current JCQ AARA, including the rules governing the use of a language modifier and the associated memory aid, together with any relevant awarding body guidance, when considering or implementing this arrangement.

The principles in Language of Examinations are intended to support understanding of linguistic accessibility and language modification. They do not replace JCQ regulations or determine a learner's eligibility for an access arrangement.

Important distinction

Applying accessible language or language modification principles when writing, teaching, or reviewing an assessment does **not** mean that a teacher, assessment writer, or other professional is undertaking the specific examination access-arrangement role of a language modifier.

Language-modified examination papers

Some learners may require a **language-modified examination paper** as a reasonable adjustment.

Language-modified papers aim to improve linguistic accessibility while preserving the intended construct, assessment objectives, essential subject-specific terminology, and cognitive demand of the assessment.

The term **language-modified paper** is used specifically within this guidance where linguistic modification is intended. The broader term **modified paper** may encompass other forms of modification provided for different access needs.

The availability, production and use of language-modified papers vary across awarding bodies and qualification frameworks. A language-modified paper should not be assumed to be a bespoke version produced for an individual learner. Where provided, it is a separate version of an assessment produced in advance for eligible learners in accordance with the relevant requirements and awarding-body procedures.

Language-modified papers remain an important part of accessible assessment provision. Improving the accessibility of standard examination papers can reduce unnecessary linguistic barriers for many learners, but it cannot address every individual's needs.

Accessibility by design and modification at source therefore **complement, rather than replace, language-modified papers and individual reasonable adjustments** where these are available and appropriate within the relevant assessment framework.

Language modification within public examination development

Within public examinations, language accessibility can be considered throughout the awarding body's assessment-development process rather than solely after an examination paper has been completed.

Applying language-modification principles during the development of the original assessment enables linguistic accessibility to be considered alongside the construct, assessment objectives, subject content, cognitive demand and marking requirements.

Assessment-development processes vary between awarding bodies. The following provides an illustrative example of how language accessibility may be incorporated into the development of a public examination:

1. Defining the construct and assessment objectives

The intended construct and assessment objectives are established, including the knowledge, understanding, and skills that the assessment is intended to measure.

2. Developing questions and tasks

Questions and tasks are developed to reflect the specification, intended construct, and assessment objectives, with accessible-language principles considered from the outset.

3. Reviewing subject accuracy and level of demand

Subject and assessment specialists review questions for accuracy, validity, level of demand, and alignment with the specification and assessment objectives.

4. Reviewing language and accessibility

The language and accessibility of questions are reviewed to identify features that may create unnecessary barriers. This may include specialist review by a BATOD Accredited Language Modifier (BALM) or another appropriately qualified professional with relevant language-accessibility expertise.

5. Considering layout, presentation, and other access requirements

The presentation and organisation of information are considered alongside language accessibility, including whether layout or other features may create unnecessary barriers.

6. Checking alignment with the mark scheme

Questions, expected responses, and mark schemes are reviewed together to ensure that accessibility changes do not alter the assessment objective, intended response, or allocation of marks.

7. Reviewing proposed modifications where required

Question writers, subject specialists, assessment specialists, and language-accessibility specialists consider proposed modifications as appropriate, ensuring that improved accessibility does not alter the construct, subject content, or intended cognitive demand.

8. Quality assurance and independent checking

The assessment is reviewed for accuracy, consistency, accessibility, and alignment between the construct, assessment objectives, questions, and mark scheme, in accordance with the awarding body's quality-assurance procedures.

9. Evaluation following assessment delivery

Assessment materials and processes may be reviewed following delivery to identify learning that can inform the development and accessibility of future assessments.

This is an illustrative model rather than a prescribed process. Awarding bodies will have their own procedures for assessment development and quality assurance.

While the process illustrated above relates specifically to public examinations, the underlying principles of accessible language are also relevant to the development and review of classroom and setting-based tasks, learning materials, and assessments.

Multidisciplinary professional expertise in language accessibility is considered in **Chapter 4**, and the regulatory and awarding-organisation context is considered in **Chapter 5**.

The relationship between modification at source and post-production modification

Modification at source and the production of a separate language-modified paper are distinct approaches. Modification at source applies accessible-language principles during development of the standard assessment. Where an awarding body provides a language-modified paper, this is a separate version produced in advance for eligible learners in accordance with the relevant requirements and awarding body's procedures. These approaches may operate alongside individual access arrangements, where applicable. Their relationship within assessment development and access provision is considered further in **Chapter 5**.

Collaboration and professional expertise

Language accessibility draws on multidisciplinary expertise. The respective contributions of awarding bodies, subject and assessment specialists, BALMs, QToDs, SaLTs, specialist teachers and assessors, other professionals, and learners themselves are considered in **Chapter 4**.

Key message

Language modification is a process; a language modifier is a specific examination access-arrangement role. Language-modified papers are a separate form of provision. These should not be confused, and current JCQ and awarding-organisation requirements should always be consulted where access arrangements apply.

Chapter 3. The evidence underpinning language accessibility

Language accessibility is supported by evidence from deaf education, speech and language therapy, specialist teaching, literacy research, linguistics, psychology, cognitive science, and educational assessment (Cawthon, 2011; Oliveri, 2019; Riccardi et al, 2020; Tancredi et al, 2023; 2025; RCSLT, 2026).

Collectively, this evidence demonstrates that the language used to present an assessment can affect whether a learner is able to understand what is being asked and demonstrate their knowledge, understanding, and skills.

Unnecessary linguistic complexity can introduce demands that are unrelated to the intended construct, increasing language-processing and cognitive demands, and potentially reducing the validity and fairness of an assessment (Oliveri, 2019).

Research also indicates that reducing unnecessary linguistic complexity can improve learners' ability to understand and respond to assessment tasks without reducing the knowledge or skills being assessed (Riccardi et al, 2020). More recent research involving learners with language and/or attentional difficulties further highlights the importance of identifying and removing barriers within learning and assessment environments (Tancredi et al, 2023; 2025).

Taken together, this evidence supports the need to identify and reduce unnecessary linguistic barriers while preserving construct-relevant language, subject-specific terminology, and intended cognitive demand. Learners who experience linguistic barriers are not a homogeneous group. Language, communication, literacy, sensory, and cognitive profiles vary considerably, including among learners who share the same diagnosis or educational category. Many learners also have co-occurring needs.

Language accessibility should therefore not be determined by diagnosis alone. It requires consideration of:

- the construct being assessed
- the language needed to assess that construct
- the linguistic and processing demands of the task
- unnecessary demands that may interfere with access
- the effect of any proposed modification on the meaning, level and validity of the question.

Language underpins learning and assessment

Language is central to learning. It supports the acquisition of knowledge, the development of concepts, participation in teaching and discussion, problem-solving, literacy, and the communication of understanding. In an assessment, language is also the primary means through which the assessment task is conveyed.

Before learners can demonstrate subject knowledge, they must understand what the question requires them to do. This may involve:

- recognising and interpreting vocabulary
- understanding sentence structure
- identifying the relationship between different parts of a question
- interpreting command words
- distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information
- making inferences
- retaining instructions
- recalling relevant subject knowledge
- planning and formulating a response.

Every assessment question can be understood as containing two related elements:

1. **The construct being assessed**, for example, mathematical reasoning, scientific understanding, historical analysis, or interpretation of a literary text.
2. **The language used to communicate the task**, including vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, instructions, layout, and the organisation of information.

In some assessments, language is integral to the construct. For example, where a language itself is the subject being assessed, an examination may intentionally assess vocabulary, inference, interpretation, or the effects of particular grammatical choices. In these circumstances, modifying the relevant language could alter what is being assessed. This is distinct from the language or medium through which an assessment in another subject is presented and undertaken (see **Chapter 5**).

In other assessments, however, complex carrier language may be incidental. A mathematics question may require a candidate to demonstrate proportional reasoning but present the task through a lengthy scenario containing unfamiliar vocabulary, embedded clauses, and non-essential information. In such circumstances, language may introduce an additional demand that is not part of the mathematical construct.

The distinction between **subject demand and language demand** is therefore fundamental. Language accessibility seeks to ensure that learners can access the intended assessment task without first having to overcome avoidable linguistic barriers. It does not remove vocabulary, concepts, or reasoning that form part of the subject or assessment objective.

Key message

The language used in an assessment should be no more complex than is necessary to communicate and assess the intended knowledge, understanding, or skill.

Understanding the language demands of assessment

Assessment questions may contain several layers of language demand. Difficulty does not arise from vocabulary alone. Learners must interpret words within sentences, understand how ideas are connected, and integrate information across the question, supporting material and response options.

Linguistic features that may increase the processing demands of a question include:

- unfamiliar or low-frequency vocabulary
- vocabulary with several possible meanings
- words used differently in everyday and subject-specific contexts
- idiomatic or figurative expressions
- abstract or culturally dependent language
- long sentences
- embedded or subordinate clauses
- passive constructions
- nominalisations
- ambiguous pronouns or reference words
- negative and double-negative constructions
- several instructions within one sentence
- separation of the command word from the information to which it relates
- inconsistent terminology
- dense introductory scenarios
- unnecessary repetition or detail
- complex relationships between text, diagrams, tables, and response spaces
- questions that depend on implied rather than explicitly stated information.

These features are not always inappropriate. Their relevance depends upon the purpose of the assessment. A figurative expression may be essential in a question assessing literary interpretation but unnecessary in a science question. A passive construction may form part of the language being assessed in one context but create avoidable complexity in another.

Subject-specific terminology or assessment command words form should be retained where they form part of the construct or where they communicate the intended assessment objective. Language accessibility should focus on unnecessary complexity in the carrier language surrounding them (see **Chapter 1**). Determining whether a linguistic feature creates an unnecessary barrier therefore requires consideration of the construct and purpose of the task. The practical principles for making these judgements are set out in **Chapter 6**.

The aim is not to produce the shortest possible question. Excessive simplification can remove important information, disrupt cohesion, or change meaning. Accessible language must remain accurate, natural, age-appropriate, and relevant to the subject.

Working memory, cognitive load, and executive functioning

Understanding and responding to an assessment question requires learners to coordinate several cognitive and linguistic processes at the same time. These may include:

- understanding vocabulary and grammar
- retaining information in working memory
- identifying the central instruction
- selecting relevant information
- ignoring distracting or non-essential detail
- shifting between text, diagrams, tables, or source material
- retrieving subject knowledge
- planning a response
- monitoring progress
- checking that all parts of the question have been answered.

The demands placed on these processes are influenced not only by the content of the question but also by how the assessment is written, structured, and presented. The same knowledge or skill can be assessed through questions that place very different demands on attention, working memory, language processing, and executive functioning.

For example, a learner may be asked to complete the same underlying task through:

- one long sentence or several clearly sequenced sentences
- a dense paragraph or information divided into meaningful sections
- several instructions presented simultaneously or instructions presented in a clear order
- consistent terminology or unnecessary changes in wording
- closely connected text and visual material, or information spread across different pages
- a clearly identified command word or an instruction embedded within background information
- essential contextual detail or a lengthy scenario containing information that is not required.

These differences in presentation can affect how much cognitive effort is needed to locate, understand, retain, and organise the information before the learner can begin the intended subject task.

Working memory

Working memory allows information to be held temporarily while it is being processed and used.

In an examination, learners may need to retain the beginning of a sentence while interpreting its later clauses, remember several instructions, integrate information from different parts of a question, and connect the task with pre-existing subject knowledge.

Where a question contains lengthy sentences, embedded clauses, several conditions, or multiple instructions, a substantial amount of verbal information may need to be held in mind at once. If considerable capacity is required to decode and retain the wording of the question, fewer cognitive resources may remain available for reasoning, problem-solving, and formulating a response.

Reducing avoidable linguistic demands can therefore reduce demands on working memory without reducing the complexity of the intended subject task.

Cognitive load

Cognitive-load theory distinguishes between the mental effort required by the knowledge or skill being assessed and additional effort created by the way information is presented.

Some cognitive demand is intrinsic to the assessment. A complex mathematical problem, scientific explanation, or historical evaluation should require sustained thought. That demand should not be removed where it forms part of the construct.

However, learners may also experience extraneous cognitive load arising from features that are not essential to the assessment objective. These may include:

- unnecessarily complex carrier language
- poorly organised information
- ambiguous instructions
- excessive introductory detail
- repeated movement between separate sources of information
- inconsistent terminology
- overcrowded presentation
- multiple instructions compressed into one sentence
- unclear relationships between text, images, tables and response spaces.

Reducing this extraneous load does not make the assessment easier. It enables learners to direct more of their cognitive effort towards the knowledge, reasoning, or skill that the assessment is intended to measure.

Executive functioning

Executive functioning includes processes used to regulate attention, plan and organise actions, manage information, and monitor performance.

During an assessment question/task, learners may need to:

- begin a task independently
- identify the required sequence of actions
- move between different parts of a question
- maintain attention over time
- inhibit responses to irrelevant information
- manage time
- monitor whether all instructions have been followed
- review and revise their response.

The presentation of an assessment can either support or unnecessarily complicate these processes. Clearly structured questions, visible sequencing, consistent wording, and purposeful layout can help learners identify what they need to do and in what order. In contrast, dense text, vague instructions, unnecessary changes in terminology, and poorly connected information may create additional executive-function demands that are unrelated to the intended construct.

Different learner profiles and cognitive demand

The interaction between language, working memory, attention and executive functioning varies between learners. The same feature may create a barrier for individuals for different reasons.

Learners with the same diagnosis or identified need may also have distinct profiles, and needs associated with different conditions may overlap or co-occur.

For example:

- a deaf learner may experience increased processing demands where unfamiliar vocabulary, complex grammar, or implied meaning affects access to the written question
- a learner with DLD may need additional processing capacity to interpret complex

syntax, retain verbal information, or connect information across clauses

- a dyslexic learner may expend significant effort on accurate and fluent word reading, leaving fewer resources available for comprehension and reasoning
- an autistic learner may experience increased cognitive demands where language is ambiguous, implied, or open to several interpretations
- a learner with ADHD may experience increased difficulty where important instructions are embedded within lengthy text, information is poorly organised, or several elements must be retained and managed simultaneously
- a learner with dyscalculia may face additional cognitive demands where a mathematical task is embedded within unnecessarily complex language.

These examples are illustrative rather than diagnostic. Individual profiles vary considerably, and learners may experience several interacting linguistic, cognitive, sensory, or processing demands, particularly where needs co-occur.

The purpose of considering learner profiles is not to prescribe different wording according to diagnosis, but to understand how an individual learner's profile may interact with the linguistic and cognitive demands of a particular task.

Accessible design and individual provision

Reducing unnecessary linguistic barriers within assessment design may improve access for a wide range of learners. It does not remove the need for modified papers, access arrangements, or other individual provision where these are required.

Further discussion of accessibility by design, modification at source, and individual language modification is provided in **Chapters 1, 2, and 5**.

Evidence across diverse learner profiles

The following sections consider evidence relating to particular learner groups. They are included to illustrate how different language, literacy, sensory, attentional, and cognitive profiles may interact with assessment demands.

They should **not** be interpreted as suggesting that diagnosis alone determines the need for language modification, a modified paper, or another access arrangement.

Deafness

Language modification originated within deaf education and has long been recognised as an important means of improving examination access for some deaf learners.

The Consortium for Research in Deaf Education (CRIDE) 2026 currently reports **53,509 deaf children and young people in the UK**, including 46,069 in England, 1,565 in Northern Ireland, 3,454 in Scotland, and 2,421 in Wales. CRIDE provides an important administrative dataset on deaf children and young people across the UK, although it is not a population prevalence study.

