

Level 6 NVQ Certificate in British/Irish Sign Language

Level 6 NVQ Diploma in Sign Language Interpreting

Level 6 Diploma in Sign Language Translation

REGULATIONS

Please read these regulations in conjunction with Signature Qualification Specification on our website.

1. Centre approval

Centres must apply for approval, for each unit, by fully completing the online centre approval application via 'My Signature'.

During the approval process, centres will receive an automatic email asking for certain documents to be supplied to Signature (see list below). The approval process will pause at this point, and centre approval will not be given until Signature has received and approved the documents. The centre will then receive an email confirming that approval has been given, and the status on the qualification, via 'My Signature', will change to 'approved'.

Centres will not be able to register candidates until they are approved.

Centre approval must be renewed each year.

It is not necessary to have an approval visit. However, Signature reserves the right to perform visits at short notice or without prior notification. If a visit is required before giving approval, the centre will be charged a fee (see Signature fees booklet on our website).

List of documents required prior to centre approval:

1. Letter from a person in authority at the centre confirming:
 - a. that the centre supports the introduction of this NVQ Certificate/Diploma qualification
 - b. that appropriate facilities and resources will be provided to support students and staff
 - c. that the centre will provide training and development to ensure the Internal Verifier(s) can understand the content, structure, assessment requirements for the qualification that they are verifying. The centre will then ensure their Internal Verifier(s) complete regular internal standardisation activities with the assessment team to ensure accuracy and consistency of assessment decisions between assessors.
 - d. that any changes that may affect the centre's ability to meet the approval requirements of the NVQ Certificate/Diploma qualification will be notified immediately to Signature
2. List of assessor(s) for this qualification. For each assessor:
 - a. their CV
 - b. copy of the relevant BSL/ISL/Interpreting/Translation qualification certificate (Level 4 or Level 6), or statement of first language use
 - c. copy of their assessing certificate (Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement, A1 or D32/33)
3. If assessor is currently working towards an assessing qualification, centres will also need to provide evidence of registration on a course, confirming start and end dates and a copy of the certificate of their countersigning assessor.
4. List of internal verifier(s) (IV) for this qualification. For each internal verifier:
 - a. their CV
 - b. copy of the relevant BSL/ISL/Interpreting/Translation qualification certificate (Level 4 or Level 6), or statement of first language use
 - c. copy of their internal verifying certificate (Level 4 Award in the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice, V1 or D34).
5. If internal verifier is currently working towards an internal verifying qualification, centres will also need to provide evidence of registration on a course, confirming start and end dates and a copy of the certificate of their countersigning internal verifier.

6. List of resources to aid the assessment team and candidates.
7. Complaints and Internal Appeals policy that will be made available to all candidates.
8. Internal verification strategy, outlining the procedures that will be followed to ensure that internal quality assurance of assessment decisions will be carried out.
9. Written confirmation that the centre is able to provide Unique Learner Numbers (ULNs) for candidates where required. Unique Learner Numbers relate to England, Wales and Northern Ireland only.
10. Fair access to assessment policy that will be made available and is understood by appropriate centre staff and all candidates.

Centre approval will not be given until all the required documents have been approved by Signature.

Centres must inform Signature immediately of any change affecting their ongoing ability to meet the centre approval criteria. In particular, centres must inform their Customer Support Officer immediately if a member of their approved internal assessment and verification team leaves or a new staff member is appointed. New staff members are not allowed to assess/verify candidates until they have been approved by Signature (see section 3).

2. Candidate registration

2.1 Reasonable adjustments for candidates with particular assessment requirements

NVQ qualifications are competence-based, and linked to the relevant National Occupational Standards (NOS). This means that, under current legislation, there is no requirement to make a reasonable adjustment to the standards (assessment criteria) within these qualifications, as the ability to achieve each of the criteria is essential to being competent. It is essential that centres explain this to potential candidates during the initial advice and guidance process.

However, adjustments to the *process* of gathering evidence for each of the assessment criteria are encouraged for candidates with particular assessment needs.

Centres requesting a reasonable adjustment on behalf of a candidate should:

- i. ensure that the request does not relate to any of the assessment criteria, which cannot be adjusted (see above)
- ii. check the proposed adjustment with Signature when they register the candidate online, OR check with their external quality assurer (EQA).

Before requesting a reasonable adjustment on behalf of a candidate, the centre should be satisfied that the adjustment applied for will enable the candidate to attempt to meet the same standards of assessment as a candidate without the disability, difficulty or special need concerned.

2.2 Registering NVQ candidates

Signature will only accept candidate registrations from centres that are approved to offer this qualification. Centres must also be approved at the time of the External Quality Assurance visit taking place.

Approved centres must assign candidates to each appropriate unit using the online via 'My Signature'. Centres are encouraged to register candidates soon after they are enrolled on an NVQ programme, so that Signature is aware at an early stage that candidates will be coming forward for quality assurance.

