

# INTERPRETER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR HERITAGE SIGNERS

**Course Handbook**

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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome and thank you for choosing BSL First! This Course Handbook contains important information relating to your course, including an outline of the course content, assessments, additional information and opportunities, and frequently asked questions. It also includes our company's policies and procedures - **please take the time to familiarise yourself with these before completing the Learning Agreement.**



## About BSL First

We are independent specialist provider of British Sign Language interpreting and translation services, as well as professional qualifications in British Sign Language, sign language interpreting, sign language translation and communication support. We also offer a range of services such as BSL training for organisations, one-to-one BSL tuition and TSLI/TSLT supervision.

## Our Courses

We are accredited to deliver all of the Signature qualifications in British Sign Language, Sign Language Interpreting, Sign Language Translation, Communication Support and Modifying Written English Texts for Deaf People. We are also accredited for the IBSL Level 6 Diploma in Sign Language Interpreting qualification.

- ✓ Signature Level 1 Award in British Sign Language
- ✓ Signature Level 2 Certificate in British Sign Language
- ✓ Signature Level 3 Certificate in British Sign Language
- ✓ Signature Level 4 Certificate in British Sign Language
- ✓ Signature Level 6 Certificate in British Sign Language
- ✓ Signature Level 6 Diploma in Sign Language Interpreting
- ✓ Signature Level 6 Diploma in Sign Language Translation
- ✓ IBSL Level 6 Diploma in Sign Language Interpreting
- ✓ Signature Level 3 Award in Modifying Written English Texts for Deaf People
- ✓ Signature Level 3 Certificate in Communication Support for Deaf Learners

## Our Mission

In 2014 we were nominated for the prestigious Signature Centre of the Year Award and we are committed to maintaining our position as one of the top training providers for BSL and sign language interpreting/translation in the UK. We want to make sure that the deaf community have access to highly skilled interpreters, translators and communication professionals. In order to do this, we have developed innovative and unique course structures designed not only to prepare you for assessments, but also to equip you with the skills for further training in interpreting, translation, communication support or any other career involving BSL.

## Our Teachers

Our teaching team boasts one of the most impressive and unique skill-sets in the country. All of our teachers hold a nationally recognised teaching qualification and have extensive experience in doing what they do, allowing us to deliver highly specialised, quality and unique courses. You can read our teachers' profiles on our website.

Enjoy your time learning with us and I wish you all the best with your studies!

Akbar Sikder MA, RSLI, RSLT, MASLI, A1  
Managing Director



# COURSE OVERVIEW

The aim of this course is to give you the underpinning knowledge, understanding and skills to work as a professional sign language interpreter. You will achieve the Signature Level 6 Diploma in Sign Language Interpreting and Translation (RQF) qualification. This course leads to Registered Sign Language Interpreter (RSLI) status with the NRCPD.

**This course is aimed at hearing people who have learned BSL as a second language. You must have completed the Level 6 Certificate in BSL qualification or our Interpreting Foundations course. You will complete Stream 1 of the qualification (spoken/signed interpreting) in BSL/English language combination.**

We have developed this course based on our extensive experience in the interpreting, translation and training fields. The course is made up of 480 hours of guided and independent learning spread over 2 years.

This course will take you from little or no knowledge of sign language interpreting to Registered Sign Language Interpreter (RSLI) status.

You will be able to register as a Trainee Sign Language Interpreter (TSLI) in the first year of this course (subject to you also meeting all other requirements set out by the NRCPD).

The course is delivered in an informal and relaxed environment and your teacher will use a variety of teaching and learning methods to cater for all learning styles and to meet the needs of all learners. The course is designed to be fun, engaging and meaningful and will give you the opportunity to practise your BSL and interpreting skills by means of group work, pair work, role-plays, games, presentations and discussions.

# 08 Course Content

## Year 1

The first year is made up of 120 hours of guided learning hours and 120 hours of structured independent study (total 240 hours). The guided learning sessions are divided into 10x 12-hour sessions over a weekend once a month over 10 months. This is followed by an additional 12 hours of structured independent study per month, which is completed through our e-learning platform.

You will develop your knowledge, understanding and skills in the following areas:

### **Intermediate British Sign Language**

You will develop your skills in British Sign Language from level 2 (A2) (or equivalent) towards intermediate level (B1). You will develop your productive and receptive skills, vocabulary and grammar. You will also study the history of BSL and deaf culture, including the role and identity of hearing heritage signers and child language brokers. This module is benchmarked to the Level 3/4 qualifications in BSL. Topics include: home life, social and recreational activities, education, employment and jobs, science and technology, medicine and law and politics.



### **Theoretical principles in interpreting and translation**

This module will introduce students to some of the key theoretical frameworks in interpreting and translation studies, including functionalist theories, ethical models and the role of the interpreter and translator. It will introduce students to some of the current principles and issues in the public service interpreting profession, with a focus on signed language interpreting. It will also look at some of the unique issues that arise for heritage signers and the relationship between heritage signers and the interpreting profession.



### **Introduction to interpreting**

You will be introduced to the main interpreting theories in spoken and signed language interpreting. You will also study the history of the sign language interpreting profession, including the role of hearing heritage signers and child language brokers. You will be introduced to consecutive interpreting, note-taking skills, simultaneous interpreting, text translation and audiovisual translation. You will practice both one-way and two-way interpreting. This module will also introduce you to some of the main domains that interpreters work in, including health, employment, education and community.





# Year 2

The second year is made up of 120 hours of guided learning hours and 120 hours of structured independent study (total 240 hours). The guided learning sessions are divided into 10x 12-hour sessions over a weekend once a month over 10 months. This is followed by an additional 12 hours of structured independent study per month, which is completed through our e-learning platform.

In the second year, you will develop your knowledge, understanding and skills in the following areas:

## Beginners American Sign Language

You will start learning American Sign Language alongside your training as a BSL interpreter, working towards pre-intermediate level (A2). **Topics include:** ASL manual alphabet | Meeting people, numbers, time | Weather, transport, directions | Healthy living | Family, clothes | Countries | Colours | Feelings and behaviour | School, work and jobs | Home life | Social and recreational activities | Education | Employment

## Advanced British Sign Language

You will develop your skills in British Sign Language from level 3 (B1) towards advanced level (C2). You will develop your productive and receptive skills, vocabulary and grammar. You will also study the history of BSL and deaf culture, including the role and identity of hearing heritage signers and child language brokers within the deaf world. The assessment for this module takes the form of 3x live observed BSL discussions, 1 externally marked presentation, 1 externally marked discussion and 1 receptive exam. You will achieve the Level 6 Certificate in BSL qualification upon completion of this module. Topics include: medicine, politics and the law, employment and finance, education, science and technology and media and society.

## Professional interpreting

You will continue to develop your interpreting skills in one-way and two-way interpreting. You will study some of the key theories in interpreting and translation studies and learn how to apply them to your practice. This module will give you the skills to analyse your interpreting performance by understanding the cognitive processes and stages of the interpreting process. You will continue to practise your skills in consecutive interpreting in addition to developing skills in simultaneous interpreting. You will also be introduced to interpreting in a wider range of domains, including health, education, employment and performance. At the beginning of the second year, you will be assessed against the National Occupational Standards for Trainee Interpreters, which will enable you to register with the NRCPD as a Trainee Sign Language Interpreter (TSLI) and start working as a professional sign language interpreter.

## Prepare for interpreting assignments

You will learn about the importance of preparing for interpreting assignments, applying key theories in interpreting and translation studies to plan and prepare appropriately for assignments. You will be able to assess your own ability to undertake, and accept, interpreting assignments, as well as plan and prepare for assignments as part of a team of interpreters. You will learn about the importance of maintaining a glossary for domains you regularly work in. You will critically evaluate and apply a range of preparation strategies and you will produce evidence of preparing for 4 assignments.

## Plan and implement continuous professional development

You will work with your professional supervisor to plan your development points over the course of your studies. You will create, maintain and update a Professional Development Plan throughout your studies. Your plan will be informed by trends, developments and good practice in the sign language interpreting/translation profession as well as your own evaluation of your gaps in knowledge, skills and competence. You will have regular meetings with your supervisor to review your PDP (required to maintain your TSLI registration).

## Remote interpreting

You will learn about the emerging field of Video Relay Interpreting (VRI) and engage critically with current debates about VRI in the sign language interpreting field. You will learn how to prepare and perform VRI assignments, including how to set up, check and monitor equipment effectively and how to manage the specific demands relating to this mode of delivery. You will also be introduced to subtitling and audiovisual translation.