Deaf learners are not a homogeneous group. They may:

- be deaf in one or both ears
- have mild, moderate, severe, or profound levels of deafness
- have permanent, progressive, or temporary deafness
- use spoken language, sign language, or a combination of communication approaches
- use hearing aids, cochlear implants, bone conduction hearing devices, or no hearing technology
- attend mainstream, deaf resource provision, or specialist deaf school
- have widely differing levels of early access to an accessible language.

The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) and BATOD recognise this diversity, including differences in the level and type of deafness and in the use of sign language, speech, and lip reading. British Sign Language (BSL) may be a learner's first or preferred language and has a linguistic structure distinct from written English.

For some deaf learners, reduced or inconsistent access to fluent language models (spoken and/or signed) during important stages of language and communication development may affect vocabulary, grammar, inferencing, idiomatic language, and reading comprehension. Other deaf learners may have age-appropriate English language and literacy skills and require no language modification.

Potential barriers may include:

- low-frequency or abstract vocabulary
- idioms and figurative expressions
- complex grammatical constructions

- implied meanings
- ambiguous reference words
- lengthy introductory material
- unnecessary changes in terminology
- questions that assume incidental access to spoken language or culturally acquired knowledge.

The need for language modification should therefore **not be inferred from deafness alone**. It should be informed by the learner's language and literacy profile and by the linguistic demands of the assessment.

The long-established contribution of QToDs and BALMs remain central to the evidence, development and professional practice described in this guidance.

Developmental language disorder

DLD is a persistent difficulty with the understanding and/or use of spoken language that has a significant impact on everyday life or educational progress and is not associated with a known differentiating biomedical condition.

The population study by Norbury et al (2016) estimated that **7.58% of children** had a language disorder of unknown origin, broadly corresponding to the group now described as having DLD.

DLD is lifelong. Although its presentation may change over time, difficulties usually continue into secondary education and adulthood. A learner may have strong non-verbal reasoning and practical ability or subject knowledge while experiencing significant difficulty understanding or formulating language.

Potential barriers in examinations may include:

- unfamiliar and low-frequency vocabulary
- words with multiple meanings
- abstract curriculum language
- complex grammatical structures
- lengthy instructions
- embedded clauses

- passive constructions
- understanding relationships of time, cause, condition, or comparison
- drawing inferences
- interpreting command words integrating information across a question
- formulating precise written responses.

A learner with DLD may misunderstand a question despite being able to answer it once its meaning has been made clear. Language accessibility is therefore particularly relevant where the language of the task exceeds what is necessary to assess the intended subject knowledge.

Language disorder associated with a biomedical condition

Language disorder may occur alongside an identified biomedical condition including autism, intellectual disability, genetic conditions, neurological conditions, acquired brain injury, or sensorineural deafness.

The Norbury et al population study (2016) estimated that **2.3% of children** had language impairment associated with an intellectual disability or existing medical diagnosis.

The nature and severity of language difficulties vary considerably. Some learners may have substantial receptive-language needs that are not immediately apparent from their spoken communication. Difficulties may affect vocabulary, grammar, discourse, social communication, verbal memory, and the organisation or expression of written responses.

Assessment implications should therefore be determined by the learner's functional language profile and the linguistic demands of the assessment rather than by the biomedical diagnosis alone.

Specific learning difficulties

Learners with specific learning difficulties (SpLDs) encompass a range of neurodevelopmental differences and are associated with diverse profiles of strengths and needs. The implications for assessment differ according to the particular SpLD and the individual learner.

Dyslexia

Dyslexic learners commonly have persistent difficulties in accurate and fluent word reading and spelling. Other areas which may be impacted include reading speed, phonological processing, verbal memory and the efficient processing of written information.

The British Dyslexia Association (BDA) states that approximately **10% of the population** are believed to be dyslexic.

Potential assessment barriers may include:

- slow or effortful reading
- reduced reading fluency
- difficulty maintaining meaning across long sentences
- unfamiliar or visually similar words
- dense blocks of text
- lengthy instructions
- demands on verbal working memory
- locating the essential information within a question.

Dyslexia does not mean that a learner lacks vocabulary, oral language, or subject understanding, and not every dyslexic learner will require language modification. However, there is substantial overlap between dyslexia and DLD, and some dyslexic learners may therefore also experience significant receptive language difficulties. Where these difficulties are present, language modification may be an important adjustment.

Where reading itself is not the construct being assessed, accessible wording and presentation can reduce incidental reading and processing demands while preserving the intended assessment demand.

Dyscalculia

Learners with dyscalculia have persistent and significant difficulties in learning and understanding number and arithmetic. The central difficulty concerns mathematical learning rather than language.

However, mathematics assessments frequently present problems through written scenarios and complex instructional language. Where unnecessary linguistic complexity is present, a learner may have to overcome an additional language barrier before reaching the mathematical problem.

Potential barriers include:

- lengthy word problems
- unfamiliar contexts
- ambiguous comparative terms
- complex sequencing
- several instructions in one sentence
- unnecessary narrative detail
- inconsistent use of mathematical and everyday vocabulary.

Language modification must not remove mathematical terminology, reasoning, relationships, or information that the candidate is expected to identify. Its purpose is to ensure that the question assesses mathematical understanding rather than avoidable complexity in the carrier language.

Autism

Autistic learners have diverse language, communication, and cognitive profiles. Some have significant receptive and expressive language needs, similar to those experienced with DLD; others have advanced vocabulary and fluent structural language.

Some autistic learners may experience difficulty with:

- ambiguity
- figurative or idiomatic language
- implied meaning
- unstated assumptions

- inference
- words with several possible meanings
- interpreting another person's perspective
- vague quantities or time references
- instructions that do not clearly specify the required response.

These features may sometimes form part of the construct, particularly in assessments of literature, interpretation, or social meaning and should not be removed where they are intentionally assessed.

Where they are incidental, clearer language may allow the learner to engage more directly with the intended subject task.

Some autistic learners also have a co-occurring language disorder. Assessment accessibility should therefore be considered according to the learner's individual language and communication profile and the demands of the task rather than autism diagnosis alone.

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental condition associated with differences in attention regulation and/or hyperactivity and impulsivity. It is not primarily a language disorder, and ADHD does not automatically indicate a need for language modification.

Learners with ADHD vary considerably in their strengths and needs. Some may experience differences in:

- sustained attention
- working memory
- planning
- inhibition
- monitoring
- organisation
- processing multiple pieces of information.

Long sentences, several embedded instructions, poorly signposted information, and unnecessary detail may therefore increase the effort required to identify, retain, and act upon the central task.

Accessible assessment design can reduce unnecessary demands without changing the content, assessment objectives, or cognitive challenge. These are principles of accessible design rather than diagnosis-specific simplification.

Some learners with ADHD may also have co-occurring language, literacy or communication needs and may require additional individual provision. Any such provision should be based on the learner's functional profile and evidence of need rather than ADHD diagnosis alone.

A learner's fluent speech or apparent verbal ability should not be assumed to indicate equivalent understanding of spoken, written or assessment language.

Learners with co-occurring needs

The learner groups described above are presented separately to explain some of the evidence relating to language and assessment. **In practice, these categories should not be viewed in isolation.**

Language, literacy, sensory, attentional and other neurodevelopmental needs frequently co-occur, and the interaction between them may influence how an individual learner accesses an assessment.

Deaf learners may also have language disorder, dyslexia, autism, ADHD, and/or another developmental or medical condition. Approximately 40% of deaf children have been reported to have an additional developmental disorder or major medical condition (Núñez-Batalla et al, 2023).

DLD frequently co-occurs with other neurodevelopmental conditions, including dyslexia, ADHD, and developmental coordination disorder (Bishop et al, 2017; Parks et al, 2023).

There is particularly important overlap between DLD and dyslexia. Although they are distinct conditions, co-occurrence may result in more extensive difficulties across oral language, decoding, reading fluency, and comprehension (Adlof, 2020; Andreou and Sepeti, 2026).

Autistic learners may have heterogeneous language profiles and co-occurring language needs (Schaeffer et al, 2023), as well as literacy or attention difficulties. Learners with ADHD may also experience co-occurring language and communication difficulties (Carruthers et al, 2022), alongside literacy needs.

The effects of co-occurrence are not necessarily additive or predictable. A learner may have strengths in one area that compensate for difficulties in another, while difficulties that appear relatively mild when considered separately may interact to create a significant barrier under assessment conditions.

Language-access decisions should therefore be informed by:

- the learner's individual functional profile
- evidence of need
- normal way of working, where relevant to the applicable assessment arrangements
- careful analysis of the linguistic and cognitive demands of the assessment task.

A diagnostic label alone cannot determine:

- whether language modification is required
- which linguistic features create a barrier
- what form any modification should take
- whether a proposed modification would preserve the intended construct.

The purpose of considering diagnostic and learner groups within this chapter is therefore not to prescribe provision according to diagnosis, but to understand the evidence about how different language, literacy, sensory, attentional, and cognitive profiles may interact with the demands of assessment.

The scale of need

Taken together, the evidence demonstrates that language accessibility is relevant to a substantial proportion of learners.

The figures presented within the sections above include:

Learner group	Indicative scale
Deaf	Approximately 0.34% of children across the UK CRIDE (2026)
DLD	7.58% of children Norbury et al (2016)
Language disorder associated with a biomedical condition	2.34% of children Norbury et al (2016)
Dyslexia	Widely cited 10% Van Herwegen and Herbert (2024)
Dyscalculia	Approximately 1.3%- 10% of the UK population Van Herwegen and Herbert (2024)
Autistic	Approximately 1.76% of children and young people (around 1 in 57) Roman-Urrestarazu et al (2021)

Note: These figures are indicative and are drawn from studies and datasets using different populations, definitions, and methodologies. They are not directly comparable and should not be added together, particularly because learners may have co-occurring needs and therefore be represented within more than one category. They also do not represent the numbers recorded within SEN/ALN/ASN systems across the four UK nations, which use different definitions and recording arrangements.

Language accessibility within the wider assessment context

Although this guidance has a particular focus on the language of examinations, accessibility is not determined by wording alone.

The format, presentation, delivery, and assessment environment can also influence a learner's ability to access a task, process information, and demonstrate their knowledge, understanding, and skills.

This is particularly important because language and communication do not operate independently of access accommodations for deafness and/or vision impairment, attention, processing, literacy, or the assessment environment. A linguistically accessible question may still present a barrier if, for example, the learner cannot adequately access spoken information, visual material is poorly presented, acoustics are unsuitable, or the method of delivery creates additional communication demands.

Assessment arrangements for English language qualifications differ across the four UK nations. One example is the GCSE English Language Spoken Language Endorsement in England.

Guidance produced by the awarding bodies for England, developed jointly with BATOD, The Communication Trust, NDCS and Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) recognised the importance of appropriate assessment arrangements for learners with communication needs and/or deafness. The guidance highlights factors including presentation format, timing, visual support, amplification, acoustics, room layout, and audience arrangements, and recommends consultation with the learner and relevant specialist professionals when determining appropriate arrangements.

This illustrates a broader principle:

Accessible assessment requires consideration of how learners access, process, and respond to assessment tasks, as well as the language in which those tasks are presented.

Fairness, validity, construct-irrelevant barriers and reliability

Fairness

Language accessibility is central to fair assessment. Fairness does not require every candidate to encounter an assessment in exactly the same form regardless of disability or need. It requires learners to have an equitable opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge, understanding, and skills that the assessment is intended to measure.

A language modification is appropriate only where it removes or reduces a barrier that is not integral to the construct. It must not:

- provide additional subject information
- explain the answer
- reduce the level of reasoning required
- remove technical vocabulary that is being assessed
- alter the assessment objective
- change the expected response
- make one interpretation more obvious where ambiguity is intentional
- change the allocation of marks
- advantage the candidate over others.

The detailed principles and safeguards for language modification are set out in **Chapter 6**.

Validity

Validity concerns whether the interpretation and use of assessment outcomes are supported by the evidence and whether the assessment measures what it is intended to measure.

Where irrelevant language complexity affects performance, the assessment may measure a combination of subject knowledge and unintended language-processing ability.

For example, a learner may possess the mathematical knowledge required to solve a problem but be unable to identify the calculation because the task is embedded in an unnecessarily complex narrative.

In such circumstances, reducing incidental language complexity may strengthen rather than weaken validity because the result may more accurately reflect the intended mathematical construct.

However, modification can also threaten validity if it removes a demand that forms part of the construct.

Decisions about modification therefore require an understanding of:

- the assessment objective
- the purpose of the question
- the significance of the wording
- the subject-specific terminology
- the expected cognitive process
- the possible consequences of each change.

Language modification is not merely an exercise in plain-English editing. It is a specialist assessment process requiring linguistic knowledge, subject awareness, and an understanding of validity.

Construct-irrelevant barriers

A construct-irrelevant barrier is a feature that affects performance but is not part of the knowledge or skill the assessment is intended to measure.

Examples may include:

- an unfamiliar idiom in a calculation question
- an unnecessarily long sentence in a science task
- an ambiguous pronoun in a geography question
- several separate instructions compressed into one clause
- inconsistent terminology for the same person, object or process
- culturally specific wording that is not relevant to the assessment objective.

Not every difficulty is construct-irrelevant. Subject-specific and technical vocabulary, inference, evaluation, extended reading, or interpretation may be deliberately assessed.

The decision cannot be made by considering the wording in isolation; it requires reference to the construct and mark scheme.

Reliability

Reliability concerns the consistency of assessment and the dependability of the resulting judgements. Language accessibility supports reliability when equivalent principles are applied consistently across:

- subjects
- examination series
- awarding bodies
- original and modified papers
- different language modifiers.

Inconsistent modification can create new problems. Two modifiers may interpret the same question differently, or a change may alter its emphasis, mark allocation, or range of acceptable responses. Effective systems therefore require:

- appropriately qualified and trained professionals
- clear principles
- access to subject expertise
- reference to assessment objectives and mark schemes
- documented decision-making
- independent checking
- quality assurance
- review following each examination series.

The detailed principles for language modification are set out in **Chapter 6**, with practical applications and examples considered in **Chapter 7**.

Key message

Language accessibility is not a niche consideration. Evidence across deaf education, language and communication, literacy, neurodevelopment and assessment demonstrate that unnecessary linguistic and processing demands can create barriers that are unrelated to the knowledge, understanding or skills an assessment is intended to measure.

Accessible assessment does not remove legitimate academic challenge. It seeks to ensure that learners can access the intended task, while preserving the construct, subject content, cognitive demand and standards of the assessment.

Chapter 4. Professional expertise in language accessibility

Language accessibility is not the responsibility of a single profession or organisation.

Developing fair and accessible assessments requires collaboration between those who understand the subject and construct being assessed, those with expertise in assessment design, and professionals with specialist knowledge of language, communication, literacy, and learning.

Different professionals bring different but complementary expertise. Learners themselves, and where appropriate their families, also provide important insight into how assessment language and presentation are experienced in practice.

No single professional perspective can determine, in isolation, whether assessment language is accessible, whether a proposed modification preserves the intended construct, or what provision an individual learner may require.

Effective practice therefore depends on multidisciplinary working, clearly understood professional roles, and shared responsibility for accessibility.

Why multidisciplinary expertise matters

Language accessibility sits at the intersection of several areas of professional knowledge.

Identifying that a question may be linguistically difficult is only one part of the process. Determining whether, and how, it can appropriately be modified may require understanding of:

- the construct and assessment objective
- the subject knowledge and terminology learners are expected to know
- the purpose of the question and expected response
- the mark scheme
- language development and language processing
- literacy and reading demands
- sensory and communication access
- cognitive and processing demands
- assessment design, validity and reliability
- relevant assessment and access-arrangement requirements.

