

GCSE English Language - Spoken Language Endorsement

Arrangements for learners with communication issues and/or hearing needs

Developed jointly with BATOD, The Communication Trust, NDCS and RNIB

GCSE English Language - first teaching from September 2015

Spoken Language Endorsement

Guidance for teachers of learners with communication issues and/or hearing needs

A. Introduction

This document has been produced by the awarding bodies for England to support learners with communication and/or hearing needs in the Spoken Language Endorsement for GCSE English Language. It has been developed jointly with representatives from the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf, The Communication Trust, National Deaf Children's Society and the Royal National Institute of Blind People. It should be read in conjunction with the GCSE English Language specification from your awarding body and the common assessment criteria.

The aim of this document is to encourage access to the Endorsement for as many learners as possible and to provide practical guidance and support for their teachers.

This document focuses on the arrangements for the assessment element of the Spoken Language Endorsement. However, it is important to ensure that, throughout the GCSE course and particularly for learners with communication and/or hearing needs, there is continuing language development work that is over and above any of the requirements specifically related to the Endorsement.

B. Access to the Endorsement

For Heads of Centre the most important responsibility in relation to the Endorsement is to ensure that as many learners as possible are offered full access to the opportunities that the Endorsement will give. While exemption may be appropriate for some learners with protected characteristics (as defined in the Equality Act 2010), for most it will not be. In these latter cases it is the responsibility of the Head of Centre to ensure that all such learners have the opportunity to take the Endorsement.

Heads' responsibilities in this area will be supported in two main ways:

- They will have to sign the annual Head of Centre declaration.
- There will be an annual monitoring exercise undertaken by the awarding bodies to identify and understand patterns of centre behaviour where surprisingly large numbers of Exemptions/Not Classified results occurred.

C. Flexibility of the Requirements

To support full access, Ofqual's requirements for the Endorsement contain considerable flexibility around provision for individual learners. Of special interest to teachers of learners with communication and/or hearing needs are the following:

- Format

Various formats of presentation are allowed, including talks, debates, speeches and dialogues. The most common format in mainstream centres is likely to be the formal individual 'talk', in front of an audience followed by questions, but there are other ways in which learners can perform. Sample assessment materials, for example, show learners in an individual dialogic format, where they are interviewed by a teacher as part of a media type presentation.

It is suggested that discussions are held with the learner and any specialist professional (eg speech and language therapists) and/or any specialist teachers (eg Teachers of the Deaf) to consider the most appropriate format.

- The Requirement for Audibility and Intelligibility

The Assessment Criteria require as a starting point that the learner should be audible and intelligible. The interpretation of 'audible' for the purposes of the endorsement means the learner is audible to the person undertaking the assessment and any audience present. Prompts can be given to encourage/remind the learner to speak louder.

Some learners can only be clearly understood by peers and staff who have become accustomed to their speech. Therefore, 'intelligibility' for the purposes of this endorsement requires that the learner is intelligible to the person making the assessment, who will have become attuned to the learner's speech over time.

- Presentation skills

The Assessment Criteria refer to learners 'making an attempt to meet the needs of the audience', which might be interpreted as including an assessment of their presentation skills. Assessors should be mindful of the possible impact of a disability such as vision impairment on a learner's body language and their ability to make eye contact with the audience. Where this may be a factor, assessment should be carried out by someone who is familiar with the learner and their individual needs.

- Recording

Not all learners have to be recorded. A sample of learners needs to be recorded, once the centre entry goes beyond 30, but the centre chooses the sample. Mainstream centres therefore do not need to record learners with communication and/or hearing needs if they do not want to. Specialist centres, with 30 or fewer learners, will still be able to apply to their awarding bodies for an exemption from recording for those learners where recording would be a significant problem.

- Timings

There are no time limits to the presentation (at either end of the time scale). Guidance will indicate that learners can do all that is necessary to access the highest attainment levels within a presentation of 10 minutes but, where more time is required, this is permissible. Guidance will also suggest that a very brief presentation will offer learners limited opportunities to demonstrate their skills.

Pauses and rest periods are allowable – for instance between the presentation and questions.

- Notes, aids, amplification systems

Notes, PowerPoint, and visual aids are all permissible without restrictions on their content, length etc. Amplification systems, such as FM systems for deaf learners are permitted.

- Acoustics and room layout

It is important that all assessments for deaf learners (whether they have mild, moderate, severe or profound loss) take place in locations with an acceptable acoustic environment and with lighting good enough to facilitate speech/lip reading. In fact, this will be to the benefit of all candidates.

Additionally, the seating arrangements/layout of the room are also very important for speech/lip reading, e.g. if a member of the audience, assessor or questioner has their back to a window, the deaf candidate will find it hard to speech/lip read. A suitably experienced professional should advise on appropriate layout and lighting.

- **Composition of Audience**

There is flexibility in the make-up and size of the presentation audience. An audience can be a whole class, a small group, or the individual teacher. It could also comprise older students, governors, teaching assistants, learning mentors etc. If the audience comprises one person, they must ensure that their questions allow the learners the opportunities to demonstrate their skills. Audience members are allowed to offer encouragement, prompts and support to a learner. It is permissible to ask a learner to speak up, repeat etc.

- **A Prompter**

A prompter could help a learner remember where they are up to in their presentation, or remind them what they have just said.

D. Arrangements which require Awarding Body approval

- **Augmentative and alternative communication systems (AAC)**

If learners use alternative communication devices as their normal method of communication, they can apply to the awarding body for permission to use this method for their presentation.

- **Sign Supported English or Cued Speech**

Sign Supported English (SSE) or Cued Speech can be used, during the presentation, or during the question stage to ensure that the learner is fully aware of the questions being asked.

The use of Sign Supported English (SSE) or Cued Speech requires approval from the awarding body

- **British Sign Language**

Please note that British Sign Language is NOT allowed, as this is a distinct language in its own right and so is different from English.

E. Conclusion

Awarding bodies hope that as many learners as possible will complete the Spoken Language Endorsement alongside their GCSE in English Language. Where there are issues which go beyond the scope of this document, please contact a specialist practitioner (e.g. a Teacher of the Deaf or Speech and Language Therapist) and/or your awarding body as appropriate for further advice.