



Group Award Specification for:

British Sign Language Award at SCQF level 6

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1 Introduction

This is the award specification for the British Sign Language award at SCQF level 6. It includes a general introduction, the aims of the award, the structure of the award and some general guidance about assessment requirements and recommended entry requirements.

The purpose of this document is to:

- ◆ help centres to implement, deliver and manage the qualification.
- ◆ provide a guide for new staff involved in offering the qualification.
- ◆ inform course managers, teachers and learners of the aims and purpose of the award.
- ◆ provide details of the range of learners the award may be suitable for.

British Sign Language (BSL) — along with the Celtic languages (ie Cornish, Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Welsh) and the Scots language — is one of the distinct languages of the United Kingdom, recognised by the Scottish and UK Governments and by the Council of Europe. British Sign Language is a visual language with a spatial grammar, and it has a variety of dialects. It is the first language of many deaf people and its use is expected to become more widespread owing to the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015.

The award allows learners to develop the following language competencies: receptive skills, productive skills, translation skills, conversation skills and knowledge of sign linguistics. At SCQF level 6, learners will also have the opportunity to develop their knowledge and understanding of the history and development of British Sign Language and the Deaf Community in Scotland and beyond.

This award will be relevant to a wide range of learners who are interested in languages and/or have a particular interest in British Sign Language. It will also be relevant to learners who want to develop their knowledge of deafness and the Deaf Community.

The award has been designed to appeal to both hearing and deaf learners. For learners of British Sign Language, the award at SCQF level 6 will develop their discussion and productive skills in British Sign Language. Learners will also have the opportunity to develop their receptive skills in British Sign Language (BSL) and to develop their knowledge of sign linguistics, ie the structure of language in a visual and spatial modality. The award will also enable learners to develop translation skills, both productive (ie into British Sign Language) and receptive (from British Sign Language). It will also provide the opportunity to develop their knowledge of British Sign Language in various contexts. The award will enhance their knowledge and understanding of the history of British Sign Language and the development of Deaf Communities in Scotland and beyond. It provides the opportunity to develop their understanding of the factors that have influenced the development of the language and community over time, and the impact on deaf and deafblind people today. Learners will also consider the history and impact of issues that affect Deaf Communities today.

For learners who already use British Sign Language, the award will help them develop their ability to communicate clearly, think critically and to use their own language creatively in more complex contexts, including translating into and from British Sign Language. Those taking the SCQF level 6 award will also gain a deeper insight into the history and cultural heritage of British Sign Language.

Background

This award originally grew out of discussions between SQA and various stakeholders in relation to the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 and the development of the British Sign Language National Plan 2017–2023. Following on from these discussions, SQA committed to develop a range of new qualifications in British Sign Language that would be similar to those available in other languages already developed by SQA. SQA recognises that British Sign Language is a language like any other, and learning a new language enables learners to make connections with different people and their cultures, and to play a fuller part as global citizens. The ability to use language lies at the centre of thinking and learning.

It is important to note that sign languages are different from other languages because they are not spoken or written. Like all sign languages, British Sign Language is in the visual-gestural-spatial modality. The ability to understand and use a different language modality gives learners a new set of communicative skills and provides them with the opportunity to acquire visual and spatial ways of thinking and learning.

This award was designed and developed by a team of BSL specialists from across the education and research sectors. The team provided advice on the content, structure and level of the award, ensuring that there was parity with the standards set in the Modern Languages Courses at SCQF level 6.

The study of any language has a unique contribution to make to the development of cultural awareness, as it provides learners with a means of communicating directly with people from different cultures, enhancing their understanding and enjoyment of other cultures and of their own. The study of British Sign Language in particular, encourages awareness of Deaf culture as part of society, and of deaf and deafblind people as equal citizens. It enables learners to communicate with deaf people in Scotland and the UK and gives them the grounding for learning another sign language, which may help them to communicate with deaf people abroad.

2 Qualifications structure

2.1 Structure

The award at SCQF level 6 is made up of 4 SQA unit credits and comprises 24 SCQF credit points. There are no optional units available in this award.