For example, specialist professionals may contribute evidence about how different language, communication, literacy, sensory, or learning profiles interact with assessment demands. Subject specialists contribute knowledge of the content, terminology and skills being assessed, while assessment specialists ensure that accessibility considerations are balanced with the need to preserve the construct, cognitive demand, and relationship with the mark scheme.

Similarly, a QToD may contribute specialist understanding of the interaction between deafness, language, communication, and educational access, while a specialist teacher or assessor may contribute evidence relating to literacy, processing, and the learner's functioning within the educational setting.

These perspectives are complementary rather than interchangeable.

Multidisciplinary working supports the central distinction between:

- **language that is necessary to what is being assessed**, which must be preserved
- **language that creates an unnecessary barrier**, which may be capable of being made more accessible.

Assessment development

Language accessibility is most effective when it is considered from the outset in the design and development of teaching, learning, and assessment materials, rather than only after a classroom task, resource, or assessment paper has been produced. This includes consideration of language accessibility when developing classroom resources, learning activities, instructions, homework, internal assessments, practice and mock examinations, and formal assessment materials.

Considering accessibility at an early stage can reduce unnecessary linguistic barriers while preserving the subject content, intended learning, or assessment objective and appropriate level of challenge.

An illustrative assessment-development process, showing where language accessibility may be considered within the development of public examinations, is provided in **Chapter 2**. The underlying principles are also relevant to classroom and setting-based tasks, materials, and assessments.

Accessibility is strengthened when subject specialists, assessment specialists, and professionals with relevant language-accessibility expertise are involved early enough to influence assessment design.

This supports the principles of **accessibility by design and modification at source** described in **Chapter 1**. It does not remove the need for language-modified papers or individual reasonable adjustments where these are required.

Professional roles and expertise

The following sections describe some of the professional expertise that may contribute to language accessibility.

They are not intended to prescribe a single model of assessment development or imply that every professional listed should be involved in every assessment. Roles, responsibilities and professional titles also differ between organisations and across the four UK nations.

Awarding bodies

Awarding bodies have overarching responsibility for the development, delivery, and quality assurance of their assessments.

Their responsibilities include ensuring that assessments:

- measure the intended knowledge, understanding and skills
- meet relevant regulatory requirements
- maintain appropriate standards and comparability
- minimise unnecessary barriers where these are not part of the construct
- provide appropriate modified materials and arrangements where required
- are subject to appropriate quality-assurance processes.

Where language-modified papers or other modified materials are produced, awarding bodies are responsible for ensuring that modifications preserve the intended assessment objectives, level of demand, and relationship with the mark scheme.

The regulatory and assessment frameworks within which awarding bodies operate are considered in **Chapter 5**.

Subject specialists and question writers

Subject specialists and question writers bring essential knowledge of the curriculum or specification, subject terminology, assessment objectives, and expected level of response.

Their expertise is particularly important in determining:

- which vocabulary learners are expected to know and understand
- whether terminology is subject-specific or part of the construct
- what knowledge, understanding, or reasoning a question is intended to elicit
- whether particular wording carries subject-specific meaning
- whether a proposed language change alters the intended demand
- whether a modified question remains aligned with the mark scheme.

Each subject has its own language, including specialist vocabulary, forms of explanation and reasoning, and assessment conventions. These should be **explicitly taught as part of curriculum learning**.

As discussed in **Chapter 1**, subject-specific vocabulary should not normally be modified where learners are expected to know and understand it. Subject expertise is therefore essential when distinguishing necessary subject language from unnecessary complexity in the **carrier language** surrounding it.

BATOD Accredited Language Modifiers

BATOD Accredited Language Modifiers (BALMs) have specialist expertise in the planned review and modification of examination papers and assessment materials.

Language modification has longstanding roots in deaf education. BALMs bring specialist knowledge of the linguistic features that can create barriers within written assessment and of how language may be modified while preserving the construct, assessment objectives, subject content, and level of demand.

Their work may include consideration of:

- vocabulary
- grammar and sentence structure
- ambiguity
- inference
- idiomatic and figurative language
- cohesion and reference
- carrier language
- command words and their relationship with the assessment objective
- question structure
- the interaction between language and processing demands.

Effective language modification is not simply a process of making language shorter or ‘easier’. It requires consideration of the whole question, the assessment objective, subject-specific terminology, mark scheme, and intended response.

BALMs may therefore work closely with subject specialists, question writers, and assessment specialists when examination papers are developed and reviewed.

A BALM involved in modifying examination papers should not be confused with a language modifier used as an individual access arrangement during a live examination.

These are distinct roles and contexts. The language modifier access arrangement is considered in **Chapter 2**, and the practical principles for language modification are set out in **Chapter 6**.

Assessment specialists

Assessment specialists bring expertise in assessment design, validity, reliability, comparability, and quality assurance.

Their contribution may include consideration of:

- assessment objectives
- cognitive demand
- question and task design
- mark schemes
- validity and reliability
- comparability
- accessibility and fairness
- quality-assurance processes.

Their expertise is particularly important where a proposed language change could affect what is being assessed or the response expected from the learner.

Specialist professional expertise

A range of professionals may contribute specialist knowledge of the language, communication, literacy, cognitive, and learning needs that can affect access to teaching and assessment. Their roles differ. Specialist evidence should therefore be used according to the learner's needs and the question being considered.

Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People

Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (QToDs) have specialist expertise in the educational implications of deafness and in supporting deaf children and young people across educational settings.

Their expertise may include:

- language and communication development
- access to spoken and/or signed language
- literacy development
- audiological and assistive technology

- classroom and environmental access
- educational assessment
- the impact of different language and communication profiles
- appropriate support and reasonable adjustments.

QToDs may contribute important evidence about an individual deaf learner's language, literacy, and communication profile and how this interacts with the demands of assessment.

As discussed in **Chapter 3**, not all deaf learners require language modification. Need should be determined by the learner's individual profile and the demands of the assessment rather than deafness alone.

Speech and language therapists

Speech and Language Therapists (SaLTs) are the recognised specialists in speech, language, communication, and swallowing across the lifespan. Within education and assessment contexts, SaLTs assess, diagnose, and support children and young people with a wide range of speech, language, and communication needs, including DLD, language disorder associated with biomedical conditions, and communication differences associated with other neurodevelopmental conditions.

Their expertise includes assessment and interpretation of and intervention for:

- receptive language
- expressive language
- vocabulary and semantic knowledge
- grammar and sentence comprehension
- verbal memory
- inference
- narrative and discourse
- social communication
- the functional impact of language difficulties on learning and participation.

SaLTs can therefore provide specialist evidence about how a learner understands and uses language, and how the linguistic demands of teaching and assessment may interact with that profile.

They may also contribute expertise to the development and review of accessible educational and assessment materials where specialist understanding of language development, processing, and comprehension is required.

There are a number of areas of overlap in the roles of SaLTs and QToDs. Both may assess and describe a learner's language profile and identify potential linguistic barriers. Roles and responsibilities may vary across UK nations, local agreements, and the needs of the individual learner. BALM accreditation represents a distinct specialist role in the planned review and modification of examination papers and assessment materials, as described above.

Specialist teachers and specialist assessors

A specialist teacher for SpLD has expertise in the cognitive, literacy and / or numeracy, and processing difficulties associated with dyslexia, dyscalculia, and related learning differences. They assess learning needs and identify barriers to learning and assessment, providing evidence-based recommendations to support access. They work collaboratively with learners, staff, and families to implement effective support strategies and reasonable adjustments. Where needed, they apply their knowledge of language processing, reading, and comprehension to support the adaptation of learning materials to make them more accessible whilst maintaining the original meaning and level of challenge.

A specialist SpLD assessor has expertise in assessing a learner's underlying cognitive processing, literacy, and/or numeracy skills, the impact on attainment, and to make a diagnostic decision where appropriate. Using standardised assessments, background information, and the learner's own views, they provide objective, evidence-based recommendations for consideration by the educational setting. They work collaboratively with learners, parents/carers, and teaching support staff to ensure that any recommended support, interventions or access arrangements are appropriate, reasonable, and tailored to the learner's individual needs.

Depending on their professional qualifications and role, they may assess or provide evidence relating to:

- reading accuracy and fluency
- reading comprehension
- spelling and written language
- phonological processing
- working memory
- processing speed
- literacy development
- assessment of need
- the functional impact of these needs within education and assessment.

Their knowledge of the learner's educational performance and response to support may provide important evidence when considering access arrangements and normal way of working.

Access arrangements assessors

An access arrangements assessor has expertise in assessing a learner's need for examination access arrangements in line Jcq AARA and Qualifications Scotland Alternative Assessment framework. Using standardised assessment data, evidence of the learner's normal way of working, and information from staff, learners, and parents/carers, they provide objective, evidence-based recommendations to support fair access to examinations. They work collaboratively with the educational setting to ensure that any arrangements are appropriate, reasonable, and reflect the learner's individual needs without compromising the integrity of the assessment.

Their role should be distinguished from professionals who diagnose or assess specific language, communication, or neurodevelopmental needs, and from professionals involved in modifying examination papers.

Requirements relating to who may assess, the evidence required, and the arrangements available may change from time to time. Professionals should therefore refer to the current guidance issued by the relevant assessment body, including current Jcq and Qualifications Scotland guidance where applicable.

Language modifier as an access arrangement

A language modifier works directly with an eligible individual learner during a live examination, within the rules and restrictions of the relevant assessment body. The role is responsive to the learner's language-access needs during the examination and is fundamentally different from the planned review or modification of an examination paper undertaken in advance.

The language modifier access arrangement, including eligibility, permitted practice and restrictions, is considered in **Chapter 2**.

Educational psychologists

Educational psychologists (EPs) bring expertise in learning, development, cognition and the interaction between learners and their educational environments.

Their work may include assessment and formulation relating to:

- cognition and learning
- literacy
- memory and processing
- executive functioning
- attention
- developmental needs
- barriers to participation and learning.

EPs may make an important contribution where learners have complex or co-occurring needs, complementing evidence from teachers, SaLTs, QToDs, specialist teachers, and other professionals.

Special educational needs coordinators, additional learning needs coordinators, learning support coordinators and support for learning teachers

Terminology and statutory responsibilities for staff coordinating additional learning or special educational needs vary across the four UK nations and between educational settings.

Special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs), additional learning needs coordinators (ALNCOs), learning support coordinators and support for learning teachers play a central role in ensuring that learners requiring additional support are identified and appropriately supported throughout their education, including **supporting appropriate provision** as part of the learner's normal way of working and, where applicable, the implementation of access arrangements in accordance with relevant requirements.

These professionals may:

- coordinate evidence from teachers and specialist professionals
- coordinate provision and reasonable adjustments
- monitor learners' responses to support
- ensure relevant staff understand learners' needs
- contribute evidence about normal way of working
- liaise with learners and families
- support the implementation of access arrangements in accordance with relevant requirements.

Their knowledge of how a learner functions in their everyday educational environment can be particularly important when specialist assessment evidence is considered alongside classroom performance.

Teachers and setting leaders

Teachers have direct knowledge of how learners engage with curriculum content and assessment language in everyday teaching.

They may observe whether learners:

- understand subject-specific vocabulary
- interpret assessment command words appropriately
- follow complex instructions
- understand written questions
- require clarification
- manage reading demands
- demonstrate knowledge more effectively when unnecessary language barriers are reduced
- use particular support as part of their normal way of working.

Teachers also have a central role in explicitly teaching the language of their subject, including technical terminology and assessment command words.

Setting leaders have responsibility for ensuring that appropriate systems, staff development, and quality-assurance processes support inclusive teaching and assessment.

The application of these principles to everyday teaching, learning, and internal assessment is considered further in **Chapter 7**.

Working across professional boundaries

Multidisciplinary working is most effective when professional roles are clearly understood and respected. Different professionals may identify different aspects of the same apparent barrier.

For example, difficulty with an examination question may arise because:

- its grammatical structure creates a receptive-language barrier
- reading is slow and effortful
- several instructions place significant demands on working memory

- the learner has not acquired the required technical vocabulary
- the presentation makes relationships between information difficult to follow
- the language is intentionally demanding because that language itself forms part of the construct.

Determining an appropriate response may therefore require more than one form of expertise.

Multidisciplinary expertise can help answer three central questions:

- 1. What is the assessment intended to measure?**
- 2. What is creating the barrier?**
- 3. What, if anything, can be changed without changing what is being assessed?**

Clear professional boundaries are particularly important when distinguishing between assessment of the learner, assessment development, and modification of materials, and the delivery of an individual access arrangement during an examination.

Learners, families, and lived experience

Professional expertise is essential, but it does not replace the perspective of the learner.

Learners and their families may provide important information about:

- language they find difficult to understand
- how they interpret questions and instructions
- barriers they experience when reading or processing assessment materials
- approaches that improve access
- support they routinely use
- barriers that may not be apparent to professionals.

Families (parents/carers) may also contribute valuable information about a learner's communication, development, educational experiences, and use of support across different contexts.

Learner and family involvement can be particularly important when considering individual access needs. Some learners may require additional support to effectively discuss and communicate their support needs. However, accessibility should not depend on learners being able to identify or articulate every barrier themselves.

There is also value in involving people with lived experience in the development and review of assessments and accessibility guidance. This can help assessment developers understand how language and presentation are experienced in practice and identify barriers that may not be apparent during technical review.

Meaningful engagement with learners and families should therefore complement, rather than replace, subject, assessment and specialist professional expertise.

Key message

Language accessibility is a shared responsibility. Fair and valid assessment requires collaboration between those with expertise in the subject and construct, assessment design, language and communication, literacy, sensory access, and learning, alongside the perspectives of learners and those with lived experience.

Professional roles are complementary but distinct. Effective multidisciplinary working helps identify and reduce unnecessary barriers while preserving the construct, subject content, cognitive demand, and standards of the assessment.

Chapter 5. Language accessibility, awarding bodies and regulation

Awarding bodies have a responsibility to develop assessments that are fair, valid, reliable and accessible whilst maintaining the integrity and standards of the qualification. Language accessibility forms one component of this wider responsibility and should be considered throughout the assessment development process.

Language accessibility may be addressed through assessment design, modification at source and, where required, individual provision. These approaches are complementary but distinct.

This chapter considers the regulatory context for language accessibility, and the role of awarding bodies in developing accessible assessments and providing appropriate modified materials and access arrangements.

The wider principles of **accessibility by design** and modification at source are introduced in **Chapter 1**. The language modifier access arrangement is considered in detail in **Chapter 2**; the evidence underpinning language accessibility is considered in **Chapter 3**; professional expertise is described in **Chapter 4**; and the practical principles of modifying examination language are set out in **Chapter 6**.

Joint Council for Qualifications

Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) is not a qualifications regulator. It is a membership organisation representing major awarding bodies and publishes common regulations and guidance used by its member organisations.

Qualifications Scotland is not a member of JCQ. References in this publication to the JCQ AARA should therefore not be assumed to apply to Scottish National qualifications, which are subject to separate Qualifications Scotland requirements and guidance, as discussed further in this chapter.

For qualifications within the JCQ framework, centres and professionals should refer to the current edition of AARA together with any supplementary guidance issued by JCQ and the relevant awarding body.

The AARA publication provides guidance on access arrangements, reasonable adjustments, modified papers and the evidence required to support applications.

Applications for Special Consideration are governed through separate guidance and should be considered independently from access arrangements and language modification.

Historically, JCQ has published updated AARA guidance annually. At the time of publication of this fourth edition, JCQ is undertaking a review of its access arrangements guidance and processes.