Centres must register existing candidates using their Signature unique learner ID number. New candidates will be issued with a unique learner ID number, by Signature, upon registration. Centres (excludes Scotland) should also enter the candidates national Unique Learner Number (ULN) in to the appropriate field. New candidates should be allocated a national ULN by the centre.

Centres will be invoiced for candidate registration fees. Centres wishing to use an official purchase order should quote the order number on the online registration form.

Signature will confirm online registration of candidates via email.

Signature does not allow candidate registration to be transferred from one centre to another.

3. Internal assessment and verification procedures

3.1 Internal assessment is carried out by:

- an approved assessor, appointed by the centre, who holds an assessing qualification (A1, D32/33 award, Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement), or
- a trainee assessor working towards this qualification, whose assessment decisions have been countersigned by someone currently holding this qualification.

Assessors or trainee assessors must have a relevant BSL/ISL/Interpreting/Translation qualification (Level 4 or Level 6). Native users of BSL/ISL are exempt from this requirement, but must provide a statement confirming their language preference and claiming exemption.

Centres must appoint assessors who will be responsible and accountable for:*

- Engaging candidates in the qualification
- Finding, planning and preparing materials
- Identifying candidates learning needs
- Planning the learning delivery
- Monitoring candidates progress
- Understanding and applying the standards and requirements of the qualification
- Communicating assessment requirements to candidates
- Giving feedback to candidates
- Making assessment decisions
- Comparing evidence against set standards/criteria
- Documenting the assessment processes and decisions
- Taking part in standardisation activities
- Taking part in CPD

*This is not an exhaustive list

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Assessors are responsible for ensuring that candidates use the same language combination in each unit. The two languages in which the candidate intends to complete the qualification must be recorded in the initial assessment plan.

3.2 Internal verification (or internal quality assurance) of assessors' decisions is carried out by:

- an internal verifier, appointed by the centre, who holds an internal verifying qualification (V1, D34 award, Level 4 Award in the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice), or
- a trainee internal verifier working towards this qualification, whose internal verification decisions have been countersigned by someone currently holding this qualification.

Internal verifiers or trainee internal verifiers must have a relevant BSL/ISL/Interpreting/Translation qualification (Level 4 or Level 6). Native users of BSL/ISL are exempt from this requirement, but must provide a statement confirming their language preference and claiming exemption.

Centres must appoint internal verifiers who will be responsible and accountable for:*

- Maintaining the integrity of the qualifications being delivered
- Leading improvements in the learning delivery
- Ensuring assessors interpret, understand and apply standards and requirements of the qualification
- Planning and carrying out sampling of assessed work using appropriate strategy
- Monitoring delivery and assessment practice
- Interviewing candidates and witnesses
- Documenting the internal quality assurance process and decisions
- Identifying issues and trends
- Observing assessors working with candidates
- Providing feedback to assessors
- Advising and supporting assessors

- Leading standardisation activities to ensure accuracy and consistency of assessment decisions between assessors and other IVs
- Taking part in Continuous Professional Development (CPD)
- Effectively communicate with centre staff and Signature
- Communicating with the EQA at visits
- Ensuring corrective action plans, implemented by Signature, are completed within set timescales
- Identifying training needs of assessors

*This is not an exhaustive list

Centres must ensure that assessors and internal verifiers are competent to perform their role and must therefore provide appropriate training and development opportunities to ensure that assessors and internal verifiers either hold the qualifications needed to carry out their role, or are working towards these qualifications.

All members of the centre's internal assessment and verification team must be approved by Signature. The centre is required to send details of the team and their qualifications during the centre approval process (see 1 above), and it is the centre's responsibility to update Signature promptly if there are any changes to the team.

4. External Quality Assurance procedures

External quality assurance (or external verification) of the centre's assessor and internal verifiers decisions is sampled by:

- an external quality assurer (EQA), appointed by Signature, who holds an external verifying/quality assuring qualification (Level 4 Award in the EQA of Assessment Processes and Practice, V2 or D35 award), or
- a trainee external quality assurer working towards this qualification, whose external quality decisions have been countersigned by someone currently holding this qualification.

Each centre must have at least one external quality assurance/support visit per year. The centre may ask for additional visits if required. The centre will be charged for all external quality assurance/support visits.

4.1 Applying for certification (requesting an external quality assurance visit)

Centres whose candidate(s) portfolios have been internally assessed and internally verified as competent, in relation to an NVQ unit/qualification, must request to have them externally quality assured. An external quality assurance visit can be requested online via 'My Signature'.

When requesting a visit, the centre must select each candidates allocated assessor, internal verifier and/or trainees, from their approved staff list. **The external quality assurer will refuse to externally quality assure any candidates whose assessor/internal verifier/trainee have not been approved by Signature.**

The centre must supply three suitable dates for the external quality assurance visit, and a minimum of six weeks notice must be given.

