

Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration: Institute of British Sign Language (IBSL) Qualifications

IBSL has a responsibility under the Equalities Act of 2010 to ensure that candidates with special needs requirements are accorded access arrangements that provide reasonable adjustments that help candidates with particular disabilities or problems to reduce disadvantages that present during any particular assessment.

There are three main areas pertaining to IBSL qualifications where reasonable adjustments will be allowed in accordance with any JCQ (Joint Council for Qualifications) guidance as published from time to time. These are:

1. Receptive Skills Assessments (and to a much lesser extent, Descriptive Skills assessments)
2. Alternative assessments for Deaf Learners where “heard” messages/passages are part of a normal assessment
3. Written assessments by Deaf Learners who use BSL

For any other area where Learner Needs will need separate/individual consideration for reasonable adjustments, request for these reasonable adjustments must be made directly to IBSL citing the circumstances for which a reasonable adjustment is being applied for, and accompanied by Centre-based or other approved Diagnostic Assessments.

There will also be other qualifications that need specific reasonable adjustments. These are detailed at the end of this document.

1. Receptive Skills

IBSL recognises that there are groups of individuals who have particular difficulties “reading” filmed or videoed British Sign Language narrations (as opposed to real-life narrations). This is a comprehension problem experienced by those who might have dyslexia (there is such a condition as Sign Dyslexia) or other learning difficulties that involve comprehending (reading) a narration in a two-dimensional context such as a filmed sequence.

These individuals may consistently score low marks in any standard receptive skills test involving filmed sequences, or demonstrate an inability to take part in a standard receptive skills test. In a normal situation, this would be less than the score of 84% required as core evidence of quantitative data in a specialist learning skills assessor’s report.

However, assessing a Learner’s abilities to comprehend a standard BSL receptive skills filmed sequence is a specialist psychiatric or educational psychologist/linguistic diagnostic role that very few centres are likely to have access to, and a quick guide as to whether a Learner has difficulties in the comprehension of a standard BSL receptive skills assessment would be to subject that Learner to at least two sample standard receptive skills filmed sequences, and if the score from these mock

assessments is below 60%, then it can be assumed that the Learner has a specific need for a reasonable adjustment in this area.

IBSL has created a number of reasonable adjustment versions of standard receptive skills assessment filmed clips. These RA versions have extended timing between the questions.

Reasonable adjustment versions are not produced for receptive skills at Levels 4 & 6 as it is considered that Learners taking these Levels have the required competence.

Another area where IBSL recognises there are difficulties in Receptive Skills assessments is where Learners (who may or may not be dyslexic, but may most certainly have either sight impairments or learning difficulties) have “focusing” issues. These relate to having to watch the questions on the screen showing Receptive Skills clips, then focus on a written answer paper, then re-focus back onto the screen after answering (or attempting to answer) the question. In these circumstances, IBSL will allow an additional reasonable adjustment where an amanuensis is provided in addition to the RA version of the assessment – the role of the amanuensis is limited to stating the question (which may be through an interpreter) and writing down the answer.

If needed, the use of coloured/enlarged answer papers is automatically allowed.

Descriptive Skills

There may be occasion in Descriptive Skills assessments (particularly units 1A2 and 2A2 and the first assessment for 3ASN) where extra time is needed due to the Learner requiring more prompts than the average learner to put together a signed narrative. *(See also reference to vision-impaired learners near the end of the document)*

IBSL will allow an extra 25% time for such Learners on application.

2. Alternative Assessments for Deaf Learners

At some levels, i.e. at Levels 4 and 6, there are assessments which require the Learner to “relay” information or messages from a spoken language into BSL and vica versa.

IBSL will produce specific BSL-versions of these assessments to replace the “heard” and “spoken” versions for Deaf Learners.

3. Written assessments for Deaf Learners who use BSL

There are a number of assessments at BSL Studies Levels 3, 4 and 6 which may require written responses (if they are not being signed). They may also need translation. For these assessments, it is permissible to use a Sign Language Interpreter as well as an amanuensis. The following should be noted:

- a) **The use of a Sign Language Interpreter should reflect the Learner's normal way of working within the centre.**
- b) **The role of a Sign Language Interpreter is to present the questions in a different language without:**
- **changing the meaning;**
 - **adding any additional information or;**
 - **providing an explanation as to what the question requires of the Learner.**
- c) British Sign Language (BSL) and Irish Sign Language (ISL) are recognised as official languages of the United Kingdom and have the same status as Welsh and Gaelic. Welsh speakers who would like their question papers translated into Welsh are entitled to that facility irrespective of their ability to read and understand the English language. Users of BSL/ISL have the same entitlement.
- d) Papers translated into Welsh are created at the same time as the English version and checked by the awarding body for accuracy and consistency of translation. Sign Language interpretation is done 'live' in the presence of the Learner during the examination in order to allow for the Learner's regional variations in BSL/ISL signs.
- e) Consequently, sign language interpretation cannot be checked by the awarding body for accuracy. Great care **must** be taken not to disadvantage or advantage the Learner.
- f) **Sign Language Interpreters can be used to sign the instructions and questions to Learners taking written papers. Technical terms or subject specific language must be finger-spelt and not signed by the Sign Language Interpreter.**
- g) **The Learner's ability to recognise and understand the English version of the technical or subject specific terms within a subject is part of the assessment.** If such terms are signed instead of finger spelt, then the demands of the question will have been compromised. This will constitute malpractice.
- h) The Sign Language Interpreter should be familiar with the subject being examined to ensure that the meaning of the question is not changed and that technical and subject specific terms are recognised and finger spelt.
- i) Sign Language Interpreters may repeat the translation if requested to do so by the Learner. An alternative translation of the carrier language may be provided. **However, under no circumstances may an explanation of the question or clarification of the carrier language be given.** These actions would be deemed as giving the Learner an unfair advantage.
- j) **Learners may only sign their answers in question papers or in controlled assessment/coursework where it is possible to finger spell the answers or where the answers involve single words.**

- k) **A Sign Language Interpreter is not a reader.** The same person may act as a reader and a Sign Language Interpreter, either reading aloud or silently reading the instructions and questions to a Learner taking written papers, and then signing. **Permission must have been given for the use of a reader and a Sign Language Interpreter. The regulations for the use of each arrangement must be strictly adhered to.**

In some assessments, the Deaf Learner may choose to sign his or her responses to camera rather than to an amanuensis. This is permissible, but if that Deaf person uses a Sign Language Interpreter to have the questions signed to him or her, that Interpreter should also be in the frame for IBSL to ensure that there has been no deviation from the question(s).

Other reasonable adjustments

Other reasonable adjustments that will be permitted by IBSL are:

- For Learners taking BSL Studies qualifications who have vision-impairments, including Usher Syndrome, Retinitis Pigmentosa, it will be permitted for Learners to have extra time in 1:1 or 1:2 assessments with the teacher (generally 25%), and to use (if appropriate) a computerised reader and/or enlarged A3 answer papers (up to 100% extra time).
- For assessments in DeafBlind qualifications, consent is automatically given for the use of any computer equipment that aids a DeafBlind person and for question papers to be provided in Braille or large print.

For Learners who have prosthetic limbs (hands) or dexterity problems, written application must be made to IBSL for specific RA requests in BSL Studies assessments detailing the nature of the disability, and how it is proposed to allow the Learner carry out the assessment.

Interpreting Qualifications

Because of the nature of these qualifications, no reasonable adjustments are permitted in assessments with the exception of coloured paper for those who are dyslexic.

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