

BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE 1

Course Handbook

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1. 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 Learner Agreement.**



1.1 About BSL First

We are an independent specialist provider of sign language interpreting and translation services, as well as professional qualifications in British Sign Language, sign language interpreting and sign language translation.

1.2 Our Courses

We are accredited to deliver all of the Signature qualifications in British Sign Language, Sign Language Interpreting, Sign Language Translation and Communication Support.

- ✓ 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 and Translation
- ✓ Signature Level 3 Award in Modifying Written English Texts for Deaf People

1.3 Our Mission

We are one of the largest and top training providers for sign language interpreting and translation courses in the country. In 2014 we were nominated for the Signature Centre of the Year Award and in 2022 we won the SME News 'best sign language interpretation and translation specialists' award. In 2022, Akbar Sikder, our director, won the Interpreters of Colour Network Evolution Award in recognition of his 'outstanding contribution to the profession and network'. 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 and knowledge for a successful career in interpreting, translation, communication support or any other career involving BSL.

1.4 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: <https://bslfirst.com/about-us/our-team/>

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Akbar Sikder'.

Akbar Sikder BA, MA, RSLI, RSLT, A1
Director

2. Course Overview

The aim of this course is to introduce learners to the basics of British Sign Language. Teaching begins by exploring the visual-gestural modality of human language. You will learn about deaf people and their language and culture. There is an emphasis on building vocabulary relating to a wide range of topics, including fingerspelling, food and drink, transport, directions, holiday, family, hobbies, leisure activities, work and school.

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 productive and receptive skills by means of group work, pair work, role-plays, games, presentations and discussions.

The Level 1 BSL course is useful for anybody who is in regular contact with deaf people, be it through work or social life.

2.1 Course Content

The course is made up of 50 hours of guided learning hours and 50 hours of structured independent study (total 100 hours). The guided learning sessions are delivered through 2-hour weekly evening sessions over 25 weeks. This is followed by an additional 3 hours of structured independent study per week, which is completed through Moodle, our e-learning platform.

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

Unit	Title	Topics covered
101	Introduction to British Sign Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manual alphabet (finger spelling) • Attracting the attention of a deaf person/deaf people • Meeting familiar and unfamiliar people • Requesting clarification • Leave taking • Basic numbers • Weather • Travelling • Giving and describing simple directions
102	Conversational British Sign Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describing people • Giving and receiving information about people • Describing animals • Describing objects and furniture • Locations • Using the local number system • Give information and ask about age • Telling the time • Ask for and given information about money • Days, weeks and years (the calendar) • Describing interests and activities at home • Describing day-to-day activities of self and others • Sharing information about food and drink
103	Communicate in British Sign Language about everyday life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving and asking for directions in a building • Describing places and buildings • Travelling • Giving and asking for information about everyday life • Giving and asking for information about people • Commenting on and describing the weather • Using the local number system • Telling the time • Asking for and giving calendar information

2.2 Assessment

Unit	Topic	Assessment
101	Introduction to BSL	Conversation with teacher (4-5 minutes)
102	Conversational skills	Conversation with teacher (4-5 minutes)
103	Everyday life	Conversation with teacher (4-5 minutes)

The exams will be video recorded and sent to the exam board for marking. Each assessment is taken separately but you must pass all assessments in order to achieve full the qualification.

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.

2.3 Feedback and Tutorials

Feedback is a vital part of your development. Your teacher will give you informal feedback every week throughout the course and may also arrange formal one-to-one tutorials with you to get you detailed feedback. It is your responsibility to keep a record of your feedback.

2.4 Homework and Independent Learning

In addition to the guided learning hours in the classroom, you are required to undertake around 3 hours of independent study every 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.

3. Progression and Careers

3.1 Progression

When you have completed this course, you will be able to further develop your linguistic skills by progressing onto the Level 2 Certificate in British Sign Language course and then on to professional training in communication support, interpreting and/or translation.

You can download our Guide to BSL Courses from our website: www.bslfirst.com.

3.2 Careers

Learning BSL isn't just fun, for many it's the starting point of a new and exciting career, or professional development in your current role. Popular careers include BSL/English Interpreter, BSL/English Translator, Communication Support Worker, Teacher of the Deaf and BSL Teacher. Our courses are designed to respond to industry demand, which means they won't just prepare you for the assessment, but also they will equip you with the skills to succeed in your chosen career, or any other career involving the use of BSL.

Our teachers have a wealth of knowledge and experience in British Sign Language, teaching, interpreting, translation and communication support, so no matter what your goals are we will help to achieve them.

Here are some popular careers that require knowledge and skills in BSL.