# Year 3

The third year is made up of 120 hours of guided learning hours and 120 hours of structured independent study (total 240 hours). The guided learning sessions (including assessment time) are divided into 10x 12-hour sessions over a weekend once a month over 10 months. This is followed by an additional 12 hours of structured independent study per month, which is completed through our e-learning platform.

In the third year, you will develop your knowledge, understanding and skills in the following areas:

## **Intermediate American Sign Language (optional)**

You will continue to develop your ASL skills towards intermediate level (B2). Topics include:  
Consumer issues and daily living | Deaf history and culture | Health and wellbeing | Society and politics |  
Science and technology | Media and culture | Employment and business | Education



## **Advanced professional interpreting**

This module will bring together your skills in interpreting in order to refine your skills in interpreting between English and BSL at native level. You will master a range of interpreting techniques, particularly in simultaneous interpreting. You will also be introduced to interpreting in specialist domains, including conferences, mental health and court. You will be assessed in both two-way and one-way interpreting and in both simultaneous and consecutive modes. Assessment takes the form of 5x evidence or observations of one-way and two-way interpreting performance.



## **Work as part of a team of professional interpreters**

This module will give you the knowledge and skills to work effectively as part of a team of interpreters. It will equip you with a range of co-working techniques, such as feeding, checking and monitoring skills, as well as strategies to work with other professionals (i.e. relay interpreters and English>BSL translators). You will consider a wide range of co-working techniques in various situations and domains, using key principles and ethical models to justify your decisions.



## **Sight translation**

You will learn about the situations when you might be required to produce sight translations of written and signed texts. You will consider the appropriateness and feasibility of the sight translation task. You will be able to apply a wide range of interpreting and translation theories and principles to justify your translation approach and ethical decisions.



## **Evaluate performance as a professional interpreter**

You will use a wide range of theoretical frameworks, ethical frameworks and key principles in interpreting and translation studies to critically evaluate your own interpreting performance. You will be able to justify and analyse the interpreting approach, as well as evaluate the consequences of ethical decisions made. You will also have the opportunity to engage in group reflective practice sessions. You are required to produce a critical analysis of your interpreting performance for all of the 6x internal assessments.

# 11 Assessment

There are a total of 23 assessments for this qualification over the total 3-year duration. There are 10 assessments in year 2 and 12 assessments in year 3. In year 3, there are a total of 6x internal assessments of one-way and two-way interpreting, 4x external assessments of one-way and two-way interpreting and 2x sight translations (externally assessed). This means students are required to produce 6x evidence of real interpreting assignments in the community (some of these assessments will be conducted in the classroom). You have the option of sitting exams in English/ASL language combination as well.

## Year 1 Assessments

1

3000 word essay

Exam essay - externally assessed

## Year 2 Assessments

1

Informal one-to-one discussion in BSL

including in-text citations

Film clip

Internally assessed

2

Informal group debate in BSL

detailing systems and processes in place to do business

Film clip

Internally assessed

3

Formal group meeting in BSL

Film clip

Internally assessed

4

Formal presentation in BSL

including:  
co-working assignments,  
1-way interpreting,  
2-way interpreting  
and sight translation.

Film clip

Externally assessed

5

Formal group meeting in BSL

Film clip

Externally assessed

6

BSL receptive skills exam

including in-text citations

Film clip

Externally assessed

7

4x evidence of preparing for interpreting assignments

including:  
co-working assignments,  
1-way interpreting,  
2-way interpreting  
and sight translation.

Coursework

internally assessed

8

Business plan

detailing systems and processes in place to do business

Coursework

internally assessed

9

Glossary

Coursework

internally assessed

10

Professional Development Plan and reflective journals

Coursework

internally assessed

## Year 3 Assessments

<p><b>1</b></p> <p>One-way consecutive BSL&gt;English and critical analysis</p> <p>One-way consecutive ASL&gt;English and critical analysis (optional)</p> <p>—</p> <p>Live observation or filmed clip - internally assessed</p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p>One-way consecutive English&gt;BSL and critical analysis</p> <p>One-way consecutive English&gt;ASL and critical analysis (optional)</p> <p>—</p> <p>Live observation or filmed clip - internally assessed</p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p>One-way simultaneous interpreting BSL&gt;English and critical analysis</p> <p>One-way simultaneous interpreting ASL&gt;English and critical analysis (optional)</p> <p>—</p> <p>Live observation or filmed clip - internally assessed</p>
<p><b>4</b></p> <p>One-way simultaneous interpreting English&gt;BSL and critical analysis</p> <p>One-way simultaneous interpreting English&gt;ASL and critical analysis (optional)</p> <p>—</p> <p>Live observation or filmed clip - internally assessed</p>	<p><b>5</b></p> <p>Two-way face-to-face interpreting BSL/English and critical analysis</p> <p>Two-way face-to-face interpreting ASL/English and critical analysis (optional)</p> <p>—</p> <p>Live observation or filmed clip - internally assessed</p>	<p><b>6</b></p> <p>Two-way remote interpreting BSL/English and critical analysis</p> <p>Two-way remote interpreting ASL/English and critical analysis (optional)</p> <p>—</p> <p>Live observation or filmed clip - internally assessed</p>
<p><b>7</b></p> <p>One-way simultaneous interpreting BSL&gt;English</p> <p>One-way simultaneous interpreting ASL&gt;English (optional)</p> <p>—</p> <p>Filmed clip - externally assessed</p>	<p><b>8</b></p> <p>One-way simultaneous interpreting English&gt;BSL</p> <p>One-way simultaneous interpreting English&gt;ASL (optional)</p> <p>—</p> <p>Filmed clip - externally assessed</p>	<p><b>9</b></p> <p>Two-way face-to-face interpreting English/BSL</p> <p>Two-way face-to-face interpreting English/ASL (optional)</p> <p>—</p> <p>Filmed clip - externally assessed</p>
<p><b>10</b></p> <p>Two-way remote interpreting English/BSL</p> <p>Two-way remote interpreting English/ASL (optional)</p> <p>—</p> <p>Filmed clip - externally assessed</p>	<p><b>11</b></p> <p>Sight translation English&gt;BSL</p> <p>Sight translation English&gt;ASL (optional)</p> <p>—</p> <p>Filmed clip - externally assessed</p>	<p><b>12</b></p> <p>Immediate translation BSL&gt;English</p> <p>Immediate translation ASL&gt;English (optional)</p> <p>—</p> <p>Written product - externally assessed</p>

All live observations and internal assessments will be externally moderated by Signature and therefore must be filmed for quality assurance purposes. You must pass all of the internal assessments, which will make up a portfolio of evidence, before taking the external assessments.

100% attendance is essential for this course. You will receive a course timetable during your induction. **You must sit the exam on the specified date.** If you cannot sit the exam on the specified date due to extenuating circumstances, please consult our Extenuating Circumstances Policy before informing your teacher.

## Feedback and Tutorials

Feedback is a vital part of your linguistic development. Your teacher will give you informal feedback every week throughout the course. There are no tutorials in this course.

## Homework and Independent Learning

In addition to the guided learning hours in the classroom, you are required to undertake around 12 hours of independent study every month (3 hours per week) through Moodle. The independent study activities are a compulsory and integral part of the course, designed to complement and reinforce what you have learned in the classroom.

Independent study activities for this course include:

- ▶ Reading books and academic literature on interpreting and translation studies
- ▶ Practising BSL receptive skills and grammar
- ▶ Practising consecutive, simultaneous, two-way and note-taking skills
- ▶ Professional Development Series
- ▶ Weekly peer support groups and professional supervision

## Moodle

Moodle is our Learning Management System. You will be given a login for Moodle when you start your course. You can access all of the homework and independent learning activities on Moodle, including course documentation, quizzes, receptive practice activities, BSL dictionary and handouts. The independent learning activities are structured on a week-by-week basis to complement and reinforce learning in the classroom.