Different approaches to language accessibility in examinations

Within examinations, language accessibility may operate at different stages and in different ways. Some approaches relate to assessment design and modified materials, while others operate as individual access arrangements within the JCQ and Qualifications Scotland frameworks. It is important to distinguish between:

- **language accessibility or modification at source**, where unnecessary linguistic barriers are considered during development of the standard assessment
- **a language-modified paper**, where a separate version of the assessment is produced in advance for learners for whom this provision is available in accordance with the relevant assessment framework and awarding-body procedures
- **a BATOD Accredited Language Modifier (BALM)**, an accredited specialist in language modification who contributes to the development and modification of assessment materials, including language modification at source and the production of language-modified papers.
- **a language modifier as an access arrangement (JCQ AARA only)**, where an eligible individual learner receives language support during the live examination within the rules of the relevant framework.

These approaches serve different purposes and should not be conflated. Accessibility at source may improve access for all learners taking the standard assessment. Even where the standard assessment has been designed with accessibility in mind, some learners will continue to require individual provision.

Comparison of approaches to language accessibility

	Language accessibility at source	Language-modified paper	Language modifier (Access arrangement)
When?	During development of the standard paper	Before the examination	During the live examination
What is modified?	The standard assessment	A separate version of the paper	Language in a question when requested and permitted
By whom?	Professional language modifier eg BALM	Professional language modifier eg BALM	Setting staff member with the accredited access arrangements language modification qualification or QToD
For whom?	All learners taking the standard paper	Eligible learners requiring the modified paper	An eligible individual learner
Access arrangements?	No	Yes – where provided to an eligible learner	Yes – JCQ access arrangement
Purpose?	Reduce unnecessary barriers at source	Provide additional access through a modified paper	Provide individual language access during the examination

Centres applying for a JCQ language modifier as an access arrangement must also apply for a language-modified paper. In some cases, the awarding body may advise that the standard paper has already been modified at source for use by all candidates and that a separate language-modified paper will, therefore, not be provided.

The language modifier access arrangement and modification at source are considered in **Chapter 2**, while the detailed principles for language modification are set out in **Chapter 6**.

Awarding bodies and language accessibility

Awarding bodies translate regulatory requirements and assessment principles into the development and delivery of qualifications and assessments.

Language accessibility can be considered at different stages of assessment development, including:

- specification and assessment design
- question and task development
- subject review
- language and accessibility review
- mark-scheme development and review
- production of modified materials
- quality assurance
- evaluation following assessment delivery.

The precise processes and terminology vary between awarding bodies.

Considering accessibility early and throughout assessment development provides opportunities to identify unnecessary linguistic barriers before they become embedded within the final assessment.

This does not mean that all assessment language should be simplified. Language must remain appropriate to the subject, qualification level, and intended construct. The purpose is to distinguish between necessary assessment demand and unnecessary linguistic complexity.

Awarding bodies differ in how language accessibility and language modification are incorporated into these processes. Some incorporate specialist language review into the development of standard papers. Some produce language-modified papers for particular qualifications or assessments. Others provide modified papers in response to eligible requests.

Language and medium of assessment across the four nations

The language or medium through which an assessment is undertaken should be distinguished from a language being the subject of the qualification. Depending on the national context and qualification, assessments may be undertaken through English, Welsh, Irish medium, Gaelic medium, or specific to Scotland, though the medium of BSL.

This is separate from qualifications in which a language itself is being assessed, such as English language, Welsh, Irish, Gàidhlig, Gaelic (Learners), French or German, or assessing BSL as a subject through the SCQF units in BSL from level 3 to 8 or Signature Level 1-6.

The regulatory context across the UK

Arrangements differ across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, reflecting their different linguistic, educational, and regulatory contexts. References in this publication to the accessibility of assessment language should therefore be understood within the relevant national and qualification context.

Across the four nations, there is increasing emphasis on considering accessibility during the design and development of qualifications and assessments rather than relying solely on adjustments post production.

A central consideration is whether a feature of an assessment is necessary to what is being assessed. Accessibility should seek to reduce unnecessary barriers while preserving the construct, assessment objectives, subject content, and intended level of demand.

The following sections provide an overview of the relevant regulatory and assessment context across the four UK nations.

England

The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation

The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) regulates qualifications, examinations, and assessments in England. Its role is to ensure that assessments provide a reliable indication of students' knowledge, skills and understanding.

Ofqual's rules require awarding organisations to have clear arrangements for making reasonable adjustments in line with equalities law, and, where they choose to, other access arrangements (provided under Ofqual's rules as a form of special consideration).

Ofqual has published guidance to support awarding organisations in designing and developing accessible assessments and meeting its regulatory requirements.

The guidance encourages awarding bodies to build accessibility in from the earliest stages of assessment design. The guidance supports awarding bodies in meeting regulatory requirements relating to matters including fitness for purpose, accessibility, setting assessments, the use of language and stimulus materials, and reasonable adjustments.

Ofqual's guidance recognises that assessments should enable learners to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and understanding that the assessment is intended to measure, without irrelevant features making it more difficult for some learners than others to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do to the required standard.

The guidance also supports awarding organisations in meeting their obligations under Equalities Law, a requirement of Condition D2 of Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition. Under Condition D2 awarding bodies must monitor any qualifications it makes available for any features which might disadvantage a group of learners who share a particular characteristic. Where an awarding body identifies such a feature it must, remove any unjustifiable disadvantage and keep a record of any disadvantage considered justifiable with the reasons for that decision.

Wales

Qualifications Wales

Qualifications Wales regulates qualifications in Wales.

Awarding bodies are expected to consider learners' needs when developing qualifications and assessments and to consider fair access while maintaining the integrity of the qualification.

The Welsh context also includes qualifications developed and delivered through Welsh and English. Accessibility must therefore be considered within the relevant linguistic, educational, and regulatory context.

Northern Ireland

Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment Regulation

Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) Regulation regulates qualifications in Northern Ireland.

Its regulatory responsibilities include maintaining standards and confidence in regulated qualifications while ensuring that qualification and assessment arrangements operate within the relevant Northern Ireland regulatory and legislative context.

Qualifications Wales and CCEA Regulation collaboration

Qualifications Wales and CCEA Regulation have jointly published Fair Access by Design (2025), which provides guidance on how well-planned qualifications and assessment can: **“give all learners the fairest possible opportunity to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do”**.

The guidance emphasises that considering fair access early in the design of qualifications and assessments can reduce the need for subsequent modifications or adjustments.

Fair Access by Design supports consideration of accessibility across the assessment-development process, including the design of questions and tasks, use of language, stimulus materials, presentation, and other features that may create barriers for learners.

Scotland

Qualifications Scotland

Scotland has a distinct qualification, regulatory, and assessment system, and arrangements applying to qualifications within the JCQ framework should not be assumed automatically to apply to Scottish National Qualifications.

Qualifications Scotland became Scotland's national qualifications body in 2026, replacing the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).

Qualifications Scotland promotes fair and inclusive approaches to qualification, development and assessment. Its Regulatory Principles require qualifications, their delivery, and assessment to be:

“fair, inclusive, and accessible to learners”

including consideration of barriers and appropriate reasonable adjustments.

For national qualifications, assessment arrangements are based on the individual needs of the learner, rather than diagnosis alone.

The guidance states that:

“the specific needs of the learner are used to consider which assessment arrangements can be put in place for them”

and that arrangements should, as far as possible, reflect the support normally provided in teaching and learning.

Learners receiving assessment arrangements are nevertheless expected to demonstrate the knowledge and skills required by the qualification. Assessment arrangements should provide access without compromising the integrity of the assessment.

Qualifications Scotland does not, however, currently use **accessibility by design** as a specific named framework.

Standards and Testing Agency

Standards and Testing Agency (STA) is responsible for the development and delivery of statutory national curriculum assessments in primary schools in England..

These assessments are distinct from regulated public qualifications but raise many of the same considerations in relation to accessibility.

The STA publishes its own requirements relating to access arrangements and modified assessment materials. Professionals should therefore refer to current STA guidance for the arrangements applicable to the relevant statutory assessment.

Working with language accessibility specialists

Language accessibility is most effective when awarding bodies bring together appropriate expertise in subject content, assessment, and language accessibility.

BALMs may contribute specialist language-accessibility expertise within awarding-body assessment development, review and quality-assurance processes. Language accessibility should form part of the wider assessment development process rather than being treated as a final stage exercise. The respective professional roles are described in **Chapter 4**; with practical principles for language modification are set out in **Chapter 6**.

Professional development

High-quality language accessibility depends upon appropriate education, training, and continuing professional development.

Professional development in language accessibility can also support question writers, subject specialists, assessment specialists, and others involved in assessment development to recognise unnecessary linguistic barriers and understand when specialist expertise may be required. Awarding bodies should ensure that those involved in assessment development, review, and quality assurance have access to appropriate professional learning in language accessibility and inclusive assessment design.

Professional development should support understanding of:

- the distinction between necessary assessment demand and unnecessary linguistic barriers
- the importance of preserving the construct and assessment objectives

- the role of subject-specific and technical vocabulary
- the importance of assessment command words
- the relationship between language and cognitive demand
- the relationship between questions, expected responses, and mark schemes
- the distinction between accessible standard assessments, language-modified papers, and individual access arrangements.

Professional learning should not be viewed as a one-off activity. Language accessibility develops alongside research, assessment practice, technology, and understanding of learners' needs and should therefore form part of continuing professional development.

Future directions

Experience from the development and provision of language-modified papers can also inform future assessment design. Where the same linguistic features repeatedly require modification, this may provide useful evidence for considering whether unnecessary barriers could appropriately be addressed at source in future standard assessments.

Continued multidisciplinary collaboration and meaningful engagement with learners and those with lived experience will be important in supporting the further development of fair and accessible assessment.

A summary of the key organisations involved in qualification regulation, assessment and accessibility across the UK is provided in **Appendix 4**.

Key message

Regulatory and assessment systems differ across the four UK nations, and current requirements and guidance should always be consulted. Across these systems, language accessibility should be considered as part of fair, valid, and high-quality assessment design while preserving the construct, assessment objectives, and intended level of demand.

Accessibility at source complements rather than replaces language-modified papers, access arrangements and other individual provision for learners who require them.

Part B

Applying language accessibility in practice

Chapter 6. Practical principles of language modification

The principles set out in this chapter provide practical guidance for those involved in writing, reviewing, and modifying assessment language. They may be applied when considering the accessibility of classroom tasks, internal assessments, and standard assessment materials at source, as well as when producing language-modified examination papers. In public examinations, their application must reflect the requirements and processes of the relevant awarding body (see **Chapter 5**). Any modification must preserve what the assessment is intended to measure.

Language modification requires careful professional judgement. Its purpose is to remove unnecessary linguistic barriers without changing the knowledge, understanding, or skills being assessed; providing unintended assistance, or weakening the relationship between the question and the mark scheme.

Principles for effective language modification

1. Preserve what the question is intended to assess

A modified question should require the same subject knowledge, understanding, skills, and concepts as the original question. It must enable the learner to meet the same assessment objectives and demonstrate the same level of cognitive demand.

Language modification must not:

- simplify the subject content
- reduce the level of reasoning required
- remove knowledge that the learner is expected to demonstrate
- provide additional clues or information
- change the expected response.

The central question is:

Can the unnecessary language barrier be reduced without changing what the learner is being asked to demonstrate?

If not, the proposed modification may not be appropriate.

2. Consider the whole question

Before making any modification, the whole question should be considered to establish:

- its intended meaning
- the assessment objective
- the knowledge, understanding or skills being assessed
- the response required
- the marks available
- its relationship with the mark scheme.

Where available, the specification, mark scheme, and relevant subject guidance should be considered alongside the question.

A word or sentence that appears unnecessarily difficult when viewed in isolation may be essential to the construct or expected response. Conversely, replacing a single difficult word may not resolve a barrier created by the structure of the question as a whole.

Where there is uncertainty, the appropriate subject specialist, examiner, assessor, or awarding-organisation process should be consulted.

3. Distinguish carrier language from language that is being assessed

Modification should focus primarily on **carrier language**: the language used to communicate the task, but which is not itself being assessed.

Where a non-technical word can be replaced without changing meaning, a more familiar equivalent may improve accessibility.

For example:

Less familiar carrier language	Possible alternative
require	need
adequate	enough
prior to	before
in conjunction with	with
locate	find
in the production of	when making

These are examples rather than automatic substitutions. A term such as 'locate' may be subject-specific in Geography, while 'production' may have a particular technical meaning in another subject.

Subject-specific or technical terminology may form part of the construct and should not normally be changed where learners are expected to know and understand it.

For example, terms such as photosynthesis, metaphor, denominator or evaporation may be essential curriculum vocabulary. The carrier language surrounding those terms should, however, be no more complex than necessary.

The purpose is not to remove the language of the subject, but to ensure that unnecessary language surrounding it does not become an additional barrier.

4. Modify only where necessary

Not every unfamiliar or difficult word should be changed.

A modification should address an identifiable linguistic barrier rather than simply make wording shorter or easier.

The decision should consider:

- whether the language forms part of the construct
- whether it is subject-specific or technical vocabulary
- whether the learner is expected to know it
- whether an alternative communicates exactly the same meaning
- whether changing it would affect the assessment demand or expected response.

For a **language modifier working during a live examination**, modification may take place only within the rules of the relevant assessment body and, where applicable, when requested by the learner. The detailed requirements for that access arrangement are set out in **Chapter 2**.

5. Work at sentence and question level, not only word level

Language modification is often more effective when applied to a complete sentence, question, paragraph, or section rather than through substitution of individual words.

Replacing one word may leave the underlying grammatical or organisational difficulty unchanged and may unintentionally alter meaning or emphasis.

Sentence length should be carefully considered. Shorter sentences may reduce the amount of information that must be processed simultaneously and may be less likely to contain several embedded grammatical structures.

However, shorter does not automatically mean clearer. A short sentence containing a dense noun phrase or unfamiliar vocabulary may be more difficult than a slightly longer but well-structured sentence.

Forthcoming research from Moor House School & College highlights the importance of considering the interaction between individual vocabulary and the meaning conveyed by the sentence as a whole, particularly in mathematical word problems. Learners with language disorders may use individual vocabulary items as cues to identify the mathematical operation required, rather than processing the full syntactic relationship within the sentence. This may create an additional barrier where the vocabulary appears to cue an operation that is inconsistent with the operation required.

For example, “How many more apples does Alex have than Kai?” requires subtraction, although the word **more** may cue addition. A more linguistically consistent formulation may be “How many fewer apples does Kai have than Alex?”. Conversely, “Alex had some apples but gave 3 away. Now Alex has 5 apples. How many apples did Alex have at the start?” requires addition, although **gave away** may cue subtraction.

These examples illustrate why accessibility cannot be determined by considering individual words in isolation. Vocabulary, syntax and the relationships expressed within the whole sentence should be considered together. Where interpreting a particular linguistic relationship is not itself part of the construct being assessed, assessment writers and modifiers should consider whether the wording creates an unnecessary language-processing demand while ensuring that any modification preserves the intended mathematical reasoning and does not provide an unintended clue.

Where contextual or introductory information is required, the task should be structured so that the learner can clearly identify the question or instruction. Where appropriate, present necessary introductory information first and distinguish it clearly from what the learner is required to do. This may also reduce unnecessary demands on working memory.

Where a question contains several instructions, consider whether they can be presented separately while preserving the intended sequence and relationship between them.

For example:

Original

Identify two faults that have been made in the design of the experiment shown, describing in each case how the fault can be corrected.

Possible modification

Identify two faults in the design of this experiment.

Describe how to correct each fault.

This retains the task but makes the two required actions more explicit.

Where appropriate, accessibility may also be improved by:

- using bullet points or lists
- using tables where these make relationships clearer
- placing related information together.

The style of language modification should remain consistent throughout the assessment.

6. Maintain the structure of the assessment and its relationship with the mark scheme

Subject expertise is particularly important in identifying vocabulary and language that form part of the construct. Successful modification depends on understanding what the examiner or assessor expects the learner to demonstrate.