- BSL/English Interpreter
- International Sign Interpreter
- BSL/English Translator
- Communication Support Worker
- Teacher of the Deaf
- BSL Teaching Assistant
- Educational Communication Support Worker
- BSL Support Worker
- Communicator Guide
- BSL Teacher
- Notetaker
- Lipspeaker
- Deafblind Interpreter

4. Entry Requirements

There are no entry requirements for this course.

5. Additional Support

5.1 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 lesson by lesson basis to complement and reinforce learning in the classroom.

5.2 Peer Support

You will have access to a separate Zoom meeting to meet with other students in between classes to practise with each other.

5.3 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 extra (contact the office for current rates).

5.4 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. Please contact the main office at admin@bslfirst.com to book your exam re-sit.

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) plus a tuition fee (contact the office for current rates). If you fail one of your exams, we will contact you with information on what to do next.

5.5 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: <https://www.signaturelearninghub.co.uk/>

5.6 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: www.signworldlearn.com

5.7 TOTUM Student Card

Previously the NUS card, a TOTUM card gives you student discounts at thousands of high street shops, including Apple, Currys/PC World and more, which will help you to buy new discounted equipment and materials for your new course. You can find more information here: <https://www.totum.com/>

6. Centre Contacts

You can see a full list of our teaching staff and their bios on our website: <https://bslfirst.com/about-us/teaching-team/>



**Andrew Stanley BSc, PGCE, A1, V1
Managing Director**

Contact: andrew.stanley@bslfirst.com

Andrew is the Managing Director and responsible for all British Sign Language courses.

Contact Andrew for:

- ✓ General enquiries about BSL courses
- ✓ Exams, resits, results and certificates
- ✓ Complaints and concerns



**Akbar Sikder BA, MA, RSLI, RSLT, A1
Executive Director**

Contact: akbar.sikder@bslfirst.com

Akbar is the Executive Director has overall responsibility for the centre.

Contact Akbar for:

- ✓ Technical issues with Moodle, Zoom or Panopto
- ✓ Feedback on Moodle and course resources
- ✓ Payments and course fees



BSL Teachers

Contacts:

stefania.bella@bslfirst.com
mohsin.patel@bslfirst.com
cathy.nassimi-green@bslfirst.com
andrew.stanley@bslfirst.com

Our BSL teachers are responsible for successful delivery of the course and to support students with their learning.

Contact your teacher for:

- ✓ Informing of lateness and absences
- ✓ Requesting support in class
- ✓ Requesting reasonable adjustments
- ✓ Feedback about the class
- ✓ Concerns about the teaching or delivery

7. Using Moodle

Moodle is our online Learning Management System. All course materials and learning resources are stored on Moodle. Students also complete all assessments, and receive their feedback, through Moodle. It is therefore important that you know how to access and use Moodle.

We understand that learning a new platform does not come naturally to many people, so we have produced plenty of self help guides to support you. You can contact us if you require additional technical support or troubleshooting.

7.1 How to log in to Moodle

- 1) Go to moodle.bslfirst.com
- 2) Log in with the username and password emailed to you when you enrolled on the course

7.2 Technical requirements

Moodle works best when using Google Chrome browser on a desktop computer or laptop. There is also a desktop app, but this has limited features and we do not recommend it. We recommend using Moodle through the Google Chrome web browser.

If you have an Apple device, please note that Moodle does not work with Safari browser. Please ensure you download Google Chrome and use Moodle through Google Chrome only.

There is also a Moodle app for iPhone, which is handy for checking Moodle when on the go. You can download the Moodle app from the app store (and then follow the steps in section 8.3)

7.3 Moodle app for iPhone and iPad

- 1) Go to the Apple or Android app store (depending on which device you have)
- 2) Search for Moodle and download the app
- 3) Enter the BSL First Moodle site: moodle.bslfirst.com
- 4) Log in with your Moodle username and password

7.4 How to submit an assignment

- 1) Find the assignment you want to submit and click to open

Assessment Tasks

- Learning Journal 6**
Not submitted
- P1 Assessment 4: Prepare for interpreting assignments (2/4)**
Not submitted
Due 1 April 2022
- Mock Assessment: BSL presentation on employment**
Not submitted
Due 1 April 2022

2) Click on 'Add submission'

PI Assessment 4: Prepare for interpreting assignments
(2/4)

Part 1 Assessment 4: Prepare for interpreting assignments (2/4)

- Total of 4x samples from the following:
 - 1-way interpreting L2>L1
 - 1-way interpreting L1>L2
 - 2-way interpreting
 - Sight translation
- Evidence must show preparation of both interpreting and translation assignments
- At least 1 sample to show planning for co/team-working situations
- Minimum 2,000 words (or 20 minutes structured BSL) for each sample
- Must draw upon references from the wider interpreting and translation studies literature
- May be completed in written English or BSL