## Signature Learning Hub

The Signature Learning Hub is an excellent online resource managed by Signature, the awarding body for all of our BSL qualifications. Signature Learning Hub is designed to complement learning for all of the Signature qualifications. It provides additional learning activities, including receptive videos, vocabulary, quizzes and examples of and tips for the exams. Signature Learning Hub is a paid subscription service and is not included in the course fee. You can access the Signature Learning Hub [here](#)

## Signworld Learn

Signworld is an online learning resource, designed to complement and reinforce your learning in the classroom. It is available for BSL levels 1 to 4. Each level contains over 900 signs relating to a wide range of topics, regional variations, hundreds of quizzes and tests, and grammar notes. Signworld Learn is a paid subscription service and is not included in the course fee. You can access Signworld Learn [here](#)

## Deaf History Tour

All interpreting students have the opportunity to take part in an annual trip to Paris and Washington DC in August. The aim of the trip is to explore deaf culture and history around the world and, in particular, the historical events that have led to the situation we find ourselves in today. The trip includes a visit to the first deaf school in the world in Paris, a tour of Gallaudet University (the only deaf university in the world) and a tour of the US National Deaf History Museum. There is also free time to explore and enjoy Paris and Washington.

# PROGRESSION & CAREERS

## Progression

The IDP-HS is a unique course that gives you the skills to interpret between English and BSL at native level (AA language combination), as well as the option to qualify as an ASL/English interpreter.

You will achieve the Signature Level 6 Diploma in Sign Language Interpreting and Translation and Signature Level 6 Certificate in British Sign Language qualifications, which allow you to apply for Registered Sign Language Interpreter (RSLI) with the NRCPD and start working as a qualified sign language interpreter. You will also be eligible for the RID National Interpreter Certification for ASL/English interpreting. Holding qualified interpreter status in both ASL and BSL will open up several opportunities around the world.

You will be eligible for full membership of the Association of Sign Language Interpreters (MASLI) and Visual Language Professionals (MVLP).

When you have 3 years of interpreting experience, you will be eligible for full membership of the Institute of Translation and Interpreting (MITI) and the Chartered Institute of Linguists (CILT).

You will also be eligible to join the International Association of Conference Interpreters, as well as the European Union Institutions and the United Nations, as a conference interpreter with AA English/BSL language combination.

This course will give you the skills and confidence to work in all domains, to aspire towards positions of leadership within the sign language interpreting profession and to seek interpreting opportunities around the world.

## Careers

Many qualified BSL/English interpreters are freelance sole-traders. There are several interpreting agencies that offer work to qualified BSL/English interpreters. These include some big multinational agencies that offer interpreting services in several languages and some smaller specialist agencies that deal mainly with BSL/English interpreting services.

NUBSLI publish guidance on rates for freelance interpreters, which vary depending on the region of the country. On average, a newly qualified interpreter can expect a starting salary of £30,000 per annum. This can go up to as much as £50,000 per annum for experienced freelance interpreters.

**For more information about starting out as a professional BSL interpreter:**

[National Union of British Sign Language Interpreters \(NUBSLI\)](#)

[Association of Sign Language Interpreters \(ASLI\)](#)

[Visual Language Professionals \(VLP\)](#)

[Institute of Translation and Interpreting \(ITI\)](#)

[Chartered Institute of Linguists \(CILT\)](#)

[International Association of Conference Interpreters](#)

[European Commission](#)

[United Nations](#)

# ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

1. Hearing native, near-native or heritage signer
2. BSL skills at Level 2 (or equivalent)
3. Pass the interview and aptitude test
4. Good level of English (e.g. GCSE grade C, CEFR B2)

You must have a good level of literacy to be able to read and understand the course materials.

Ideally, you will have a network of contacts to help you to collect evidence of your interpreting work for your portfolio.



# ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

## Extra Tuition

Sometimes it can be difficult keeping up with the pace of the course, especially if you have missed a few sessions. In case this happens, we can arrange for you to have some one-to-one catch-up sessions with your teacher to help you get back on track with the course. You can have as many or as few sessions as you like, but your teacher will advise you on how many hours of extra input you might need. These sessions are charged at £50 per hour

## Exam Re-sits

If you fail one or more of your exams, we can arrange for you to re-sit the exam. You can re-sit an exam at any time, but we have to book the exam at least 4 weeks in advance.

Exam re-sits is an additional service and is not included in the initial course fee. As a result, you will need to pay an additional fee for exam re-sits. This fee will be the current Signature Candidate Registration Fee (see [www.signature.org.uk](http://www.signature.org.uk)) plus a £50 per hour tuition fee. If you fail one of your exams, we will contact you with information on what to do next.

## Therapeutic Support

If you feel you need to access professional therapeutic support, you can contact Matthew Shrine at [Matt.Shrine@icloud.com](mailto:Matt.Shrine@icloud.com) or 07706225822.

Matthew is a qualified psychodynamic therapist and counsellor and a hearing child of deaf parents. He offers a specialist counselling service for hearing people from deaf families and deaf people, based on his own personal lived experiences as occupying a middle ground between deaf and hearing worlds, and how this can impact an individual's sense of identity and belonging. He can offer the following services:

- ▶ One-to-one counselling (online or face-to-face)
- ▶ One-to-one professional supervision
- ▶ Group therapy
- ▶ Signposting and information

## Mentoring and Supervision

A professional mentor can support you throughout your journey as a trainee interpreter and in the first few years after qualifying by providing guidance about ways you can develop your skills. A mentor can also help you to learn a specialism and to undertake interpreting work in a new domain. You can find a list of mentors on the [ASLI website](#).

A professional supervisor can help you to reflect on your own practice by providing a safe and non-judgemental space. Professional supervision is included in our interpreting courses, but you can find a list of qualified supervisors at [Labyrinth Supervision](#).





# FEES AND FUNDING

## Funding for BSL Courses

We understand that learning British Sign Language can be a huge financial commitment. The total cost of learning BSL from Level 1 to Level 6 can be over £4,000. This is in addition to over £6,000 for further training to become a professional sign language interpreter or sign language translator.

Unfortunately, these days there is very little government help available for BSL courses. Some Further Education colleges are able to access government funding and so they are able to subsidise the cost of BSL courses and charge lower fees. However, these courses are rarely free and often FE colleges are only able to subsidise the cost of Level 1 BSL courses.



BSL First is a private training provider and so we are not eligible for government funding. This means that we have to run our business solely based on the income we generate from course fees. Although the cost of learning BSL is high, there are options available to help you with managing these costs.

## Private funding

The majority of students pay for the cost of BSL courses with their own private funds. This may be personal savings or setting some money aside every month to go towards the cost of the course.

We offer the option to pay the course fees over a number of monthly instalments to help you with managing your finances. The monthly payments are collected by Direct Debit, so it will come straight out of your bank account on a date that you have specified. For example, for the Level 1 BSL course, you may wish to pay £100 per month over 4 months on the 20th of the month. Below is an example breakdown of instalment payments.

This breakdown is indicative and intended for example purposes only.

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	
Deposit	Installment 1	Installment 2	Installment 3	Total
£100	£100	£100	£100	£400

## Concessions and discounts

Due to the lack of funding available for hearing parents of deaf children and for hearing children of deaf parents, we offer a 10% concession. This concession is only available for the Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 BSL courses and cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer.

BSL First is focused on providing professional courses in sign language interpreting, translation and communication support. As a result, we have designed a route that prepares you for entry to your chosen professional qualification, meaning you can save time and money in the long run.

For more information about fees and funding options, we have put together a Fees and Funding Guide, which you can download from our website: [www.bslfirst.com](http://www.bslfirst.com)

# TEACHING STAFF



## **Akbar Sikder MA, RSLI, RSLT, MASLI, A1**

Akbar is a hearing child of two deaf parents, growing up bilingual in English and BSL. He holds a BA (Honours) in French and Linguistics and an MA in Translation and Interpreting from the University of Manchester. He is a Registered Sign Language Interpreter (RSLI) and Registered Sign Language Translator (RSLT) with the NRCPD, and a Member of the Association of Sign Language Interpreters (MASLI). He has been working as a professional signed language interpreter since 2009 and has experience in a wide range of domains, specialising in legal, education, Islamic settings and broadcast media. He is a qualified teacher and A1 assessor for the BSL, interpreting and translation qualifications and a Lecturer in Translation and Interpreting Studies at University College London. Akbar works closely with awarding bodies on the development and assessment of BSL, interpreting and translation qualifications, and with the NRCPD as a Professional Standards Advisor.



