

Language of examinations

The third and fourth editions: what's changed and what's stayed the same?

The fourth edition builds on more than three decades of Language of Examinations and its important foundations in deaf education. The core principles of language modification remain, while the new edition reflects developments in evidence, policy and professional practice and broadens the focus to accessibility throughout learning, teaching and assessment.

What's stayed the same	What's new or strengthened in the 4th edition
	UK-wide context provided
Accessible language for all learners with language needs central. The 'nuts and bolts' practice of language modification developed by Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (QToDs) in past editions did not require revising.	Profile details on all group of learners. The guidance now explicitly describes learners with DLD, language disorder associated with a biomedical condition, autism, SLCN and SpLDs, alongside deaf learners and others who experience linguistic barriers.
The fundamental principles of language modification remain. The aim continues to be removing unnecessary linguistic barriers without changing what is being assessed.	Accessibility by Design. Accessibility and normal/usual way of working should be considered from the outset when learning materials, instructions, tasks and assessments are developed, rather than relying on modification post production.
Academic standards are maintained. Language accessibility does not mean making an assessment easier or changing the knowledge, skills or concepts being assessed.	Beyond examinations. The principles now extend more explicitly across classroom learning, teaching, resources and assessment as well as formal examinations.
Language modifiers continue to have an important role. Specialist	Earlier consideration of language. Assessment writers and awarding organisations are encouraged to identify and reduce

expertise remains necessary where language modification is required.	unnecessary linguistic barriers during assessment design and paper development.
Modified papers remain important. Some learners will continue to require modified language papers and possibly other reasonable adjustments.	Universal accessibility alongside individual adjustments. Better design can benefit many learners, while recognising that accessibility by design does not remove the need for individual reasonable adjustments or modified papers.
The guidance remains practical. Established principles relating to vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar, question construction and presentation continue to support professionals making language more accessible.	Updated evidence base. The fourth edition incorporates contemporary evidence about language and communication needs and how linguistic demands can affect access to learning and assessment.
The validity of assessment remains fundamental. The message is retained that changes to language must not alter the construct being assessed or inadvertently provide the answer.	Greater attention to assessment constructs. The edition further strengthens consideration of when vocabulary, reading comprehension or language itself is part of what is legitimately being assessed and therefore should not be modified.
Professional judgement remains essential. Language cannot simply be made accessible through a mechanical set of rules. Context, subject content and the purpose of the assessment matter.	A wider professional audience. The fourth edition brings together expertise from Qualified Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (QToDs), speech and language therapy (SaLT), SpLD, SEND, assessment and examinations and is relevant to teachers, SENCOs/ALNCOs, specialist teachers, assessors, awarding organisations and regulators.
The learner's normal/usual way of working remains important. Appropriate support should reflect established practice rather than appearing for the first time in an examination.	Greater continuity from classroom to examination. Accessible language should form part of everyday learning and teaching, supporting continuity into assessment and examinations.

The overall purpose is unchanged: Learners should be able to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do without unnecessary language creating an additional barrier.	A stronger shared responsibility. Language accessibility is not solely the responsibility of the individual language modifier at the end of the process; teachers, resource developers, assessment writers, awarding organisations and other professionals all have a role.
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In summary

The fourth edition of Language of examinations does not replace the language modification process and principles of the third edition, it builds on them.

The major shift is from thinking primarily about **modifying examination language for an individual learner** towards also asking:

“Can we make the language accessible from the outset?”

The fourth edition therefore brings together two complementary approaches:

- **Accessibility by Design**
Design learning, teaching and assessment to minimise unnecessary linguistic barriers from the beginning.
- **Individual reasonable adjustments and language modification**
Continue to provide modified papers, language modification and other appropriate adjustments where individual learners require them.

The result is a broader approach to language accessibility while retaining the expertise, principles and important foundations in deaf education and wider language comprehension issues established through earlier editions of Language of Examinations.