Where available, refer to:

- the mark scheme
- specification
- assessment objectives
- relevant subject guidance
- relevant awarding-organisation requirements.

Long or complex questions may require restructuring, but modification must not disrupt the relationship between the question, assessment objective, and mark scheme.

Question numbering, sections and subsections, such as:

- (a), (b), (c); and
- (i), (ii), (iii)

should normally be retained in the same form.

The number of required responses, available marks, and sequence of tasks should remain unchanged unless the awarding body has explicitly approved an alternative arrangement.

7. Retain assessment command words where they communicate the required cognitive process

Assessment command words tell learners what they are required to do. Examples include:

- **describe**
- **explain**
- **suggest**
- **compare**
- **justify**
- **evaluate**
- **discuss.**

Some command words may also have everyday meanings that differ from their assessment meaning. Terms such as outline, sketch, illustrate and present a case may therefore require particular consideration.

Assessment command words should be **explicitly taught and used consistently during teaching and learning** so that learners become familiar with their meaning and the type of response expected before formal assessment.

Examples of commonly encountered examination command words are provided in the relevant **Appendix 1**. Further guidance on command words and their use in language modification is available in the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors (CIEA) Handbook for the Examination Access Arrangement Language Modifier Role.

8. Retain and explicitly teach subject-specific vocabulary

Each subject has its own language.

Technical and subject-specific vocabulary form an important part of subject knowledge and may be part of what is being assessed. It should not normally be replaced simply because it is unfamiliar or linguistically complex.

Learners therefore need opportunities to encounter, understand, and use subject-specific vocabulary **explicitly and repeatedly during teaching and learning**.

Language modification should focus on making the carrier language surrounding essential terminology as clear as possible so that understanding of the subject is assessed rather than the learner's ability to disentangle unnecessarily complex wording.

9. Select and review source and stimulus material carefully

Assessments may include extracts, case studies, scenarios, quotations, historical sources, articles, diagrams, tables, photographs, and other stimulus material.

A distinction should be made between **original source material** and **examiner-generated material**.

Original source material may form part of the construct and should not normally be modified unless the relevant assessment process permits this.

Examiner-generated material may offer greater scope for modification where this improves accessibility without altering subject content or assessment demand.

Where appropriate and permitted, a glossary may be considered for unfamiliar non-technical words or expressions that are not being assessed.

Assessment writers and examiners should choose source and stimulus material carefully so that the language within it is accessible and does not create unnecessary linguistic barriers.

When selecting source and stimulus material, consideration should be given to:

- linguistic complexity
- length and density
- cultural and contextual assumptions
- the relationship between the source and the question
- the accessibility of images, diagrams and tables
- whether learners need to move repeatedly between different sources of information.

Source material should not unintentionally become a test of language comprehension unless this forms part of the intended construct.

10. Protect meaning, validity, and comparability

Every proposed modification should be checked carefully to ensure that it does not:

- alter the meaning of the question
- remove essential subject terminology
- change the emphasis of the task
- make the expected answer more obvious
- introduce a new ambiguity
- weaken the relationship with the mark scheme
- reduce the cognitive demand
- compromise comparability with the standard assessment.

A modification may be rejected where the examiner or awarding body determines that:

- the meaning has been altered
- particular wording is essential to the subject or construct
- the modification changes the expected response
- consistency across questions or papers would be affected
- the modification would compromise validity, reliability or comparability
- it is not suitable for cultural (and other) reasons.

11. Support normal way of working

Accessible language should form part of a learner's **normal way of working** wherever possible.

Learners who require language-modified materials in formal assessment should have appropriate opportunities to encounter accessible and, where relevant, similarly modified materials during teaching, learning, classroom tasks, and internal assessment.

This is important because language accessibility should support access to learning throughout education rather than appear only at the point of examination. Learners should also be familiar with the style, structure, and presentation of materials they may encounter in formal assessment.

This does not mean reproducing secure examination arrangements in the classroom. It means embedding appropriate language-accessibility principles within everyday teaching, learning, and assessment.

Learners should be explicitly taught the subject-specific terminology they are expected to know and use. Relevant specifications and subject materials provided by awarding body should be used to identify required terminology, and clarification should be sought from the relevant awarding body where there is uncertainty about whether a term is subject specific.

Requirements relating to signed communication and the treatment of command words and subject-specific terminology differ between Qualifications Scotland and JCQ. In Scotland, command words and subject-specific terminology can be signed; elsewhere they must be fingerspelt. If such command words are found in source material, they must not be signed.

JCQ advise that the sign language professional should also be a qualified language modifier. It is essential that deaf learners who use sign language and are entitled to the language modifier access arrangement have established a normal way of working experience of assessment practice. They must have the ability to recognise and understand that the English version of the technical or subject-specific terms within a subject is part of the assessment. JCQ have clear wording in their policy that if such terms are signed instead of fingerspelt, then the demands of the question will have been compromised and this will constitute malpractice.

12. Support professional dialogue, checking, and collaboration

Effective language modification depends on collaboration between those with relevant expertise in language accessibility, subject content, and assessment.

A proposed modification may appear linguistically clearer but inadvertently change technical meaning, assessment objective, cognitive demand, or expected response.

Professional dialogue supports consideration of:

- the intended construct
- technical and subject-specific terminology
- potential linguistic barriers
- the implications of proposed changes
- the mark scheme
- assessment validity and comparability.

Where assessment-development processes allow, proposed modifications should be subject to appropriate checking and quality assurance. The modified wording should be considered alongside the original to confirm that meaning, assessment demand, and expected response have been preserved.

Feedback from modification should also inform future assessment development. Where the same unnecessary linguistic barrier repeatedly requires modification, consideration should be given to whether it could appropriately be addressed at source in future standard assessments.

Common areas of need

The same linguistic feature may create barriers for different learners for various reasons.

Table A illustrates some common areas of need and their potential impact for deaf learners and learners with other language, literacy, or neurodevelopmental needs.

For example, an idiom may be difficult for a learner with DLD because of difficulties interpreting non-literal language, or for an autistic learner because the intended meaning is implicit. Deaf learners may also experience difficulties with non-literal or implied language, including where reduced access to incidental spoken language has limited opportunities to encounter and interpret such language in context.

Individual profiles vary considerably, and learners may experience overlapping or co-occurring language, literacy, sensory, attention, or other processing needs. The examples in Table A are therefore illustrative rather than diagnostic. The interaction between different learner profiles and the language and cognitive demands of assessment is considered further in **Chapter 3**.

Language modification should focus on the identified linguistic barrier while preserving the content and construct of the assessment, recognising the needs of the learner.

Table A: Language demands, potential barriers, and principles of language modification

Area of need	Possible impact for deaf learners	Possible impact for learners with other language, literacy or neuro-developmental needs	Language modification focus	What must not change
Working memory	The learner may need to hold the question, technical vocabulary, visual information, and answer plan in mind while decoding unfamiliar language.	The learner may struggle to retain lengthy instructions, multi-part questions, or dense wording while planning and recording an answer.	Reduce unnecessary sentence length, separate multi-step instructions, use clear sequencing, avoid unnecessary embedded clauses, make the task requirement explicit.	The number of required steps, marks available, subject knowledge, reasoning demand, and command word requirement must remain the same.
Processing speed	The learner may take longer to decode written language, connect it to signed or spoken language, and identify what the question is asking.	The learner may work at a slower pace because of literacy, cognitive processing, attention, visual, motor, or fatigue-related needs.	Use direct wording, remove redundant words, place key information close to the question, avoid unnecessarily complex sentence structures.	The time-dependent skill being assessed, where relevant, and the level of subject complexity must not be reduced.
Language comprehension	The learner may misinterpret idioms, figurative language, abstract wording, passive constructions, or low-frequency vocabulary not central to the subject.	The learner may misread or misunderstand unfamiliar vocabulary, complex grammar, ambiguous wording, or instructions with several conditions.	Use accessible but age-appropriate language, replace idioms or unnecessary figurative language, clarify pronoun references, clarify or replace non-technical vocabulary where permitted.	Technical terms, key subject vocabulary, assessment terminology, and required concepts must not be removed where they are part of what is being assessed.

Continued on next page

Table A continued:

Area of need	Possible impact for deaf learners	Possible impact for learners with other language, literacy or neuro-developmental needs	Language modification focus	What must not change
Command words	The learner may know the content but misunderstand whether they are being asked to describe, explain, compare, justify, or evaluate.	The learner may confuse command words or fail to recognise the level of response required because of language, cognition, or literacy needs.	Ensure command words are visible and unambiguous, avoid placing the command word late in a complex sentence, maintain consistent wording where possible.	The command word and expected cognitive demand must not be changed unless the relevant assessment process permits an equivalent accessible form.
Cognitive load	Effort spent decoding language may reduce capacity for recalling knowledge, reasoning, applying methods and checking answers.	Effort spent managing reading, attention, fatigue, anxiety, visual access or physical recording may reduce capacity for the assessment tasks.	Use clear paragraphing, bulleting where appropriate, uncluttered layout, consistent terminology and logical ordering of information.	The assessment objective, mark allocation, data interpretation, and problem-solving demand must remain intact.
Inference and implied meaning	The learner may miss implied information, tone, nuance, or assumed background knowledge where access to incidental language has been reduced.	The learner may find implicit instructions or hidden assumptions difficult because of language, cognition, attention, or literacy needs.	Make instructions explicit where the inference is not itself being assessed, state what information should be used, avoid unnecessary ambiguity, ensure references such as “this”, “it” or “they” are clear.	Inference must not be removed where making inferences is the skill being assessed, such as in some reading or analysis questions.

Continued on next page

Table A continued:

Area of need	Possible impact for deaf learners	Possible impact for learners with other language, literacy or neuro-developmental needs	Language modification focus	What must not change
Reading stamina and fatigue	The learner may experience visual or linguistic fatigue from sustained reading, especially when also using signing, captions, or assistive technology.	The learner may experience fatigue associated with visual, physical, cognitive, attention, or other needs.	Remove unnecessary repetition, keep wording concise; use clear layout, avoid dense blocks of text where this does not affect the assessment purpose.	Required source material, stimulus content, reading demand, and assessment length must not be shortened where there are integral to the assessment or construct.
Vocabulary access	The learner may have gaps in general vocabulary, connectives, comparative language, or abstract terms associated with reduced access to incidental spoken language.	The learner may have limited vocabulary knowledge associated with language, literacy, learning, or other neurodevelopmental needs.	Replace non-essential low-frequency words with familiar alternatives, clarify connectives, avoid unnecessary synonyms that may confuse meaning.	Subject-specific terminology and vocabulary that learners are expected to know must not be simplified where it is part of the assessment.

Chapter 7. Applying language-modification principles in practice

Chapter 6 sets out the principles that should guide language modification. This chapter illustrates how those principles may be applied in practice to instructions, questions and other assessment material.

The examples are illustrative rather than prescriptive. Any modification must preserve the intended construct, assessment objective, subject content, cognitive demand and expected response. In public examinations, the requirements of the relevant awarding body must also be followed.

Modifying the rubric

The rubric contains the instructions and information that tell learners how to complete an assessment. Clear rubric language and presentation can reduce unnecessary barriers and help learners identify what they are required to do.

1 Addressing the learner

Where appropriate, instructions and advice should address the learner directly, using you and the active voice.

For example:

‘You must use all the information to get full marks’.

2 Giving instructions

The plain imperative should be used and the number of questions answered should be in words; For example:

‘Answer **five** questions.

Answer **Question 1, Question 2** and **three other** questions.

3 Repeating essential instructions

Even when instructions are clearly stated on the front page, it may be helpful to repeat essential instructions at the relevant point in the paper.

For example:

On the front page ‘Answer two questions from Section A’

At the top of Section A ‘Answer two questions from this section’

Where a paper has a mixture of compulsory and optional sections, an instruction should be printed under the option headings, for example:

On the front page Answer Section A **and either** Section B **or** Section C’

Under Section C ‘If you have answered **Section B**, do not answer this section’

4 Organising instructions and information

Separate the instructions where this makes the required actions clearer.

For example:

‘Answer **two** questions.

Choose **one** question from Section A and **one** question from Section B’

The following should be used to give the mark value for each question or part question:

‘The number of marks is given in brackets () at the end of each question or part question.’

This type of information may be presented under a heading such as ‘Information for Learners’ in accordance with the style of the relevant assessment.

An example of modifying a rubric

The following example was developed for a mock GCSE Dance examination and is included to illustrate how instructions and information may be presented more accessibly.

Some changes shown in this example relate to timing or procedure rather than language. In a formal assessment, changes to timing, permitted actions, or assessment procedures require appropriate authorisation and must comply with the requirements of the relevant awarding body. They cannot be introduced solely as a language modification.

Original version

Instructions to learners

- Answer all the questions in the spaces provided in the answer book.
- After the first viewing, ten minutes will be allowed for you to read the question paper. During this viewing and reading time you must not begin writing.
- The extract will be shown four more times with approximately a two minute interval between each viewing. You may make notes on the supplementary sheets provided throughout these four viewings and intervals but you should not write your answers on the question paper.
- You will have a further one and a half hours in which to complete the paper.

Information for learners

- You will be shown a video extract from 'Still Life at the Penguin Café' choreographed by David Bintley and performed by the Royal Ballet. You will see this extract five times.
- An insert has been provided for use with Question 17.
- The number of marks is given in brackets at the end of each question.
- You will be awarded marks for accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Possible modification

Information for learners

- You will watch a video extract from 'Still Life at the Penguin Café' choreographed by David Bintley and performed by the Royal Ballet.

You will see this extract five times.

- There is a picture to help you with Question 17.
- The number of marks is given in brackets () at the end of each question.
- You are given marks for accurate spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

Instructions to learners

- Watch the video once.

Then read the question paper.

You have 12 minutes to do this.

Do not write anything yet.

- Watch the video four more times. You can ask the invigilator to pause the video so you can write notes*
- Write notes on the sheets, **not** on the question paper.
- You have another 1 hour 53 minutes to finish the paper.
- Answer **all** the questions.
- Write your answers in this book.

The timings shown are illustrative. Where a learner has an approved extra-time arrangement, the total time allowed would be adjusted accordingly.

*Some deaf learners may experience additional demands when required to attend, listen to, and/or watch a performance while making notes at the same time. Where pausing or other changes to the assessment procedure are proposed, these must be consistent with the requirements of the relevant awarding body.

The layout and presentation of the rubric should be accessible and should not create unnecessary barriers for learners. Particular consideration should be given to the requirements of learners with visual or other access needs.

The content and layout of examination-paper covers may vary between awarding bodies. An example of what an information section may include:

- The number of marks is given in brackets () at the end of each question or part-question.
- The total number of marks available is 100.
- You should think carefully about how you use your time.
- Your responses must be clear, accurate, and well presented.

Applying the principles to words and terms

Chapter 6 distinguishes carrier language from language that forms part of the construct and explains the importance of retaining subject-specific terminology and assessment command words where these are being assessed. The following examples illustrate linguistic features that may require consideration when applying those principles in practice.

Examples of replacing less familiar carrier language with more familiar alternatives are provided in **Chapter 6**.

1 Words and terms

- Subject-specific terminology that forms part of the knowledge or understanding being assessed should normally be retained. Command words should normally be retained where they are linked to the assessment objective or expected response. Learners should have opportunities to become familiar with them meaning during teaching and preparation. There is also a large body of words which are uncommon in everyday use, but frequently appear in examination questions eg ‘feature’, ‘factor’, ‘characteristic’. It is often difficult to find common alternatives for these words and they should ideally be taught before an examination series.
- It is within the carrier language, that which is not being assessed, that modification should be made to make access easier and examination questions more valid.