## **Adrian Bailey BSc (Hons), PGCE, RSLI, MASLI**

Adrian is a hearing child of two deaf parents, growing up bilingual in English and BSL. He holds a BSc (Honours) in Deaf Studies from the University of Bristol and a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) from Edge Hill University. He is a Registered Sign Language Interpreter (RSLI) with the NRCPD, a Member of the Association of Sign Language Interpreters (MASLI) and holds Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). He has been working as a BSL/English interpreter since 2014 and has experience in a wide range of domains, including extensive work within the film and television industry. He previously worked as a drama teacher. Adrian is also proficient in ASL and International Sign, and has worked as an interpreter at the European Parliament in Brussels.



## **Tessa Padden MA, RSLI, RSLT**

Tessa is the deaf child of deaf Irish parents who lived in England for over 50 years. She is trilingual in British Sign Language (BSL), Irish Sign Language (ISL) and English. She is a Registered Sign Language Interpreter (RSLI) and Registered Sign Language Translator (RSLT) with the NRCPD, working between ISL, BSL and International Sign. She is an experienced BSL teacher, teacher trainer, translator, television presenter and interpreter. She has taught and trained BSL teachers and sign language interpreters all over the world and for institutions including Durham University, Bristol University and The British Deaf Association. Tessa was the founding Chair of IBSL and Chair of the BDA's BSL Academy in 2006-2015.

# 19 Teaching Staff



## **Cathy Nassimi-Green CTLLS, A1**

Cathy is a deaf child of deaf parents and comes from a large deaf family. She has been teaching BSL for over 10 years and has experience in teaching all levels of BSL. She holds the Level 4 Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (CTLLS) and the A1 Assessor qualifications. She also has skills and experience in International Sign interpreting and Deafblind interpreting.



## **John Mancini**

John is a deaf child of deaf parents and comes from a large deaf family. He holds a Certificate in Deaf Studies from the University of Bristol and an Advanced Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector from the University of Central Lancashire. He also holds the assessor and verifier qualifications. He has over 20 years of experience in teaching all levels of BSL and is a senior examiner for BSL qualifications for awarding bodies. In 2010, John won the Signature National Teacher of the Year award.



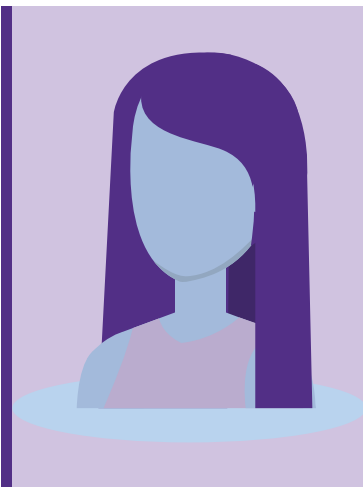
# TESTIMONIALS



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I can see the improvements in my interpreting since starting with BSL First. The input and guidance have been invaluable. I feel more settled and supported than I have before, the course that Akbar has designed, in my view, is excellent in terms of the structure, content and the support.

**Penny**



//

Being with BSL First has probably been THE Best learning experience I've had. I've met many wonderful people, there has been so much support and never been more comfortable in a learning environment, either classroom based or online (blended). Would do it all over again!

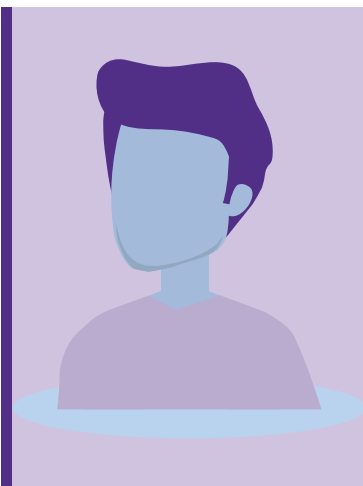
**Kerri**



//

I cannot recommend this course enough. I have felt completely at ease throughout all the teaching time, and when I had doubts in my own abilities and motivation, Akbar was there at the end of an email, and helped me work through it. The teachers have a real wealth of experience, and are incredibly knowledgeable - I defy anyone to spend time on this course and not be inspired to take themselves as far as they can go on their journey into BSL.

**Emma**



//

Thank you for the BSL Level 6 you arranged, and to especially thank you for sending Alan Murray to be our leading instructor. He did his a very helpful attitude, and was more aware of my needed. I appreciate the time he took to work samples of my study in advance so his comments were immediately applicable. BSL First always find a way to get it done – and done well! Thank you.

**Rinkoo**

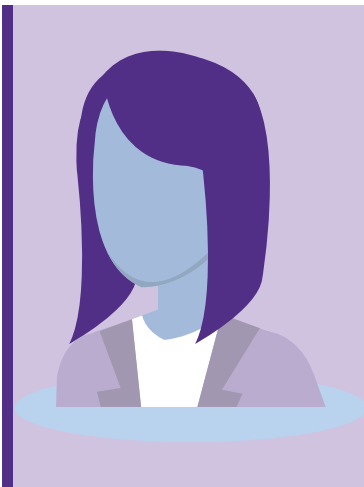
# 21 Testimonials



//

I feel that finding this course and being with other CODAs was fate for me. I have wanted to do a course like this for a while, but being in a group with the people I am with now is better than I had imagined. With great tutors and leadership along the way, I look forward to what the future brings!

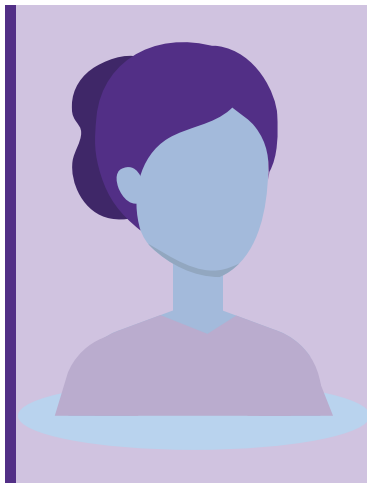
**Iona**



//

I am really enjoying my course with BSL First, Akbar and his team have a wealth of knowledge and I really trust that I'm in good hands. The teaching is varied and there are always opportunities to feedback on any area of the course as well.

**Sophie**



//

The course has fantastic content. I would recommend BSL First as the tutors are very knowledgeable, very approachable and supportive.

**Karen**



//

I am extremely pleased I chose BSL First as a course provider. The quality of the training is first class. The tutors are friendly, approachable, supportive and, most importantly, experts in their field. I would highly recommend BSL First as a course provider.

**Natasha**

## 1. Can I pay in instalments?

Yes. Payment in monthly instalments is standard for all of our courses. Depending on your course, you can spread the course fees across 3-12 monthly instalments, which we will collect via Direct Debit. The first instalment payments tend to be larger sums, followed by a number of smaller payments

## 2. When do the courses start and finish?

We run courses throughout the year and we advertise start and end dates for upcoming courses on the individual course pages of our website. If your selected course is full or not running, we will put you on a waiting list and contact you when the course is running.

## 3. Are there any exams?

All of our courses are accredited by Signature, so you are required to sit an exam in order to receive the qualification. There are no written exams for the BSL courses. There is significant written coursework and exams for all professional interpreting, translation and communication support courses. You can opt out of the BSL exams if you just wish to learn for fun, but you will not receive a qualification upon completion.

## 4. What qualification will I receive?

You will receive a qualification accredited by Signature, the leading awarding body for BSL, Deafblind and Communication Support qualifications in the UK. Signature qualifications are recognised by a wide range of employers and training providers.

## 5. Can I attend a different class each week?

No. You must attend the same class each week and you will not be able to attend a class on different days. For example, if you decide to attend a Tuesday class then you must attend that class every Tuesday.

## 6. Who are the teachers?

Our teachers have extensive experience in the interpreting, translation and BSL training fields and we are industry leaders. All of our BSL teachers are native BSL users, hold a recognised teaching qualification and have extensive experience in teaching BSL. You can find out more about our teachers on our website: [www.bslfirst.com](http://www.bslfirst.com).

## 7. What will happen at the interview?

Level 3 courses and above require applicants to attend an interview before being offered a place on the course. This is in order to ensure we can continue to meet our high standards. When you attend the interview, you will be given a series of short tasks to complete and you will have the opportunity to meet with the teacher and ask any specific questions you have about the course. We will then contact you after the interview to inform you whether or not you have been successful in obtaining a place on the course.