4.2 Confirmation of an external quality assurance visit

Once Signature has confirmed a mutually convenient date for the centre and the external quality assurer, this date becomes the visit date (known for administrative purposes as the 'assessment date'). Signature will send a confirmation letter, via post, to the centre confirming details of the visit. Signature will also enclose the Application for Certification form (AFC). This is the list of candidate(s) whose portfolios have been internally assessed and internally verified as competent, by their allocated assessor, their internal verifier and/or trainees. If any information on this form is incorrect, the centre must notify their customer support officer immediately.

4.3 External Quality Assurance visit

At the visit, the external quality assurer will sample the assessment and internal verification decisions in relation to those candidate(s) portfolios that are listed on the Application for

Certification form (AFC). The role of the external quality assurer is **not** to re-assess candidates' work, but by sampling the decisions made the internal verifier will be able to satisfy her/himself that the assessing and internal verification decisions are sound. If the external quality assurer has doubt about the safety of the assessment or internal verification decisions made at the centre, s/he may refuse to sign off all the portfolios in the group. S/he will offer advice to the assessment team to rectify any errors, but will not negotiate over the achievement of individual candidates.

5. Use of e-portfolios

Signature will accept the use of e-portfolio systems in centres for the assessment of NVQ Certificate and Diploma qualifications.

Centres must ensure when using e-portfolios that the following points are met:

- an e-portfolio system must include adequate protection, such as software and/or firewalls that will protect against viruses and hacking, and monitor and block attempts to corrupt the assessment process
- e-portfolio systems should store and maintain candidates' portfolios for access by all required parties securely and meet the evidence needs for a qualification
- data protection act must be met
- security measures must be in place to ensure assessment decisions are authenticated and only authorised personnel have access to assessment records
- e-portfolios must have the capabilities to fulfil the requirements of the assessment and regulations. The content of an e-portfolio must be no different to the paper-based version
- external quality assurers must have access to the system on the day of the external quality assurance visit. If there is a technical problem on the day which prevents the portfolios from being sampled and signed off, another visit will have to be arranged
- appropriate signatures are visible. Signature will accept electronic signatures

6. Sanctions

Failure to comply with these regulations or to maintain compliance with the requirements of centre approval for Signature NVQ Certificates and/or Diplomas will result in sanctions being imposed on the centre.

An explanation of the sanctions that could be applied is in the table below.

Level	Non-compliance	Sanction
One	Centre has not complied with centre approval or other requirements but there is no actual threat to the integrity of the assessment decisions	Action point added to EV report and deadline date implemented
Two	Action point(s) arising from a Level 1 sanction have not been completed by specified deadline date but there is no actual threat to the integrity of the assessment decisions	Written warning given to centre with revised deadline date implemented
Three	a) Centre has not complied with centre approval or other requirements which have led to a threat to the candidates, and the integrity of the assessment decisions has been lost, risking invalid claims to certification b) Failure to comply with Awarding Body requests, detailed in the written warning letter	Action plan implemented with deadline dates attached and suspension of registration and/or certification
Four	a) Irretrievable breakdown in the management and quality assurance of a specific qualification b) Failure to comply with Awarding Body requests, detailed in the action plan implemented	Withdrawal of centre approval for the specific qualification
Five	Irretrievable breakdown in management and quality assurance of all NVQs run by the centre	Withdrawal of centre approval for all NVQs offered by Signature

A centre may have attempted to rectify a fault leading to a sanction, but been unable to do so for reasons that can be justified. Signature will take this into account when deciding whether to impose a higher-level sanction.

A centre may temporarily rectify non-compliances, only to display the same weaknesses again at a later date. Signature will take into account the track record of a centre in considering whether to impose a higher level sanction.

7. Issue of results

After the visit has been completed the external quality assurer will complete a visit report and will confirm (or otherwise) the claims to competence of the candidates in the group.

Signature will carry out any other necessary quality assurance procedures, and will issue the results online within six weeks of the visit date.

Following the quality assurance checks, if there is cause for concern about the assessment standard, results may be delayed beyond the normal processing time.

Centres will be notified by email when results are ready.

8. Issue of certificates

Signature will issue certificates, for those who have achieved the full qualification, within two weeks of the results released date, for onward distribution to candidates. Signature will issue certificates using the spelling of the name as it appears on the Application for Achievement Form (AAF). It is important that the candidate has verified that the spelling is correct.

Credit certificates for single units are available, on written request, for those candidates who did not intend to complete the full qualification.

9. Appeals

See Signature's website for appeals procedure.

10. Retention of evidence

Centres must securely store candidates' portfolio evidence for a period of three years. All evidence can be stored electronically if a centre desires.