1(i) Use more common terms

- ‘need’ rather than ‘require’
- ‘enough’ rather than ‘adequate’
- ‘before’ rather than ‘prior to’
- ‘with’ rather than ‘in conjunction with’
- ‘find’ rather than ‘locate’
- ‘when making’ rather than ‘in the production of’

The modifier should be aware that some words are subject-specific in certain areas.

A word that functions as carrier language in one subject may be subject-specific terminology in another, for example, should ‘locate’ be learned for a geography course? Should ‘production’ be learned for design technology?

Modification therefore requires consideration of the subject context and construct.

1(ii) Ambiguity

A candidate may take the most common meaning of a term that has more than one meaning.

- 'Draw conclusions from data in the table'
- 'Present a case to persuade learners to travel widely'
- 'It was sound policy not to intervene in the riots'

Some commands such as 'outline', 'sketch', 'argue' can be ambiguous.

Where ambiguity is not part of what is being assessed, wording should be reviewed to determine whether the intended meaning can be made clearer without altering the construct or expected response.

1(iii) Abstract nouns

Usually, a verb is more commonly understood than the equivalent abstract noun.

- 'protect' rather than 'protection'
- 'complete' rather than 'completion'

There are exceptions. 'Behaviour' is a more common word than 'behave'.

Sometimes the same word can act as a noun or verb. In this case, some readers may only know the verb:

- 'Teenagers often **use** slang' is easier than 'The use of slang is common among teenagers'.

Where an abstract term is essential to the subject or construct, it should be retained.

Where it forms part of the carrier language, consider whether the same meaning can be communicated more directly.

1(iv) Jargon and neologisms

Certain terms are overused in specific contexts. For example, rail companies may ask customers to 'take care when alighting from the train'. A language modifier may suggest rephrasing terms or adding a gloss [note] even if it's subject-specific, with an awareness that an assessor may not see such a term as jargon.

In sociology 'Women face a **glass ceiling** in banking' may be subject-specific.

New words may or may not come into common usage. Consider this quotation from Barack Obama:

‘Like, if I tweet or hashtag about how you didn’t do something right or used the wrong verb, then I can sit back and feel pretty good about myself because, man, you know how woke I was’.

Unnecessary jargon should be avoided where it is not part of the subject content or construct being assessed.

Subject-specific terminology that learners are expected to know should not be removed simply because it is specialised or unfamiliar.

1(v) Non-literal language

Some readers may find idioms, similes, or metaphors difficult to interpret.

Idioms	‘He had the best of both worlds’
	‘In some religions it is wrong to touch alcohol’
Similes	‘Her fingers were as cold as ice’
	‘The two sides fought like cats and dogs’
Metaphors	‘The teacher was drowning in paperwork’
	‘The key to this problem can be seen in the diagram’

Where understanding non-literal language is not part of the construct, consider whether a more direct expression can communicate the same meaning. Where interpretation of non-literal or figurative language is itself being assessed, it should be retained.

1(vi) Phrasal verbs

Some phrasal verbs may be familiar in everyday language, but familiarity varies between learners and contexts. Where a phrasal verb is carrier language, consider whether a clearer alternative communicates the same meaning without changing the task.

Phrasal verbs are usually made up of a simple verb and a particle which together create a verb of a different and usually non-literal meaning.

- Hanif **put down** a deposit of £500 on a new car.

‘Put down’, for example, could refer in different ways to an adversary (something negative someone says to you), a pencil, or even a pet.

Common phrasal verbs retained in examination questions may include 'carry out' (eg a survey), 'come across' (eg 'encounter'), 'go through' (eg 're-read').

Phrasal verbs can usually be replaced but it is often by a less common verb. The awarding body will need to advise if it would allow a suggested replacement for a phrasal verb or a gloss to be included beneath the exam question to explain the meaning of the original phrasal verb.

An example of the use of a double meaning and a phrasal verb:

Original version

Midtown Council plans to **conduct** a survey about sports facilities in the town.
This is how the Council plans to **carry out** the survey.

Possible modification

Midtown Council is planning a survey.
The Council wants to know people's views about sports centres in the town.

This is how the Council plans to do the survey.

Whether 'do the survey' is acceptable will depend on the intended meaning and the judgement of the relevant subject specialist or assessment team. As a modification, 'carry out the survey' is a commonly used expression.

This example illustrates why words and terms should be considered within the context of the whole question. A proposed change should be checked against the intended meaning, assessment objective, and expected response before it is accepted.

2 Sentences

Research has identified linguistic and syntactic complexity as important considerations in the accessibility of assessment material (Abedi, 2006). Research involving deaf learners has also examined the potential impact of vocabulary, syntax, and discourse complexity on access to assessment (Cawthon, 2011). Sentence structure may present particular challenges for learners with language, learning or literacy needs. However, shorter sentences are not necessarily easier to understand: vocabulary, grammatical complexity, and processing demands can also affect sentence comprehension (Pizzioli and Schelstraete, 2011; Montgomery et al, 2021).

Effective language modification usually requires consideration of the whole sentence or question rather than substitution of individual words.

Difficulties occur when the learner has to track backwards and forwards to get meaning, or is confused by combinations of clauses and/or phrases, or when a lot of auditory memory is needed. These difficulties can overlap.

2(i) Sentence length

Here is an example from a GCSE Drama paper:

Outline the physical and vocal qualities that you would look for in the actor playing Creon and then explain how you would direct the actor in his first appearance in the play in order to demonstrate his authority to your audience.

This may be challenging to the candidate. It could be simplified using shorter sentences:

You are directing the actor playing Creon. Outline the physical and vocal qualities that you would look for in this actor.

It is the actor's first appearance in the play and you want him to show his authority to the audience. Explain how you would direct this actor.

Modifying by using shorter sentences can remove difficulties such as the number of subordinate clauses.

Write down the co-ordinates of a point that is on the line whose equation is $x + y = 6$.

The following is more accessible

The equation for a line is $x + y = 6$

Write the co-ordinates of a point that is on that line.

Short sentences, however, are not always easier. They may be dense, using long noun phrases. This sentence is shorter

Sam had to drive a fully loaded trailer truck.

but probably not as accessible as this sentence:

Sam had to drive a trailer truck that was fully loaded.

2(ii) Sentence structure

It is often best to use simple sentences with a subject-verb-object sequence. In examination questions, try to give information and then ask the question.

Describe a suitable back-up system that would reduce the risk of losing data from the ENTRY file in the event of a hardware failure.

The following is more accessible:

You might lose data from the ENTRY file if there is a hardware failure. Describe a back-up system to reduce the risk of losing data.

2(iii) Subordination

Some readers can understand simple or compound sentences but find complex sentences more difficult. These sentences are formed when subordinate clauses are linked to the main clause:

'She wanted an ice cream'	Simple sentence (S-V-O)
'She wanted an ice cream but she didn't have much money'	Compound sentence (the main clause is linked by the connective 'but').
'She was worried that she didn't have enough money for an ice cream'	Complex sentence (main clause and subordinate clause linked by 'that')

Complex sentences have connecting words (subordinators). Examples include 'who', 'what', 'which', 'whose', 'where', 'when', 'how', 'if', 'whether' and 'that'. The subordinate clauses created can often be avoided by using shorter sentences:

- How many points would a runner have if he came second in the first two races, and fourth in the next two races?
- A runner came second in the first two races and fourth in the next two races. How many points would he have in total?

Some readers are confused by thinking certain subordinators are indicators of a question ('how', 'who', 'when', etc).

Very often, using a complex sentence is a way of condensing a lot of information into a small unit of writing. These can be very hard for readers with language needs.

Psychologists have suggested **that** the effect of the audience on the players would disappear **if** the audience wore blindfolds.

There are two subordinators here: that and if.

We could rewrite it to separate out these subordinate clauses:

Psychologists saw that the audience had an effect on the players.

But what would happen if the audience could not see the players?

The psychologists wanted the audience to wear blindfolds.

They thought the effect of the audience on the players would then disappear.

In this example the word *blindfolds* has been clarified. It may be a technical term in GCSE Psychology as the word comes up in many experiments. It would be sensible to check this sentence with the examiner.

Examiners often use relative clauses, which are subordinate clauses that modify a noun.

Name one extraneous variable **which** should be controlled in this experiment.

'Which' is the subordinator in the example above. The relative clause modifies the noun variable. Relative clauses can often be overcome by using shorter sentences.

One solution to this question might be:

Extraneous variables should be controlled.

Name **one** extraneous variable in this experiment.

Some learners who can understand complex sentences with one subordinate clause are confused when two or more are used in a sentence. This sentence contains a main clause, a relative clause, an adverbial clause and a noun clause:

She used to make a mess of everything she did until she learned that a little patience helped.

Using shorter sentences reduces the amount of subordination:

She used to make a mess of everything. Later, she learned to be a little more patient.

Subordinate clauses can affect the normal word order. In this example, a relative clause immediately follows the noun which it qualifies ('plant') and becomes embedded in the main clause ('The plant had yellow leaves').

The plant that was kept in the dark had yellow leaves.

Possible modification:

The plant was kept in the dark. The plant had yellow leaves.

Language modifiers do not have to identify particular types of clauses but must be aware of the difficulties that subordinate clauses can create.

2(iv) Voice

The passive voice is often used in examination questions, particularly for science or technical subjects, because it focuses on the process, not who did it. Learners can wrongly think that the subject is the agent:

The dog was attacked by three men.

In this example a reader with language difficulties might think that the dog was attacking three men.

Using the active voice makes the agent clearer:

Three men attacked the dog.

Passives, like subordinate clauses, can affect the word order and consequently create difficulties. It is usually best to modify to the active voice. There are three passives in this question:

Identify two faults that have been made in the design of the experiment shown, describing in each case how the fault can be corrected.

This could be modified as follows:

Identify two faults in the design of this experiment.

Describe how to correct each fault.

The language of questions can become more difficult if passives are in long sentences or are combined with other difficult structures such as relative clauses.

An investigation was carried out by a group of psychologists into the extent of peer group pressure on the attitude of teenage boys to racism.

is easier as

A group of psychologists is investigating the attitude of teenage boys.

They are trying to find out if peer group pressure leads to more or less racist views.

and

Describe a study in which it was shown that perception was affected by motivation

is easier as

A study finds that motivation affects perception.

Describe a study like this.

Changing from passive to active voice can affect the emphasis of a question. It is also not always possible to change from passive to active.

Example:

Original

Two metal plates may be riveted together by placing a white-hot rivet in the hole through the two plates. The head of the rivet is then hammered flat. Explain why the plates are held more tightly together when the rivet has cooled.

Possible modification

A metal worker rivets two metal plates together.

He puts a white-hot rivet in the hole through the two plates.

Then he hammers the head of the rivet until it is flat.

The rivet cools and the plates are now very tightly held together.

Why are the plates held so tightly together, now they are cold?

There is still one passive verb phrase in here, but it is easier to understand because the sentence length is much shorter. Some examiners do not like the introduction of characters and particularly not names.

2(v) Negation

Questions containing negatives can confuse learners because they may take the focus of the question in the opposite way from that which the examiner intended.

Learners may pick up the meaning of 'no' or 'not' but miss other signal words such as 'lack' or 'despite.'

Two negatives in the same sentence can be especially difficult.

Experimental studies on obedience have been criticised for a number of reasons.

Discuss two criticisms that are not based on ethical reasons.

The word criticism has negative meaning, and the not is nearby. In addition, the first sentence has a passive. One solution might be:

Experimental studies on obedience have been criticised for ethical reasons.

Discuss **two other** reasons why experimental studies on obedience have been criticised.

2(vi) Questions embedded in statements

This format is often used in tests and exams. Readers with language difficulties are penalised because they cannot easily see what the question is asking. A good solution is to give the information first and then ask the question in a separate sentence.

How has the introduction of man-made boards to replace wooden boards affected the method of fixing tabletops to frames?

A possible modification:

Fifty years ago joiners used wooden boards to make table tops.

Explain how joiners fit wooden boards to the table frames 50 years ago. We use man-made boards to make table tops **today**.

Explain how we fix man-made boards to the table frames **today**.

Check with the examiner to see if the modified version is too laborious. The mark scheme may not require the candidate to explain earlier fixing methods.

2(vii) Coherence and cohesion

Coherence is the way ideas in a text hang together.

Cohesion is the linking of text to build up coherent ideas. Good readers use cohesive cues at all levels to comprehend texts.

Four categories of cohesive device have been identified:

a) **Reference** These are devices in a text that can only be interpreted by referring to other parts of the text or to world knowledge. They include:

- Personal reference (pronouns).

‘The boy dropped **his** sandwich. The gull ate it.’

‘The girl visited the library. The library was in the city centre. **It** was a busy place. She looked for a quiet place to read **her** book.’

- Demonstrative reference (‘the’).

‘A new teacher had started. The children were curious about **the** teacher’.

(ie not any teacher but the teacher – the reader has to track back to find the referent).

- Comparative reference (‘such as’, ‘more’, etc)

‘A healthy diet includes root vegetables **such as** carrots’.

Reference devices can refer to items mentioned before, (‘The toy squeaked when she squeezed it’), later (‘When he arrived, John saw the door was open’) or outside the text (‘Take a look at this!’).

b) **Substitution and ellipsis** Substitution is the replacing of a word or phrase with another that has a similar grammatical function:

‘Car tyres wear out. New **ones** may have to be fitted’

Ellipsis is missing a word out once it has been mentioned.

‘I ordered three boxes but they only delivered two’ (boxes).

Ellipsis Writers often leave out a phrase in order not to repeat it. Repeated phrases are seen as clumsy. Readers with language challenges do not know to look back to reconstitute the full phrase.

Eight students completed the chemistry experiment. **None** recorded the temperature of the water correctly.

It shows the word **none** referring back to the noun phrase 'Eight students' in sentence one. The reference needs to be made more explicit for readers with language challenges.

Eight students completed the experiment. **But none of the students** recorded the temperature of the water correctly.

c) **Lexical** This cohesion occurs when two words in a text are related semantically. This might be a word repeated in a similar place in a neighbouring sentence or a synonym ('Which trousers will you wear? I'll wear my jeans.').

d) **Conjunction** This signals a relationship between parts of the text which might be additive ('and'), causal ('because'), or temporal ('then'). The reader has to interpret these cues to make sense of complex sentences.

Reference, substitution, and ellipsis devices require the reader to search backwards and forwards to find the referent. Some readers find this skill difficult, so language modifiers should be aware that access to a question can be limited using these cohesive devices. Successful texts are still cohesive, but the cohesive ties are more common ones which do not need a lot of work to discover.

This is part of a maths question. Try reading without the words in brackets, then with them. Which is easier? (The maths is the same).

Marie had 10 marbles in a bag. It (the bag) weighed 1 kilo. Then she (Marie) added some more (marbles) until it (the bag) weighed 2 kilos.

The language and structure of a question should not create unnecessary working-memory or cognitive demands by requiring learners to locate, track, connect, and process information beyond what is necessary to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, or understanding being assessed.

Difficult question words

Some question words are more difficult to interpret than others.

‘How’ is particularly hard and can usually be rephrased to make the meaning clearer to the candidate.

How would you decide whether or not there was inter-observer reliability in your study?

The question will still need to be a *how* question, but it would be easier to interpret if it were shorter.

Did you have inter-observer reliability in your study?

Explain how you know if you have inter-observer reliability.

To modify this question successfully you would need to see the complete question and the mark scheme to make sure that the modified version produces the correct response. The phrase underlined is technical vocabulary that could not be modified.

This illustrates the importance of considering the whole question and its relationship with the mark scheme, as discussed in **Chapter 6**.

A note on readability

There are long-standing systems such as those developed by Dr Edward Fry, or Rudolf Flesch and J Peter Kincaid that estimate the readability of text. These measure the average number of syllables per word in a text and the average number of sentences in a text.