## 8. What is included in the course fee?

The course fee includes the cost of training room hire, tuition fees, assessment fees and the Signature exam fees. We also offer a range of additional benefits for our students - you can find the current offers on our website: [www.bslfirst.com](http://www.bslfirst.com)

## 9. What if I have a pre-booked holiday during the course?

If you happen to have a holiday booked before you started the course, then you must inform your teacher when you will be off and how many sessions you expect to miss. If the holiday was pre-booked then this will not affect your attendance rate, as this will be marked as an authorised absence. However, if you book a holiday after you start the course then this will be marked as an unauthorised absence and will affect your attendance rate. Please be aware that you will not be entered for the exam if your attendance falls below 80%.

## 10. What if I have to miss a class?

If you are ill or you have other commitments and can't attend class, please contact your teacher as soon as practicably possible. You can contact your teacher by text or email. There is no need to contact the main office.

# 23 Frequently Asked Questions

## 11. When will the exams take place?

All exams will take place during normal classroom hours so you must make yourself available for the exam. Your teacher will book the exam date in consultation with the whole class.

## 12. What if I can't make the exam date?

If you cannot make the agreed exam date, you must explain your reasons to your teacher. You may be eligible for extenuating circumstances if the reason is relating to health problems or disability. Holidays and work commitments are not valid reasons and you may have to pay additional fees to sit the exam on an alternative day. Exam fees are non-refundable once the exam has been booked.

## 13. What if I miss my exam?

If you do not attend your exam on the exam day then you will need to arrange for a re-sit outside of normal classroom hours and additional fees will apply. If you have extenuating circumstances for your absence then you must inform the main office as soon as possible. Exam fees are non-refundable once the exam has been booked.

## 14. Who do I contact about payment queries?

For all queries relating to payments, including changing the date of your Direct Debit, please contact the main office on [admin@bslfirst.com](mailto:admin@bslfirst.com).

## 15. How can I withdraw from my course?

If you are no longer able to continue with your course and have to withdraw, you must inform your teacher as soon as possible. Please note that, as per our refund policy (which all students sign twice when joining the course), if you withdraw after the 14-day cooling off period, you are still liable for the course fee.

If you cancel your Direct Debit payments or refuse to pay the outstanding course fee after the 14-day period, we will attempt to recover these debts via Small Claims Court.

## 16. Who do I contact about applying for a TOTUM card?

Please contact the main office for TOTUM card enquiries.

## 17. How do I sign up for the Signature Learning Hub and other online resources?

Your teacher will guide you through the sign up process for the Signature Learning Hub, Sign World and Moodle during class.

## 18. I want to progress on to the next level – how do I do this?

Your teacher will give you information about progression at the end of your course. You can also find full details of, and apply for, all our courses on our website: [www.bslfirst.com](http://www.bslfirst.com).

## 19. How do I receive my certificate and results?

You will receive an email from the main office with your results. This is typically sent 6-8 weeks after the exam has taken place. When your certificate is ready, we will post your certificate to you via Royal Mail Signed For.

## 20. What is the refund policy?

The deposit is always non-refundable. You are entitled to a full refund of the course fees (minus the deposit) if you withdraw within 14 days of starting the course. After 14 days, you will not be entitled to a refund unless you qualify for extenuating circumstances as set out in our Extenuating Circumstances Policy. You must agree to our Refund Policy when booking your place on the course.





# REASONABLE ADJUSTMENT AND SPECIAL CONSIDERATION POLICY

In accordance with the Equality and Diversity Policy, BSL First aims to facilitate open access to all of its programmes for learners who are eligible for reasonable adjustment and/or special consideration in assessments or examinations. These reasonable adjustments must not compromise the assessment of the skills, knowledge or understanding of the competence being measured.

## Reasonable Adjustment

This is agreed at the initial assessment or interview stage and is any action that helps to reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty, which places the learner at a substantial disadvantage in the assessment situation. Reasonable adjustments must not, however, affect the reliability or validity of assessment outcomes, nor must they give the learner an assessment advantage over other learners undertaking the same or similar assessments.

A reasonable adjustment helps to reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty that places the learner at a substantial disadvantage in the assessment situation.

Reasonable adjustments must not affect the validity or reliability of assessment outcomes, but may involve:

- ▶ Changing usual assessment arrangements
- ▶ Adapting assessment materials
- ▶ Providing assistance during assessment
- ▶ Re-organising the assessment physical environment
- ▶ Changing or adapting the assessment method

Reasonable adjustments must be approved (internally or externally) and set in place prior to assessment commencing. It is an arrangement to give a learner access to a qualification.

The work produced following a reasonable adjustment must be assessed in the same way as the work from other learners.

## Examples of Reasonable Adjustments

Below are examples of reasonable adjustment. It is important to note that not all adjustments described below will be reasonable, permissible or practical in particular situations. The learner may not need, nor be allowed, the same adjustment for all assessments. A reasonable adjustment must never affect the validity or reliability of assessment, influence the outcome of assessment or give the learner(s) in question an unfair assessment advantage.

- ▶ Changes to assessment conditions
- ▶ Modification to the presentation of assessment material
- ▶ Alternative ways of presenting responses
- ▶ Allowing extra time, e.g. assignment extensions
- ▶ Using a different assessment location
- ▶ Use of coloured overlays,
- ▶ Assessment material in large format
- ▶ Assessment material on coloured paper
- ▶ Language-modified assessment material
- ▶ British Sign Language (BSL)



## Requesting Reasonable Adjustment

Reasonable adjustments are approved before an assessment and are intended to allow attainment to be demonstrated.

A learner does not have to be disabled (as defined by the Equality Act 2010) to qualify for reasonable adjustment; nor will every learner who is disabled be entitled to reasonable adjustment.

Allowing reasonable adjustment is dependent upon how it will facilitate access for the learner.

A reasonable adjustment is intended to allow access to assessment but can only be granted where the adjustment does not affect the validity or reliability of the assessment given the learner(s) in question; provide an unfair advantage over other learners taking the same or similar assessment; or influence the final outcome of the assessment decision.

It is the responsibility of the learner and/or the relevant teaching staff to inform the course administrator of any application or request for reasonable adjustment.

It is at the discretion of BSL First management as to whether or not a reasonable adjustment will be awarded.

## Special Considerations

This is a post-assessment or post-examination allowance to reflect temporary illness, injury or indisposition that occurred at the time of assessment. Any special consideration granted cannot remove the difficulty the learner faced at the time of assessment and can only be a relatively small adjustment to ensure that the integrity of the assessment is not compromised.

A special consideration is a consideration given following a period of assessment for a learner who was prepared for and present at an assessment but who may have been disadvantaged by temporary illness, injury or any acceptable extenuating circumstances, as set out in the Extenuating Circumstances Policy, that have arisen at or near to the time of assessment misses part of the assessment due to circumstances outside their control.

A learner will **not** be eligible for special consideration if no evidence is supplied that the learner has been affected at the time of the assessment by a particular condition, any part of the assessment is missed due to personal arrangements including holidays, or unauthorised absence or any unacceptable extenuating circumstances, as set out in the Extenuating Circumstances Policy.

The following are examples of circumstances that might be eligible for special consideration (this list is not exhaustive):

- ▶ Terminal illness of the learner
- ▶ Terminal illness of a parent
- ▶ Recent bereavement of a member of the immediate family
- ▶ Serious and disruptive domestic crises leading to acute anxiety about the family
- ▶ Incapacitating illness of the learner
- ▶ Severe car accident
- ▶ Recent traumatic experience such as death of a close friend or distant relative
- ▶ Flare-up of severe congenital conditions such as epilepsy, diabetes, severe asthmatic attack
- ▶ Recent domestic crisis recent physical assault trauma broken limb on the mend

## Requesting Special Consideration

All requests for special considerations should be made to the course administrator. All requests must be made in either English or BSL. It is at the discretion of BSL First management as to whether or not special consideration will be awarded.

# MALPRACTICE POLICY

Malpractice consists of those acts that undermine the integrity and validity of assessment, the certification of qualifications, and/or damage the authority of those responsible for conducting the assessment and certification.

The centre will ask all learners to declare that their work is their own. For all internal assessments, the centre and its learners must provide a written declaration that the evidence is authentic and that the assessment was conducted under the requirements of the assessment specification, as set out by Signature.

The centre will take positive steps to prevent or reduce the occurrence of learner malpractice. These steps are:

- ▶ Using the induction period and the Course Handbook to inform learners of the centre's policy on malpractice and the penalties for attempted and actual incidents of malpractice.
- ▶ Introducing procedures for assessing work in a way that reduces or identifies malpractice, e.g. plagiarism, collusion, cheating, etc.

