

Supportive practices in assessment of Talking in National Literacy Units



This guidance aims to help teachers/lecturers in assessing talking skills, where learners have additional support needs. This could include, for example, learners who have anxiety disorders such as selective mutism (in which people speak fluently in some situations but remain silent in others and learners who are reluctant to speak in particular situations).

Supporting candidates in the classroom

Encourage communication in a relaxed atmosphere. You could try to find time to talk with the learner outwith a formal lesson, or in a quiet room. You might try to provide the *opportunity* rather than expectation for a learner to join in a discussion, eg 'I love this colour — I wonder what you used to mix it?' rather than 'How did you make this? Consult Learning Support staff — it may be that there is a person in school/college that the learner talks to more easily than others, such as a friend or guidance staff.

Remember also, that talking skills need not necessarily be assessed in school/college. For any particularly anxious learner, or one with selective mutism, any supportive environment that allows them to meet the Assessment Standards can be used, eg a setting at home, or in a café or other social space where conversation takes place.

Assessment

The Assessment Standards for talking are:

National 3	National 4	National 5
Talk to communicate, as appropriate to audience and purpose, by:		
Selecting and using simple language	Selecting and using straightforward language	Selecting and using complex language
Organising the communication	Organising the communication	Organising the communication
Using some non-verbal conventions	Using non-verbal conventions	Using a range of non-verbal conventions

Remember that evidence for talking can take many different forms and can be gathered in different ways. Think of the assessment as a flexible activity that takes place when the learner is **ready** to be assessed, and remember that contexts for talking can be formal or informal. Evidence of talking can be generated and presented in a range of ways, including video/audio recording of responses, and detailed checklists or detailed observation notes of responses.

A talking assessment doesn't need to be:

- ◆ a solo talk
- ◆ a talk done in front of the class
- ◆ done in formal or exam-like conditions

Talking can be assessed:

- ◆ as a group discussion
- ◆ in a flexible activity – (anytime, anywhere)
- ◆ as an individual discussion in a conducive atmosphere

Use your professional judgement, subject knowledge and experience, as well as your understanding of your learners, to determine:

- ◆ the most appropriate ways to generate evidence
- ◆ the conditions and contexts in which they are used

Personalisation and choice in terms of topic, context and audience will support any learner, and may be particularly helpful in supporting anxious candidates.

Literacy across the curriculum

All practitioners have responsibility for the development of learners' literacy skills. Talking skills need not be assessed in the context of English lessons, but could be assessed within any subject in their curriculum. Naturally-occurring evidence of a learner's talking in their everyday activities may be available. This may be helpful and supportive, for learners who have an interest or aptitude in a particular area, and especially for those with additional support needs.

Combining assessment¹

Oral responses to reading or listening to a text in English or in another subject can provide evidence for Talking — provided that the responses satisfy all three Assessment Standards **and** that the responses are extended (allowing learners to plan/organise their answers). For example, the learner might research a history topic on the web before discussing it with their history teacher.

For more information on combining assessment, please see the **Unit Support Notes – Literacy**, for each level.

For specific examples of different learning contexts, topics and how assessments of taking skills might be arranged, please see the **Additional learning and teaching Support Notes**, for each level. You can find these documents under **Advice and Guidance** at <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/47502.html>.

¹ This approach, getting as much out of an activity as possible for a range of qualifications, may be useful for some learners — eg those with interrupted learning.