However, these systems are limited because short words are not always easier. A candidate is more likely to understand ‘impossible’ (four syllables) than ‘crux’ or ‘trope’ (one syllable). Shorter sentences are usually more accessible as they often use a simpler structure (subject verb object (SVO)) and are less likely to contain subordinate clauses.

It can help to divide shorter sentences if they contain a lot of condensed information:

- The government used a **Jamie Oliver endorsed media campaign** to promote healthier school dinners.

This very heavy noun phrase makes the sentence difficult to process. The noun phrase here is in object position. Heavy noun phrases in subject position are even more difficult. The further the head noun is away from the main verb, the more difficult it is to interpret.

Although SVO sentences are the most frequent pattern, they are by no means the only one.

Adverbials can occur in different positions within a sentence. Structures such as subject–verb–adverbial (SVA) and adverbial–subject–verb–adverbial (ASVA) are common in school texts, while instructions frequently use verb–object–adverbial (VOA) structures.

The position of an adverbial can affect how easily a sentence is understood. There is no single word order that is always more accessible; this may depend on the type and function of the adverbial and on whether the order in which information is presented reflects the order in which events or actions occur.

For example:

Write the sum before you write the answer.

may be easier to process than:

Before you write the answer, write the sum.

In the first version, the actions are presented in the order in which they should be completed. Where possible, instructions should therefore present actions in a clear and logical sequence, particularly where changing the position of an adverbial would require the learner to hold, reorder or reinterpret information.

Context and cultural assumptions

Assessment contexts should be considered for unnecessary cultural, social, or experiential assumptions where these are not relevant to the construct. Familiarity with a particular context should not inadvertently become an additional barrier to demonstrating the knowledge or skill being assessed.

Consider the relevance and interest of the question content to the learner, in terms of gender, culture, disability, etc. A language modifier could indicate if they see an inappropriate question, such as the relevance to a deaf candidate of a question about a radio play.

This maths question was suggested for a new post-16 exam and printed in *The Guardian* on 3rd September 2015. The language would need modifying. Examiners could also consider the social and cultural relevance:

Nine friends go out for a meal. The total bill for all the food and wine comes to £184.75. The cost of the wine is £29.90. Three of the friends did not have any wine.

One of the friends suggests two options for deciding how the total bill is to be divided up.

Either they share the cost equally or those who did not have wine pay only for the food and contribute nothing to the wine bill.

Each of the nine friends rounds the amount they have to pay up to the nearest whole pound and leaves the change as a tip for the waitress.

Which option will give the waitress the largest tip, and by how much? You must show all your workings.

Possible modification

Nine friends go out for a meal.

The cost of **all** the food and drinks is £184.75.

The drinks cost £29.90. Three of the friends did **not** have any drinks.

The friends want to share the bill. They have **two** options.

Option A:

The friends will share the cost, so each person will pay the same amount.

Option B:

The three friends who did **not** have drinks **only** have to pay for the food and **not** the drinks.

The tip – extra money for the waitress

The nine friends also want to pay the waitress a tip.

Each person will round up the amount they have to pay to the nearest whole pound.

(a) Which option will give the waitress the largest tip, option A **or** option B?

(b) What is the difference in the tip between option A and option B?

You **must** show all your working.

Modifying source material/longer texts

Longer texts can place additional language, memory, and processing demands on learners. Applying language-modification principles to longer texts therefore requires consideration not only of individual words and sentences but also of how information is organised, connected, and presented across the text.

Before modifying a longer text, consider the text as a whole and how it relates to the questions or tasks that accompany it. In an assessment, read the relevant questions and, where available, the assessment objective and mark scheme before making changes. In classroom materials, consider the purpose of the activity and the knowledge, skills, or understanding that learners are expected to demonstrate.

Where appropriate, consider whether you can:

- remove information that is unnecessary for the task
- reorganise information into a clearer or more logical sequence
- present events or processes in chronological order where this supports understanding
- separate information into shorter paragraphs, lists, or bullet points
- use headings and subheadings to organise related information
- present appropriate information as a fact file or table
- use diagrams, mind maps, or similar visual representations where these support access without changing the task
- use spacing, bold, or other appropriate formatting to make the structure of the text clearer
- place related information together so that learners do not have to search unnecessarily across the text or page
- avoid unnecessary use of capital letters for emphasis
- apply the principles in earlier chapters to vocabulary, sentence structure, reference, cohesion, and other language features.

Care is needed when reorganising, highlighting, or visually restructuring information. Changes to presentation should not inadvertently identify important information, reveal relationships, provide additional cues, or otherwise change the knowledge, skill, or understanding required by the task.

Example

The following example is taken from background material for an in-college assessment at an agricultural college. The modification addresses the condensed presentation, long sentences, abstract nouns, and use of passive voice while retaining relevant technical terminology.

Original

There are two different types of carrots used in Russell Carrot and Leek (a brand of animal food), micronised (bright orange flakes) and home-dried (pale orange, irregular shaped).

Micronisation improves the digestibility of the carrot and enhances the palatability by converting the starches to sugars.

Colour retention with the process is excellent which is why these flakes appear so bright. The home-dried carrot is produced at the Supreme Factory from fresh carrots. Slices of carrot are dried very slowly, which maintains the aroma and flexibility of the product.

Both types of carrot are used as not only do they contain moderate levels of protein and fibre, they are especially rich in β -carotene. Both are extremely palatable and the different textures provide interest.

Possible modification

Russell Carrot and Leek uses two types of dried carrot:

1. Micronised carrot

Bright orange flakes.

If a carrot is micronised, the starches change to sugars.

Advantages:

- Carrots are more easily digested.
- Carrots taste sweeter.
- Carrots keep their bright colour.

2. Home-dried carrot

Pale orange, irregular shapes.

Slices of fresh carrot are dried slowly.

Advantages:

- Carrots keep their smell.
- Carrots are still flexible.

Advantages of both types of carrot:

- They contain moderate levels of protein and fibre.
- They are very rich in β -carotene.
- They taste good.
- The different textures make the food interesting

Points to consider

In this example, technical terminology such as *micronised* and *β -carotene* is retained, while the carrier language is made more accessible. Information is separated into shorter sentences and lists, and related information is grouped together. Sentence structures are also more direct.

The extent to which longer or source material can be modified depends on the purpose of the material and what the learner is expected to demonstrate.

Where a text provides background or contextual information and reading comprehension is not itself being assessed, there may be greater scope to reorganise information or modify the carrier language. However, any modification must preserve information that is relevant to the task and must not alter the knowledge, skill, understanding or level of challenge being assessed.

Greater caution is required where the language, structure, or style of a text forms part of the learning or assessment. For example, a literary extract, historical source, or other authentic source material may itself contain language or features that learners are expected to interpret or analyse. Modifying these features could change what is being taught or assessed.

Where source or stimulus material has been written or adapted specifically for an assessment, there may be scope for language modification. Any proposed modification should be considered alongside the questions, assessment objective, expected response and mark scheme.

In classroom teaching and learning, teachers and other professionals can consider whether unfamiliar words in source material can be explained before or alongside the task, for example through explicit teaching, a glossary or other appropriate support, where doing so does not remove something learners are expected to work out for themselves.

In formal examinations and assessments, source and stimulus material must only be modified where this is permitted by the relevant awarding body. Where direct modification is not permitted, other authorised approaches, such as a glossary, may sometimes be available.

Chapter 8 Examples of questions with suggested modifications

This chapter provides examples of how the language-modification principles described in earlier chapters may be applied to questions and tasks used in setting-based **assessments and formal public examinations**.

The suggested modifications are illustrative rather than prescriptive. There may be more than one appropriate way to modify a question. The aim is to reduce unnecessary language barriers while preserving the intended meaning, subject content, knowledge, or skill being assessed and appropriate level of challenge.

Questions should be considered as a whole rather than by changing individual words in isolation. In assessment contexts, any relevant source or stimulus material, assessment objective, expected response, and mark scheme should also be considered. Subject-specific terminology and command words should be retained where they are necessary to the learning or form part of what is being assessed.

The **points to consider** accompanying some examples highlight particular language features and demonstrate why a modification that appears clearer may not always be appropriate.

In formal examinations and assessments, modifications must also comply with the requirements of the relevant awarding body.

Example 1 – Changing passive content

Original

Sunlight contains ultraviolet radiation called UVB. Ozone in the atmosphere absorbs UVB radiation. Experiments have shown that UVB radiation kills phytoplankton near to the surface of the sea. This may result in plankton being driven down to deeper depths in the ocean. Manmade pollutants eg CFCs can severely reduce the amount of ozone in the atmosphere.

passive

superfluous information

Using this information, explain why the energy available to consumers in the food web in Figure 3 is likely to be reduced as a result of pollution due to CFCs.

passive... need to separate information and question

Possible modification

- Sunlight has ultraviolet radiation called UVB.
 - Ozone in the atmosphere absorbs UVB radiation.
 - Experiments have shown that UVB radiation kills phytoplankton near to the surface of the sea.
 - Radiation can force plankton down deeper into the sea.
- CFC pollution can reduce the amount of ozone in the atmosphere.

CFC pollution means that there will be less energy for consumers in the food web in Figure x.

Explain why.

Use the information in the bullet points above to help you explain.

To modify this question successfully you would need to consider if the modified version correlated with the content in Figure x.

It is recommended to use the whole word 'Figure' rather than 'Fig.'.

Example 2 – Semantic relationships

Original

adverbial connector

heavy noun phrase

Since 1970 there has been a great increase in fishing for krill. Concern about potential overfishing in the Antarctic has led to the establishment of the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR).

(Information supplied by the Worldwide Fund for Nature).

With reference to the food web in Fig 3, explain why there is such concern over the potential overfishing of krill.

question is hidden after a long phrase

Possible modification

There has been a large increase in fishing for krill since 1970.

People are worried about overfishing.

Explain why people are worried about the overfishing of krill.

Use the food web in Figure 3 to help you explain.

(Note: This is a good modification which has kept all the semantic relationships).

To modify this question successfully you would need to check mark scheme to see if the additional CCAMLR information is important.

Example 3 – Complex comparative sentences and confusing layout

Original

The yellow alloy brass does not corrode easily.

complex comparative sentences

Brass is a mixture of the metals copper and zinc. The more zinc in the brass, the lighter the colour becomes. More zinc in brass makes it hard-wearing. The bigger the percentage of copper in brass, the easier the brass is to shape.

More copper in brass makes the yellow colour darker.

confusing layout

Possible modification:

Here is some information about brass

- Brass is a yellow alloy. It does not corrode easily.
- Brass is a mixture of the metals copper and zinc.
- More zinc in the brass makes the brass a lighter yellow colour.
- If there is a bigger percentage of copper in the brass, it will be easier to shape.
- More copper in the brass makes the brass a darker yellow colour.

Example 4 – Removing unnecessary information

Original

Unnecessary information

Uniforms can be used to identify people and members of specific groups, eg students at certain schools.

An infant school has decided to re-design their summer uniform.

(a) Give **five important design criteria** technical vocabulary – do not modify
you would consider when **designing an infant school uniform.**

nonfinite clause

Possible modification

Uniforms show that members of a group like a school belong together. An infant school wants a new summer uniform.

You will design the new uniform.

(a) What five design criteria do you think are important?

Example 5 – Complex question structure

Original

difficult question word

multiple question

(i) **How much use** could Richard Pipes (Source A) make of both **the origin and content** of Source F **to justify his view that** 'Stalin sincerely regarded himself as a disciple of Lenin' (Source A line 55)? embedded question and relative clause (4)

(ii) Both Richard Pipes (Source A) and Isaac Deutcher (Source C) make use of the evidence of Source E to support each of their interpretations of Stalin's rise to power. Explain why this same evidence can be used to support contrasting arguments. (6)

need for direct questions

Possible modification

(i) In Source A, Richard Pipes writes that 'Stalin sincerely regarded himself as a disciple of Lenin' (Source A line 55).

'This is still difficult but it is a common question format on evidence based GCSE History papers, which candidates should recognise.'

How useful is Source F in supporting Pipes' view?

Write about both the origin **and** content of Source F. (4)

(ii) Richard Pipes (Source A) and Isaac Deutcher (Source C) interpret Stalin's rise to power in different ways. They both use evidence from Source E to support their views.

Why can the same evidence be used to support these two different arguments? (6)

Example 6 – Relative clauses

Original

Identify any **two** factors which you should avoid when you design a building where physically disabled people must be able to access the building.

three relative clauses

Possible modification

You are designing a building.

Physically disabled people must have access to the building.

Give **two** features you should avoid when you design your building.

Avoid is one of those words which may not be understood by a reader with language difficulties: it gives instructions to consider only negative features. Like **scarce**, **lack** and **seldom**, its negative impact may not be picked up by a reader with low vocabulary.

Command words align closely to the assessment objective being assessed. Therefore, changing 'give' to 'identify' may change the assessment objective being tested.

Here, it would be important to look at the mark scheme. If the answer is that the designer needs to consider issues such as ramp steepness, door width, toilet door width, and lift provision, then the awarding board could be asked to consider rewording the question to think about the positive features which could be considered by the designer. For example:

What **two** factors should you consider when you are designing a building accessible to physically disabled people?

(Note: The mark scheme is often a good guide to what can be done with a question)

Example 7 – Adverbial subordinator

Readers with language difficulties often cannot understand logical connections.

Original

Finally, **only when** he hit a bouncing ping pong ball with his beak towards another pigeon was Alex given a food **pellet**.

adverbial subordinator

unnecessary wording

Possible modification

Last experiment

The scientists give Alex food **only when** he does the right action.

He has to hit a bouncing ping pong ball to another pigeon using his beak.

This version removes unnecessary wording like ‘pellet’ and uses a more recognisable name.

This question could be improved by the addition of a picture.

Example 8 – GCSE Psychology

Original

How does a real-life setting affect the rate of bystander intervention when compared with a laboratory setting?

Possible modification

Bystander intervention happens in the laboratory and in real-life settings.

Compare the rate of bystander intervention in these two places.

This example shows how important it is to have a subject specialist modifying exam papers. It would be useful to check with the examiner that the modified question is not likely to mislead the candidate.

Example 9 – A level Sociology

Original

Non-finite clause

- 1) Using information from the items and elsewhere, assess the usefulness of 'individualistic' theories of the causes of poverty.

Possible modification:

Are 'individualistic' theories about the causes of poverty useful?

Assess how useful they are. Use information from the items and from your other reading.

Original

Non-finite clause

- 2) Identify and briefly describe two problems in trying to measure how much poverty there is in society.

Possible modification:

Measuring poverty in society

Identify and briefly describe **two** problems we can find when we try to measure poverty.

A non-finite clause can be identified because it cannot stand alone as a sentence. They often make sentences in examination questions unnecessarily long. A finite and shorter separate sentence with the same meaning can often make the question more accessible.

Example 10 – Mathematics

Original

Calculate the ratio of the sides of Rectangle A to the corresponding sides of Rectangle B giving your answer on the form of 1 : n.

Non-finite clause

Possible modification:

Calculate the ratio of the sides of Rectangle A to the corresponding sides of Rectangle B.

Give your answer in the form 1 : n.

The small changes to the question can remove the unnecessary linguistic demand on the learner.

Example 11– Full examination question (GCSE Science)

Original

There are three main carbohydrate groups. Sugar is one of these.

'ellipsis

a. Name the other two groups. (2)

passive / infrequent word / adverbial connector

b. Sugar, if consumed in large amounts, can lead to health problems.

What are the three major health problems created by consuming large amounts of sugar?

unnecessary information

(3)

unnecessary information

c. Sugar is mainly used to sweeten food. If you were trying to reduce your sugar intake, how could you cut down on sugar when

(i) drinking tea or coffee?