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To achieve the award at SCQF level 6, a learner must achieve the following three units:

4 code	2 code	Unit title	SQA credit	SCQF credit points	SCQF level
J45N	46	British Sign Language: Understanding Language and Linguistics	1.5	9	6
J45P	46	British Sign Language: Using Language in Context	1.5	9	6
J45R	46	British Sign Language: History and the Deaf Community	1	6	6

3 Aims of the qualification

The main aim of the British Sign Language Award (SCQF level 6) is to develop learners' ability and confidence in using and understanding detailed and complex information in British Sign Language in a range of contexts. At SCQF level 6, the award aims to introduce productive and receptive translation skills to learners. The award further aims to develop learners' knowledge of the history of British Sign Language and their understanding of the Deaf Community.

3.1 General aims of the qualification

The award offers learners opportunities to develop and extend a wide range of knowledge and skills.

Learners will develop their:

- ◆ understanding of how detailed and complex information is expressed in British Sign Language.
- ◆ understanding of detailed and complex aspects of sign linguistics.
- ◆ understanding of complex aspects of the way language works.
- ◆ ability to communicate detailed and complex information using British Sign Language.
- ◆ understanding of the factors that have influenced the development of the language and community over time.
- ◆ understanding of issues that affect Deaf Communities today.

3.2 Specific aims of the qualification

The award will enable learners to develop their:

- ◆ understanding of how detailed and complex information is expressed in British Sign Language.
- ◆ ability to express detailed and complex information in a monologue using British Sign Language.
- ◆ detailed and complex conversational skills using British Sign Language.
- ◆ ability to accurately translate sense units from and into British Sign Language.
- ◆ ability to adapt to the regional varieties of British Sign Language.
- ◆ ability to use appropriate cultural conventions in British Sign Language.
- ◆ understanding and use of complex visual and spatial language modality (ie sign linguistics).
- ◆ understanding of the factors that have influenced the development of the language and community over time.
- ◆ understanding of the historical and social context of issues that affect Deaf Communities today.

4 Recommended entry to the qualification

Entry to the award is at the discretion of the centre. Centres can decide an appropriate starting level for each learner, based on the learner's existing knowledge and experience of British Sign Language and/or learning across other languages. However, some previous knowledge and interest in British Sign Language may be an advantage.

5 Guidance on approaches to delivery and assessment

Each of the unit specifications that make up this award provide suggestions regarding the delivery approaches that can be taken by centres. In the units, *British Sign Language: Using Language in Context* and *British Sign Language: Understanding Language and Linguistics*, there are a range of topics that could be covered across the contexts of: society, learning, employability, and culture. In the unit *British Sign Language: History and the Deaf Community*, learners can assemble a portfolio of work showing their research and understanding of key topics. Centres are encouraged to focus on contexts and topics that most closely reflect those their learners are likely to use in their day-to-day lives. For example, some learners may be learning BSL for work purposes, while others may want to improve their ability to communicate with friends or family members in social settings.

5.1 Sequencing/integration of units

The units can be delivered in parallel or in sequence.

It may be possible to integrate the assessment of outcomes from different units, so that evidence generated will meet the combined standards through one activity. The activity would need to be carefully designed to ensure it will generate evidence that can be matched across the outcomes. It will also be important for assessors to label evidence clearly to show which standards have been achieved and to ensure that evidence is collected to cover all the standards.

For example, a learner could watch a British Sign Language clip and then discuss the content with another British Sign Language user in a conversation. This would demonstrate understanding of information expressed in British Sign Language (*British Sign Language: Understanding Language and Linguistics*, Outcome 1) and show the ability to hold a conversation in British Sign Language (*British Sign Language: Using Language in Context*, Outcome 1).