## Examples of Malpractice

The following are examples of malpractice by learners. This list is not exhaustive and other instances of malpractice may be considered by BSL First Limited at its discretion:

- ▶ Plagiarism by copying and passing off, as the learner's own, the whole or part(s) of another person's work, including artwork, images, words, computer generated work (including Internet sources), thoughts, inventions and/or discoveries whether published or not, with or without the originator's permission and without appropriately acknowledging the source
- ▶ Collusion by working collaboratively with other learners to produce work that is submitted as individual learner work.
- ▶ Impersonation by pretending to be someone else in order to produce the work for another or arranging for another to take one's place in an assessment/examination/test
- ▶ Fabrication of results and/or evidence
- ▶ Failing to abide by the instructions or advice of an assessor, a supervisor, an invigilator, or conditions in relation to the assessment/examination/test rules, regulations and security
- ▶ Misuse of assessment/examination material
- ▶ Introduction and/or use of unauthorised material contra to the requirements of supervised assessment/examination/test conditions, for example: notes, study guides, personal organisers, calculators, dictionaries (when prohibited), personal stereos, mobile phones or other similar electronic devices obtaining, receiving, exchanging or passing on information which could be assessment/examination/test related (or the attempt to) by means of talking or written papers/notes during supervised assessment/examination/test conditions
- ▶ Behaving in such a way as to undermine the integrity of the assessment/examination/test
- ▶ The alteration of any results document, including certificates
- ▶ Writing down questions during an examination/test and taking them out of the examination room to give to other learners
- ▶ Cheating to gain an unfair advantage.

# 27 Malpractice Policy

## Centre Staff Malpractice

The following are examples of malpractice by centre staff. The list is not exhaustive and other instances of malpractice may be considered by BSL First Limited at its discretion:

- ▶ Assisting learners in the production of work for assessment, where the support has the potential to influence the outcomes of assessment, for example where the assistance involves centre staff producing work for the learner
- ▶ Producing falsified witness statements, for example for evidence the learner has not generated allowing evidence, which is known by the staff member not to be the learner's own, to be included in a learner's assignment/task/portfolio/ coursework facilitating and allowing impersonation
- ▶ Misusing the conditions for special learner requirements, for example where learners are permitted support, such as an amanuensis, this is permissible up to the point where the support has the potential to influence the outcome of the assessment
- ▶ Failing to keep learner computer files secure
- ▶ Falsifying records/certificates, for example by alteration, substitution, or by fraud
- ▶ Fraudulent certificate claims, that is, claiming for a certificate prior to the learner completing all the requirements of assessment
- ▶ Failing to keep assessment/examination/test papers secure prior to the assessment/examination/test
- ▶ Failing to validate the identity of learners taking an examination/test obtaining unauthorised access to assessment/examination/test material prior to an assessment/examination/test.

## Penalties and Sanctions Applied by BSL First

Where malpractice against a member of staff or learner is proven, BSL First will have to consider whether the its professional integrity and reputation might be jeopardised if the member of staff or learner in question were to be involved in future activities with BSL First. BSL First may take action to protect its professional integrity and reputation. This action may involve:

- ▶ Refusing to register students for an assessment/examination in cases where malpractice has been proven
- ▶ Withholding the release of results/certificates
- ▶ Withholding test/examination papers if the security of a test/examination is considered at risk pending the outcome of the investigation
- ▶ Reserving the right to withdraw students from courses and training programmes
- ▶ Reserving the right to pass on information regarding malpractice to the examination body
- ▶ Ending supervision of Trainee Sign Language Interpreters and informing the NRCPD of malpractice



## Complaints regarding the building or facilities

If you would like to make a complaint about the building or the facilities available at the centre, you should discuss your concerns with your teacher in the first instance. If you feel that your teacher has not made reasonable adjustments or has not taken appropriate action then you should write to the Managing Director at [akbar.sikder@bslfirst.com](mailto:akbar.sikder@bslfirst.com).

## Complaints regarding a course

If you would like to make a complaint about the course structure or the quality of teaching, you should attempt to resolve the issue with your teacher in the first instance. If you feel that your teacher has not made reasonable adjustments or has not taken appropriate action then you should write to the Managing Director at [akbar.sikder@bslfirst.com](mailto:akbar.sikder@bslfirst.com).

The Managing Director will carry out a formal investigation into the complaint. This may include talking to the teacher and other students on the programme. The Managing Director will respond to the complainant with a report within six weeks.

If the learner has requested either a part or full refund, BSL First management will consider the request in accordance with the findings of the report. The final report will contain the final decision on any refund request. This decision should be reached within six weeks. This decision is final.

## Appealing against an external assessment decision

The awarding body is responsible for all external assessments. If you would like to appeal against an external assessment decision, you should contact BSL First within two weeks of receiving the result. The centre must agree that the appeal is viable and if so will initiate an appeal with the awarding body Signature. Appeals to Signature can only proceed through the registered centre. Signature's appeals process will then be followed.

More information about [Signature's appeals policy](#)

## Appealing against an internal assessment decision

Qualified A1 Assessors and Internal Quality Assurers at the centre are responsible for marking all internal assessments. You have the right to appeal against any internal assessment decision. You should ask your assessor to refer the assessment to be second marked by another A1 Assessor or Internal Quality Assurer. This should be done within two weeks of receiving results.

If you disagree with the second marker then you should ask for the assessment to be referred to the awarding body. The awarding body will send the assessment to an external assessor. The external assessor's decision is final.



# DATA PROTECTION POLICY

This policy applies to all personal data collected and processed by BSL First in the conduct of its business, in electronic format, in any medium and within structured paper filing systems. BSL First does not collect or process sensitive personal data.

BSL First needs to collect and process personal data about people, including staff and individuals with whom it deals with, in order to operate its daily business and for the organisation to operate effectively.

This policy applies to all BSL First employed and freelance staff, students, sub-contractors and visitors. Disciplinary action may be taken against parties failing to comply with this policy.

## **BSL First adheres to the following values when processing personal data:**

- ▶ Individuals will be made aware that their information has been collected, and the intended use of the data specified either on collection. This may be verbally or written.
- ▶ Personal data will be collected and processed only to the extent that it is needed to fulfil business needs or legal requirements.
- ▶ Personal data held will be kept up to date and accurate.
- ▶ Personal data will be processed in accordance with the rights of the individuals about whom the personal data are held.
- ▶ Appropriate technical, organisational and administrative security measures to safeguard personal data will be in place.
- ▶ Staff will report any actual, near miss, or suspected data breaches to the Managing Director for investigation. Lessons learned during the investigation of breaches will be relayed to those processing information to enable necessary improvements to be made.
- ▶ Any unauthorised use of corporate email by staff, including sending of sensitive or personal data to unauthorised persons, or use that brings BSL First into disrepute will be regarded as a breach of this policy.
- ▶ Staff will use appropriate protective markings to protect and secure any document containing personal information. In this way informing recipients of the document of the measures that need to be employed for its appropriate handling.
- ▶ Members of staff will have access to personal data only where it is required as part of their functional remit.
- ▶ Data subjects, who wish to make a comment or complaint about how BSL First is processing their data, or about BSL First's handling of their request for information, should contact the Managing Director at [akbar.sikder@bslfirst.com](mailto:akbar.sikder@bslfirst.com).
- ▶ A data subject's personal information will not be disclosed to them until their identity has been verified.



## Section 1: Introduction

This Extenuating Circumstances policy is to be used where circumstances are believed to be unforeseen, arising close to or during assessment and have had a significant and detrimental impact on the student's ability to comply with the demands of the assessment or attendance on a course.

The procedure applies to all forms of assessment which:

- ▶ Have been missed (in the case of timetabled assessments)
- ▶ Have been completed after the published deadline (in the case of a non-timetabled assessment)
- ▶ It is anticipated will be completed after the published deadline (in the case of a non-timetabled assessment)
- ▶ Have been attempted in the presence of extenuating circumstances (in the case of either a timetabled or non-timetabled assessment)

Where a student is aware of a disability or long-term medical condition, or other circumstances that are expected to have an impact on their performance in assessment, they should make their teacher aware of their circumstances at the earliest possible opportunity so that appropriate arrangements can be put in place.

The following procedure is also to be used in cases where circumstances are unforeseen, arising close to or during assessment. By missing an assessment or a class, the student will receive a mark of 0 if the examination body or BSL First decides that the assessment was missed without 'sufficient cause'.