(ii) choosing fruit juice?

(iii) choosing canned fruit?

(iv) making a cake?

'embedded question

(8)

difficult question word

d. How may parents ensure that their child does not develop a 'sweet tooth'?

idiom

(4)

e. A customer leaving a supermarket says that his family does not eat any sugar. His shopping trolley contains no bags of sugar.

Explain, giving examples, why it is unlikely that he can make this claim?

(3)

'unnecessary information subordination embedded question

f. Glucose is a sugar. It is often said that it gives us instant energy. Explain why. (3)

difficult question word

unnecessary

g. How has modern labelling of convenience foods enabled the consumer to make sensible choices if trying to reduce their sugar intake?

(2)

'embedded question

Possible modification

1 There are **three** main carbohydrate groups.

Sugar is one of these carbohydrate groups.

(a) Name the **other two** carbohydrate groups. (2)

(b) If you eat too much sugar, you can get health problems.

Name **three** of these health problems (3)

(c) You want to have less sugar.

(i) How could you have less sugar when you are drinking tea or coffee?

(ii) How could you have less sugar when you are choosing fruit juice?

(iii) How could you have less sugar when you are choosing canned fruit?

(iv) How could you use less sugar when you are making a cake? (8)

*

(Some examiners may see this repetition as clumsy
but it would be less taxing on working memory)

(d) Some children like sweet things.

What can parents do to make sure their children do **not** have too much sugar? (4)

(e) A customer says he never eats sugar.

There are **no** bags of sugar in his trolley.

But he probably does eat sugar.

Explain how he probably eats sugar.

Give examples of foods containing sugar in your answer. (3)

(f) Glucose is a sugar which gives us instant energy

Explain why glucose gives us instant energy (3)

(g) You want to reduce the amount of sugar in your diet.

How can you use food labels to help you? (2)

Chapter 9. Legibility and layout

NB Font type and size need to be consistent throughout the paper.

Legibility

Font

- Choose fonts which have clear shapes of letters and numbers eg sans serif font. Avoid fonts such as Times New Roman.
- Many awarding bodies use at least 12-point font size for main text. No part of the paper should be smaller than 11 point.
- Use **bold** to highlight specific words and phrases. Follow the style set by the awarding body.

Spacing

- Long lines of text set closely together are difficult to read. The longer the lines, the more important the amount of space between them becomes.
- Double spacing between statements or questions and treble spacing between sections helps to improve legibility.

Diagrams, pictures and photographs

- Ensure good contrast and definition.
- Reproduce at a size that ensures relevant points and text are easily seen.
- Ensure titles and labels are clear and set against a contrasting background.
- Lines and arrows joining labels to diagrams can be confusing. A key might be clearer.
- Label the diagram with full word 'figure' opposed to 'fig.'.

Layout

- Consider the structure of a page. Use headings and sub-headings that cue readers into the content of the text, following the awarding board style guide. Use of build-in heading styles helps screen readers navigate the document.
- Long or complex sentences are sometimes better split up by using bullet points or numbered lists.
- Use features such as bold to provide reading cues and to focus attention.

- Instructions should be clear. They should be separate from and precede the question. They should be repeated when necessary.
- It is helpful to use a new line for a sentence containing a new idea.
- Learners with language difficulties are helped by regular spacing of text. Thus, 'align left' is often a better alignment than text which has been justified to both margins.
- Put text close to relevant pictures/diagrams to enable candidate to relate the two effectively.
- Good practice for images recommends providing a description for all images and diagrams that screen readers can access.
- Consider the use of white space around objects and text to assist with separating sections and helping readers find information on a page.
- A question should begin and end on the same page or at least on the same double spread, where possible.
- Add the tick symbol (✓) next to the word 'tick'.
- Expand abbreviations at first use.

Visual clutter, colour, and contrast should be considered. The needs of learners with vision impairment or colour vision deficiency/colour blindness should be considered in an accessible universal by design approach. Guidance for best practice in modification for professionals in schools, modifiers, and producers is produced by the UK Association for Accessible Formats (UKAAF) on behalf of the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and in consultation with awarding bodies and Ofqual.

A self-study course 'Prepare for Success' is available through RNIB and vision impairment education workforce (VIEW), the professional association representing the interests of children and young people with vision impairment, for those learning more about producing practice materials to similar standards as GCSE and GCE exams. The RNIB guide to modifying examination, assessment, and curriculum materials for learners with VI, 'Well Prepared', is available through the RNIB Bookshare.

Example

The two examples below ask the same question. The second example has put some of our accessibility principles into practice. As you can see, the second is much clearer and much easier for learners to understand what is required.

Identify **two** errors that have been made in the development of the prototype displayed, describing in each case how the error can be corrected by the team.

.....

.....

.....

.....

Identify **two** errors in the development of the prototype.

Describe how the team can correct each error.

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Appendix 1. Common examination and assessment terms

accurate	advantage	affect	amount
approximate	assess	attitude	audience
benefit	briefly	calculate	carry out
challenging	character	characteristic	chart
comparison	complete	composition	consequence
contrast	convey	criteria	data
define	decrease	details	develop
devices	diagram	disadvantage	drawback
effect	essential	estimate	expand
explore	extract	factor	fault
feature	focus	t(he) following	fully
function	illustrate	impression	include
increase	inform	initial	insert
label	lack	likely	list
maximum	memorable	method	minimum
necessary	needs	other than	passage
precaution	present	prevent	principle
problem	process	property	purpose
quality	quantity	reason	refer
requirements	response	sketch	similar
source	state	style	subject
suggest	suitable	survey	table
task	term	text	theme
type			

This list is not exhaustive. Terms such as these may be uncommon in everyday use but can be common in examination papers. It is often difficult to find a more common alternative and learners should be expected to learn them. This may be burdensome, so teachers could be encouraged to use specifications and past papers to make their own lists for particular examinations.

These terms can confuse because they often have another, more common, meaning.

What might a learner think of initially when reading ‘text’ or ‘term’?

Appendix 2. Guidance for language modifiers as an access arrangement (JCQ)

Command words are always active verbs (action words).

Command terms should ideally be pre-taught. If they are causing confusion in the exam, you may as a language modifier use an equivalent, but be careful not to change the meaning or you may disadvantage your candidate.

Command words are the guides in the question which identify which Assessment Objective (AO) is being targeted by that question. When the questions are written, command words are decided on carefully and the word order is chosen to make it clear what the examiner/tester is looking for in the answer.

Command Words are associated with specific Assessment Objectives therefore learners benefit from practice as part of their normal way of working to understand which skill they should be focusing on in the question.

Some command words

Assess	Describe	Identify
Compare	Discuss	Illustrate
Consider	Examine	Justify
Contrast	Explain	Outline
Define	Evaluate	Suggest

Command words and learning outcome standards examples

1. Knowledge

define, duplicate, label, list, memorise, name, recognise, relate, recall, repeat, reproduce, state.

2. Comprehension

classify, describe, explain, express, identify, indicate, locate, recognise, report, review.

3. Application

apply, choose, demonstrate, dramatise, employ, illustrate, practice, schedule, sketch, solve, use, write.

4. Analysis

analyse, appraise, calculate, categorise, compare, contrast, criticise, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, examine

5. Synthesis

arrange, assemble, collect, compose, construct, create, design, develop, formulate, manage, organise, plan, propose.

6. Evaluation

appraise, argue, assess, attach, choose, compare, defend, estimate, judge, predict, rate, select, support, value.

Language modifier role requirements:

5.11.5 A language modifier must have:

- successfully completed accredited training; (A JCQ Centre Inspector will ask to see evidence of successfully completed accredited training.)
- knowledge of the subject being examined in order to recognise subject-specific vocabulary and technical terms;
- a good working knowledge of English language grammatical structures;
- an understanding of the impact of command words and an examiner's expectations of a candidate's answer. [JCQ reg (2025/2026) pg 73]

A suggested memory aid for a language modifier can be found in Appendix 3 of the JCQ AARA.

Source – Owen, A (2023) Command words (learning outcome standards) – BATOD

A list of common command terms (again, not exhaustive) can be found in Annex 6 of 'Fair Access By Design'. Awarding bodies may also produce lists of the commands they use in particular subjects.

Appendix 3. Checklist and resources

Checklist

☒ Step 1: Check the purpose

Is any reading or language demand necessary to what is being assessed?

Have I kept essential **subject-specific terms** (eg *photosynthesis*, *equation*, *metaphor*) unchanged?

☒ Step 2: Clarify the wording

Are sentences as short and clear as possible, with unnecessary complexity removed?

Have I replaced **abstract nouns with verbs** where this improves clarity (eg *protection* → *protect*)?

Have I avoided unnecessary **jargon, idioms and figurative language**?

If a complex word is necessary, is its meaning clear or appropriately defined?

☒ Step 3: Clarify instructions

Is the **command word** standard, appropriate and clear (eg *describe*, *explain*, *calculate*)?

Where a command word may be unfamiliar or ambiguous, is its meaning clear from the assessment context or supporting guidance?

Have I used **positive phrasing** where possible rather than unnecessary negatives (eg *Which is correct?* rather than *Which is not correct?*)?

Is the **action required** obvious (eg tick, circle or write)?

☒ Step 4: Improve readability

Have I broken long text into **short paragraphs or bullet points** where appropriate?

Is the layout clear, with sufficient space, consistent numbering, and a readable font size?

Is related information grouped logically, for example, in a table, list, or diagram where helpful?

Have all abbreviations been expanded at first use?

Step 5: Double-check fairness

Have I kept the **content and level of challenge** the same?

Does the modified version still align with the **mark scheme**?

Have I minimised unnecessary barriers in the **carrier language** of the question?

Key principle

Clarity is not the same as simplifying content.

The aim is to reduce unnecessary language barriers without changing what is being assessed.

Resources

Cambridge English Vocabulary Profile

Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors (CIEA) (n.d.) Language Modifier Guidance: Examples Booklet.

Collins Online Dictionary

Lextutor

Well Prepared- RNIB guide

This list is not exhaustive.

Appendix 4. Abbreviations

Abbreviations used in this document

ASVA	Adverbial (initial), subject, verb, advertorial (final)
AARA	Access arrangements and reasonable adjustments
ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
ALNCos	Additional Learning needs coordinators
AO	Assessment objective
AS	Advanced subsidiary
ASVA	Adverbial (initial) subject verb adverbial (final)
BALMs	BATOD Accredited Language Modifiers
BATOD	British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People
BDA	British Dyslexia Association
BSL	British Sign Language
CCEA	Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
CFC	Chlorofluorocarbon
CIEA	Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors
CIO	Community interest organisation
CRIDE	Consortium for Research in Deaf Education
DLD	Developmental language disorder
EP	Educational psychologist
FE	Further education
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
JCQ	Joint Council for Qualifications
LM	Language modifier
NAEO	National Association of Examinations Officers (NAEO)
NAPLIC	National Association of Professionals supporting language and communication (DLD)
nasen	National Association of Special Educational Needs
NATED	National Association of Teachers of the Deaf in Further and Higher Education
NDCS	National Deaf Children's Society
NVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
OCR	Oxford, Cambridge and RSA
Ofqual	Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation
Patoss	Professional Association of Teachers of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties

PE	Principal examiner
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
QToDs	Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People
RCSLT	Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
RNIB	Royal National Institute of Blind People
SEN	Special educational needs
SENCos	Special educational needs coordinators
SLCN	Speech, language and communication needs
SaLT	Speech and language therapist
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
SpLD	Specific learning difficulties
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
STA	Standard and Testings Agency
SVA	Subject verb adverbial
SVO	Subject verb object
UKAAF	UK Association for Accessible Formats
UVB	Ultraviolet radiation (in sunlight there is UVA and UVB)
VIEW	Vision impairment education workforce
VOA	Verb object adverbial
WJEC	Welsh Joint Education Committee

Appendix 5. Key organisations

Organisation	Primary role	Relevance to language accessibility
AQA www.aqa.org.uk	Awarding bodies	Inclusive qualification development and assessment
British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (BATOD) BALM exec@batod.org.uk	Modify language of examination questions as required	Accredited language modifiers contracted by awarding bodies
CCEA Regulation ccea.org.uk/regulation	Qualifications regulator (Northern Ireland)	Fair Access by Design and qualification regulation
Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors (CIEA) www.ciea.org.uk	Train professionals	JCQ language modifier access arrangement
Communicate-Ed www.communicate-ed.org.uk	Train professionals	JCQ language modifier access arrangement
Edexcel www.edexcel.org	Awarding body	Inclusive qualification development and assessment
Eduqas (English sector of WJEC) www.eduqas.co.uk	Awarding body	Inclusive qualification development and assessment
GL Assessment www.gl-assessment.co.uk	Commercial assessment provider for CATS	Inclusive assessment design and accessibility considerations
Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) www.jcq.org.uk	Awarding body consortium	Access arrangements, reasonable adjustments and modified papers

Continued on next page

Key organisations continued:

Organisation	Primary role	Relevance to language accessibility
OCR www.ocr.org.uk	Awarding bodies	Inclusive qualification development and assessment
Office of Qualifications and Examination Regulation (Ofqual) www.ofqual.gov.uk	Qualifications regulator (England)	Accessible assessment guidance and regulation
Qualifications Scotland (previously known as Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)) www.qualifications.gov.scot	Qualifications regulator and national qualifications body (Scotland)	Inclusive qualification development and assessment
Qualifications Wales www.qualifications.wales	Qualifications regulator (Wales)	Fair Access by Design and qualification policy
School's Entrance Assessment Group (SEAG) www.seagni.co.uk	Transfer assessment provider (Northern Ireland)	Development and delivery of transfer assessments
Standards and Testing Agency (STA) gov.uk/government/organisations/standards-and-testing-agency	An executive agency of the Department for Education (England) responsible for national curriculum assessments	Assessment accessibility and reasonable adjustments
Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC) www.wjec.co.uk	Awarding body	Inclusive qualification development and assessment

Professional associations and volunteer sector organisations

Professional associations and volunteer sector organisations	Purpose
Afasic – www.afasic.org.uk	Charity supporting and providing information for families with children and young adults who have Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) with a focus on Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)
British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (BATOD) www.batod.org.uk	Professional membership association for Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People in the UK
British Dyslexia Association (BDA) www.bdadyslexia.org.uk	Professional membership organisation
Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors (CIEA) www.ciea.org.uk	Provider of training in examination access arrangements in the UK
Communicate-Ed www.communicate-ed.org.uk	Provider of training in examination access arrangements in the UK
Moor School & College www.moorhouseoxted.co.uk	Highly specialist educational placement for children who have significant and pervasive language disorders and/or speech disorders with average learning potential
Membership organisation of professionals supporting language and communication (DLD) (NAPLIC) www.naplic.org.uk	Professional membership organisation
National Association of Examinations Officers (NAEO) www.thenaeo.org	Professional membership body for examinations officers in the UK
National Association of Special Educational Needs (nasen) nasen.org.uk	Professional membership body for SEND

Continued on next page

Professional associations and volunteer sector organisations continued:

Professional associations and volunteer sector organisations	Purpose
National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) www.ndcs.org.uk	Charity for deaf children with any level of deafness in the UK
Professional Association of Teachers of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties (Patoss) www.patoss-dyslexia.org	Professional Association of Teachers of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties in the UK
Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) www.rcslt.org	Professional body for speech and language therapists in the UK
Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) rnib.org.uk/professionals/education-professionals	Charity for children with vision impairment in the UK
Speech and Language UK (operating name of I CAN) Charity speechandlanguage.org.uk	UK children's communication charity
vision impairment education workforce (VIEW) viewweb.org.uk	Professional membership association for Qualified Teachers of Vision Impairment in the UK