The table below shows some examples for combining outcomes across different units at SCQF level 6:

Activity	Outcomes from British Sign Language: Understanding Language and Linguistics	Outcomes from British Sign Language: Using Language in Context	Outcomes from British Sign Language: History and the Deaf Community
Learner discusses factors that have caused regional variation in British Sign Language with another user of British Sign Language.	1 Understand detailed and complex information expressed in British Sign Language.	1 Hold a detailed and complex discussion using British Sign Language.	1 (a) Identify a range of historical and cultural factors that have helped to shape British Sign Language.
Learner watches a debate between two users of BSL about an issue that affects the Deaf Community today, then contrasts their arguments.	1 Understand detailed and complex information expressed in British Sign Language.	N/A	2 (c) Contrast two or more perspectives on the impact of the issue on the Deaf Community.
Learner researches complex aspects of British Sign Language and gives a presentation in British Sign Language about their research.	2 Understand complex aspects of British Sign Language linguistics.	2 Express detailed and complex information clearly using British Sign Language.	N/A
Learner researches an issue that affects the Deaf Community today and gives a presentation about their research, describing the issue and explaining its impact over time.	N/A	2 Express detailed and complex information clearly using British Sign Language.	2 (a) Describe in detail an issue that affects the Deaf Community. (b) Explain in depth how the issue has affected the Deaf Community over time.

5.2 Recognition of prior learning

SQA recognises that learners gain knowledge and skills through formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts.

In some instances, a learner may have evidence of prior attainment or experience that could be used to contribute towards the achievement of a unit or units. More information and guidance on the *Recognition of Prior Learning* (RPL) may be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk.

5.3 Support materials

Assessment support materials are available from the SQA secure website, where further information is provided regarding tasks that refer to film clips and on-screen assessment.

6 Resource requirements

There are no specific resources necessary to deliver this award. However, access to some form of filming equipment and appropriate software will be necessary to collect learner evidence. There is no set requirement in terms of the type of film equipment used and mobile phones or tablets could be used, assuming footage can be downloaded onto more appropriate electronic storage. The recordings do not have to be to any prescribed quality standard, but they must be of sufficient clarity for each learner's signing to be clearly distinguished by the viewer.

7 General information for centres

Equality and inclusion

The unit specifications making up this award have been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners will be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence. Further advice can be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

Internal and external verification

All instruments of assessment used within this qualification should be internally verified, using the appropriate policy within the centre and the guidelines set by SQA.

External verification will be carried out by SQA to ensure that internal assessment is within the national guidelines for these qualifications.

Further information on internal and external verification can be found in *SQA's Guide to Assessment* (www.sqa.org.uk/GuideToAssessment).

8 History of changes

It is anticipated that changes will take place during the life of the qualifications and this section will record these changes. This document is the latest version and incorporates the changes summarised below. Centres are advised to check SQA's APS Navigator to confirm they are using the up to date qualification structures.

NOTE: Where a unit is revised by another unit:

- ◆ No new centres may be approved to offer the unit which has been revised.
- ◆ Centres should only enter learners for the unit which has been revised where they are expected to complete the unit before its finish date.

Version Number	Description	Date

Acknowledgement

SQA acknowledges the valuable contribution members of the Qualification Design Team (QDT) made to the development of this qualification.

9 General information for learners

This section will help you decide whether this award is for you by explaining what it covers, what you should know or be able to do before you start, and what you will need to do during the award.

The award is made up of the following units:

J45N 46	British Sign Language: Understanding Language and Linguistics
J45P 46	British Sign Language: Using Language in Context
J45R 46	British Sign Language: History and the Deaf Community

Your learning centre will be able to decide if this award is suitable for you based on your existing qualifications and experience. It would help if you already had some awareness of British Sign Language but that is not essential. What you will need is a willingness to learn and an enthusiasm for the subject.

In the level 6 award you will learn to:

- ◆ watch and understand detailed and complex information delivered by someone using British Sign Language.
- ◆ use British Sign Language to deliver detailed and complex communications.
- ◆ understand some of the complex technical aspects of using a sign language that differ from a spoken language.
- ◆ translate sentences or phrases into British Sign Language.
- ◆ translate sentences or phrases from British Sign Language.
- ◆ understand how and why British Sign Language has developed differently in different places.
- ◆ understand the history and impact of issues that affect the Deaf Community today.

The SCQF level 6 award will be a little more difficult than the level 5 award, in that you will be expected to learn a wider range of signs and learn more about the more technical aspects of sign language. In addition, those taking the SCQF level 6 award will learn more about the history and culture of British Sign Language and the Deaf Community.