## Section 2: Non-compliance with the Assessment Requirement(s)

A student who is unable to comply with the published timetabled assessment requirement(s) must, at the earliest possible opportunity, contact the course administrator with a full explanation.

Coursework extension requests and other requests relating to coursework should be made to the member of staff responsible for the assessment prior to the published submission date with supporting evidence. If an extension is agreed, the revised submission date should be confirmed in writing, or by email, by the course administrator.

The extenuating circumstances request should be submitted as soon as the student knows that s/he will not comply with the assessment requirement(s). The absolute latest date for submission is the seventh working day after the affected assessment. If the request is not submitted within this period, the student may receive a mark of 0 for the assessment(s).

BSL First reserves the right as to whether to consider extenuating circumstances claims that are submitted after the seventh working day from the affected assessment. BSL First is entitled to reject automatically and without consideration all extenuating circumstances claims that are submitted after the deadline above. The only exception to this provision is where the student provides authoritative evidence (e.g. from a doctor) that they were incapacitated through illness and unable to submit the extenuating circumstances any earlier. Where such an exception is made, the student's claim will be considered under this policy without prejudice.

Notwithstanding the above, extenuating circumstances claims will in any case not be considered if they are submitted more than one month after notification of the outcome of an examination board.

All claims of extenuation made under this policy need to be supported by independent, reliable, documentary evidence of inability to undertake the assessment.

Upon receipt of a written claim, BSL First Limited will determine whether or not the student has 'sufficient cause' for non-compliance with the requirements of the assessment.

It is acknowledged that there may be occasions where the supporting evidence is felt to be particularly sensitive. In such cases, students may request that the claim of extenuation be given limited and minimal circulation. BSL First will adhere to its Data Protection Policy in all cases when handling supporting evidence.

# 31 Extenuating Circumstances Policy

## Section 3: Impaired Performance in a Completed Assessment

Where an assessment is completed but the student believes that there were extenuating circumstances that affected their performance, §2 of this policy (see above) should be followed.

## Section 4: Standard of Evidence

The 'burden of proof' to support a claim on extenuation lies with the student at all times. Evidence presented by students must meet the following standards and should:

- ▶ Be written by appropriately qualified professionals who are independent to the student
- ▶ Be on headed paper and signed and dated by the author. Evidence presented by email may be acceptable if the author has sent the email from the official domain name of the author's organisation
- ▶ Be dated at the time the reported extenuating circumstances took place and not be retrospective
- ▶ Be in English or in BSL. It is the student's responsibility to provide supporting documentation and any translation should be undertaken by an accredited translator
- ▶ Be original. Copies of supporting evidence will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances
- ▶ Be unaltered by the student. Documentation that has been amended for any reason will be deemed inadmissible
- ▶ BSL First should only uphold a student's claim of extenuating circumstances when, in their opinion, all of the above are fully satisfied



# 32 Extenuating Circumstances Policy

## Section 5: Acceptable Circumstances

The following gives examples of the kind of acceptable circumstances (i.e. where the student has demonstrated 'sufficient cause') and the associated evidence that is normally required. This is given without prejudice and for general guidance. It is not exhaustive, definitive or prescriptive. BSL First considers each claim of extenuating circumstances on its own merits and as an individual case.

### ▶ Long-Term Illness

An original medical certificate or letter from an appropriate medical professional (or equivalent) confirming the nature of the illness and the likely impact it has had on the student's ability to undertake formal assessment.

### ▶ Short-Term Illness

Short-term illness (less than 7 days) will not normally be regarded as an extenuating circumstance with regard to assessed coursework, where the student is given a number of weeks/months to complete and submit such work. It shall be for the teacher or Managing Director to decide whether this has affected the student's performance and whether an extension to a deadline should be granted.

### ▶ Bereavement

Where there is a demonstrably close relationship between the student and the deceased, a death certificate or a letter confirming the death from an independent person (usually not a family member) with their contact details provided.

### ▶ Acute Personal/Emotional Circumstances

An original medical certificate or letter from an appropriate medical professional (or equivalent) confirming the nature of the illness and/or circumstances and the likely impact it has had on the student's ability to undertake formal assessment.

### ▶ Hospitalisation

A medical letter/certificate from the relevant hospital confirming the nature and severity of the student's circumstances and the likely impact it has had on the student's ability to undertake formal assessment.

### ▶ Family illness

A medical certificate/letter from an independent medical professional confirming the nature and severity of the family circumstances and the likely impact it has had on the student's ability to undertake formal assessment.

### ▶ Victim of Crime

A written statement of events, which is supported by written evidence from the Police (including a crime reference number). Where relevant, an original medical certificate or letter from an appropriate medical professional (or equivalent) confirming the impact the reported crime has had on the student's ability to undertake formal assessment.

### ▶ Religious Observance

If the student has submitted an extenuating circumstances request by the required deadline and it has not been possible to make alternative arrangements, BSL First should take reasonable steps to provide an alternative assessment opportunity. Absence from an assessment for reason of religious observance, where no extenuating circumstances request has been submitted, or where the relevant permission for absence has not been obtained prior to the assessment, will not be deemed an acceptable extenuating circumstance.

If a student has made, or is making, a complaint under the Complaints and Appeals Policy and feels that the matters covered by that complaint may have affected their assessment performance, an extenuating circumstances request should be submitted in the normal way with appropriate evidence, as detailed in section 4 of this policy.



# 33 Extenuating Circumstances Policy

## Section 6: Confidentiality of Evidence

The confidential nature of information provided by students will be respected by BSL First in accordance with its Data Protection Policy.

Confidential information will only be shared within the company on a 'need to know' basis. Any student wishing to restrict the sharing of such information should make his/her wishes known to the Managing Director, preferably in writing. Students should be aware that BSL First cannot respond to a student's circumstances if it remains unaware of relevant information.

Normally such wishes will be respected unless to do so would be against the best interests of the BSL First community or the interests of safety or security of any person.

## Section 7: Unacceptable Circumstances

The following gives examples of circumstances that are likely to be considered as unacceptable (i.e. where the student has NOT demonstrated 'sufficient cause'). This is given for general guidance and is not exhaustive, definitive or prescriptive. BSL First considers each claim of extenuating circumstances on its own merits and as an individual case.

### ▶ **Transport issues**

It is expected that students will ensure that they arrive at the assessment on time, irrespective of the form of transport used or relied upon. An inability to travel as a result of circumstances beyond the student's control may though constitute sufficient cause.

### ▶ **Pre-booked holidays**

It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they are available for all assessments. All holidays should take place at a time that will not impact on the student's availability to undertake or prepare for an assessment.

### ▶ **Misreading the examination timetable**

It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they know and remember the location, time and duration of all formal assessments.

### ▶ **Paid employment or voluntary work**

It is expected that students will ensure that any paid employment or voluntary work does not interfere with their ability to engage with their studies or assessments.

### ▶ **'Exam Stress'**

Feeling 'below par' leading up to and during an assessment(s) is a common experience of many students. It is not considered to be an acceptable extenuating circumstance.

### ▶ **IT and/or Computer failure**

Loss or corruption of files is not an acceptable extenuating circumstance. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all work, which is electronically stored, generated and/or submitted, is sufficiently backed up.

### ▶ **Criminal conviction**

If a student is convicted of a criminal offence any disruption caused by the investigation or sentence is not an acceptable extenuating circumstance.



# EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

BSL First is committed to supporting, developing and promoting equality and diversity in all of its practices and activities and aims to establish an inclusive culture free from discrimination and based upon the values of dignity, courtesy and respect.

BSL First is committed to eliminating discrimination and advancing equality on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief (including lack of belief), sex and sexual orientation and to fostering good relations between different groups.

This commitment supports the organisational principles of the company and upholds the ethos of establishing a culture based on dignity, courtesy and respect.

This is an over-arching policy designed to outline the fundamental principles of BSL First's commitment to equality and diversity and will be supported by specific equality policies and action plans.

The policy applies to all students, applicants for training courses, all applicants for posts with the company, all staff employed on a full time or part-time basis, all staff on permanent or temporary contracts, freelance staff and sub-contractors undertaking work on behalf of BSL First, and all visitors.

It is incumbent upon all members of the BSL First community to behave with dignity, courtesy and respect and to act in a manner that does not unlawfully discriminate at all times.

## Role of Learners

- ▶ To actively encourage non-discriminatory practices and to report any incidences of behaviour that fail to comply with this policy
- ▶ To support the aims of the BSL First Equality and Diversity policy
- ▶ To be aware of equality and diversity issues.

## Role of Managing Director

- ▶ To ensure that recruitment advertising, selection and appointment procedures, performance management processes and disciplinary grievance processes are fair and transparent and are consistently applied.
- ▶ To monitor employment equality data and to publish the findings of monitoring activities, as appropriate.
- ▶ To investigate all matters of alleged discrimination, harassment and inappropriate behaviour promptly and thoroughly.
- ▶ To ensure that equality and diversity issues are considered as part of the curriculum planning processes.

## Role of Teaching Staff

- ▶ To ensure that they work to promote equality and diversity as an integral part of the services they provide and the policies and procedures they both develop and apply.



# 35 Equality and Diversity Policy

## Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment advertising will encourage applications from all sectors of the community reflecting BSL First's commitment to equality and diversity.

Recruitment advertising will appear in publications appropriate to the audience capable of producing the best candidates (subject to budget considerations).

Job descriptions, person specifications and recruitment advertisements will be written or signed on the basis of the essential and justifiable requirements of the position.

Shortlisting, appointment and rejection decisions will be transparent and justifiable and will be supported by either written or signed comments. It is the candidate's responsibility to commission a translation, if required.

All information contained in prospectuses, websites and other material used in the recruitment of learners should promote equality of opportunity.

All staff involved in the recruitment, selection and admission of students will have an awareness of equality and diversity.

## Discipline and Grievance

Disciplinary and grievance procedures will be applied fairly and transparently for all staff.

Allegations of discrimination, harassment or inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with under the appropriate disciplinary procedures for staff.

## Bilingual Policy

BSL First operates a bilingual policy that requires all administrative documentation, including company policies, to be available in both English and British Sign Language.

BSL First reserves the right to produce any documentation, including assessment documents (such as assessment feedback), in either English or British Sign Language. It is the learner's responsibility to commission a translation, if required.



## Before the Exam

### Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations

BSL First Limited works to the guidelines specified in its Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration Policy. Any reasonable adjustment needs must be declared on the course application form when applying for the course, or to the course teacher at the start of the course. Any application for special consideration during classes and exams must be made at the beginning of the course.

### Complaints and Appeals

Complaints or appeals on the grounds that BSL First failed to make reasonable adjustment or special consideration will not be upheld if a learner has failed to inform the centre of their need for reasonable adjustment or special consideration.

### Assessment Dates

All assessments will take place during normal classroom hours.

The provisional date(s) of the assessment(s) will be published in a course timetable and distributed to students at the beginning of the course. The teacher will then confirm the exam date(s) with the students during normal class hours.

The confirmed assessment date is fixed and cannot be changed under any circumstances.

Students who were absent at the time the assessment date was confirmed must inform their teacher as soon as practically possible if they cannot make the agreed assessment date.

BSL First cannot guarantee that learners who are unable to make the agreed assessment date will be offered an alternative date.

Learners who cannot make the agreed assessment date due to extenuating circumstances should follow the guidance set out in the Extenuating Circumstances Policy.

Where applicable, learners will be given a time-slot for their exam.

Teachers will carry out mock assessments with all students before their official assessment (if applicable).

# 37 Examinations Policy

## Taking the Assessment

Learners must arrive 10 minutes before their allocated time slot.

Preparation will take place in an allocated preparation room. This will be clearly marked by the appropriate sign outside the room and exam regulations will be clearly displayed inside the waiting room.

Preparation and exams must take place under exam conditions, that is, a candidate must not accept help from anyone during preparation and the assessment.

No unauthorised personnel are allowed in the preparation or exam room. Those allowed are teachers, assessors, candidates and an invigilator.

No unauthorised items are allowed in the waiting room. Introduction of unauthorised items may be considered malpractice and result in disqualification (see Malpractice Policy for list of unauthorised items).

All mobile phones and electronic equipment must be switched off.

The teacher or assessor will collect the candidate from the preparation room and take him/her to the exam room to complete the assessment.

## After the Exam

When an assessment is finished, the candidate should leave the building unless asked to stay. There should be no contact between learners who have finished an assessment and those preparing for one.

## Exam Results

The course administrator will email all learners their results 3-5 working days after the centre has received the results from the awarding body.

BSL First administration will notify learners when certificates are ready for collection from the main office.



## Introduction

This policy sets out how BSL First aims to support learners in the event of centre approval or qualification approval being withdrawn by an Awarding Body.

This policy is aimed at all BSL First stakeholders including learners, centres, and other parties involved in any aspect of BSL First qualification and endorsed learning provision.

## Centre withdrawal of a qualification

In the event that BSL First decides to no longer offer a qualification, it will provide Signature with 8 weeks' notice via submitting a qualification withdrawal form with details of the withdrawal and rationale and details of any learners that may be affected.

## Signature withdrawal of centre approval to offer a qualification

If Signature decides to sanction a centre and withdraw its approval to offer a qualification, it will do so in accordance with its Sanctions Policy and will communicate this decision to the centre in accordance with the arrangements outlined in the Sanctions Policy.

## Centres which cease to operate

In some instances, centres may cease to operate due to financial circumstances and may have no opportunity to provide Signature with due notice. In such circumstances once Signature is informed of the situation (e.g. by a member of staff at, or Learners from, the Centre) BSL First will implement the following arrangements where appropriate:

1. Upon receipt of the notification, the Head of Compliance and Quality Assurance will be responsible for taking the request forward and for ensuring that BSL First takes all reasonable steps to protect the interests of any learners currently registered on the qualification(s). This will include:
2. Work with Signature and/or any Learners affected by the withdrawal in order to transfer them – where possible and feasible – to another Centre to enable them to carry on with the qualification(s) they are registered on.
3. If no alternative Centres are available/suitable for any Learners affected by the withdrawal, and/or the Learners do not wish to carry on with the qualification(s), they will seek to ensure the Learners are certificated for any units they have completed to date in accordance with the requirements of the associated qualification specification(s).

Update the Centre's record upon activation of the withdrawal to reflect the fact the Centre is no longer approved to offer the qualification(s).

In accordance with BSL First's Refund Policy, learners are entitled to receive a full refund of course fees in the event that they are unable to complete their course due to the Centre ceasing to operate.

At all times, the Head of Compliance and Quality Assurance will seek to ensure that all parties affected by the withdrawal are kept appropriately informed throughout.

## What if learners are unhappy about the situation?

If any learners are unhappy with the situation or with how BSL First may have dealt with the withdrawal they should contact Signature. If they are still unhappy they can then take the matter through Signature's Complaints Policy.

# REFUND POLICY

## **A full refund will be made in the following circumstances:**

1. BSL First Limited decides to cancel a programme. A full refund, minus any credit/debit or payment processing fees, will be made for all cancellations, regardless of whether the cancellation was made before the course has started or at some point during the course.
2. A full refund will be made in the case where a learner decides to withdraw from the course within two weeks of starting the course.
3. Learners who are required to attend an interview for his or her programme must pay the deposit before the interview date. A full refund, minus any credit/debit or payment processing fees, will be made for learners who are unsuccessful in the interview.

## **A part refund will be made in the following circumstances:**

1. A learner is unable to complete the course due to acceptable extenuating circumstances, as detailed in the Extenuating Circumstances Policy. The amount to be refunded is dependent on how much time has lapsed since the learner has started the course.
2. A learner is forced to withdraw from their course due to a complaint that he or she has made regarding the administration, teaching or other aspect of the course. BSL First Limited reserves the right to consider each refund application on an individual basis. The amount to be refunded is dependent on the specific circumstances, the results of any investigation and the amount of time that has lapsed since the learner has started the course.

## **No refund will be made in the following circumstances:**

1. A learner is unable to complete the course due to unacceptable extenuating circumstances, as detailed in the Extenuating Circumstances Policy.
2. A learner is forced to withdraw due to poor attendance, poor organisation or not keeping up with homework.
3. A learner does not finish the course.
4. A learner fails an exam or assessment decision.
5. A learner fails to inform BSL First that he or she has decided to withdraw from the course. Learners must inform his or her teacher of his or her intention to withdraw from the course.
6. If the learner is required to attend an interview for his/her chosen course and is offered a place on the course is not entitled to a refund of the deposit if he/she decides not to accept his/her offer of a place.