Discourse map template	15 January 2021, 3:31 PM
Harrington and Turner Preparing for Assignments	15 January 2021, 3:31 PM
Preparation Checklist Template	15 January 2021, 3:31 PM
SPEAKING template	15 January 2021, 3:31 PM
TERPCO template	15 January 2021, 3:31 PM

Submission status

Attempt number	This is attempt 1.
Submission status	No attempt
Grading status	Not marked
Due date	Friday, 1 April 2022, 6:00 PM
Time remaining	44 days 7 hours
Last modified	-
Submission comments	Comments (0)

Add submission

You have not made a submission yet.

3) Drag the files you want to upload or click on the document icon. Click save changes.

PI Assessment 4: Prepare for interpreting assignments
(2/4)

Part 1 Assessment 4: Prepare for interpreting assignments (2/4)

- Total of 4x samples from the following:
 - 1-way interpreting L2>L1
 - 1-way interpreting L1>L2
 - 2-way interpreting
 - Sight translation
- Evidence must show preparation of both interpreting and translation assignments
- At least 1 sample to show planning for co/team-working situations
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SPEAKING template	15 January 2021, 3:31 PM
TERPCO template	15 January 2021, 3:31 PM

File submissions

Maximum file size: 64MB, maximum number of files: 20

Files

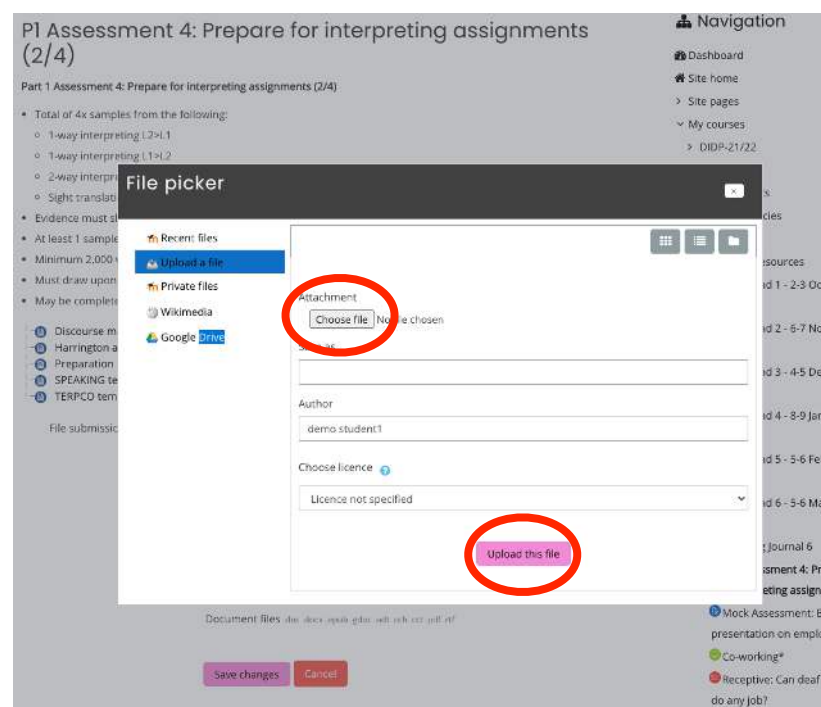
You can drag and drop files here to add them.

Accepted file types:

Document files .doc .docx .epub .gdoc .odt .ott .pdf .rtf

Save changes

Cancel



4) You will see the file has been uploaded and is in draft. At this stage, you can still edit the submission if required. If you are ready to submit the assignment, click 'Submit assignment'. You won't be able to make any more changes to the assignment after you have submitted.

Submission status

Attempt number	This is attempt 1.
Submission status	Draft (not submitted)
Grading status	Not marked
Due date	Friday, 1 April 2022, 6:00 PM
Time remaining	44 days 7 hours
Last modified	Wednesday, 16 February 2022, 9:05 AM
File submissions	<div> Glossary Links.docx 16 February 2022, 9:05 AM </div>

Submission comments

► Comments (0)

Edit submission

Remove submission

You can still make changes to your submission.

Submit assignment

5) Tick the plagiarism disclaimer and click 'Continue'

Confirm submission

☒ This submission is my own work, except where I have acknowledged the use of the works of other people.

Are you sure you want to submit your work for grading? You will not be able to make any more changes.

[Continue](#) [Cancel](#)

There are required fields in this form marked

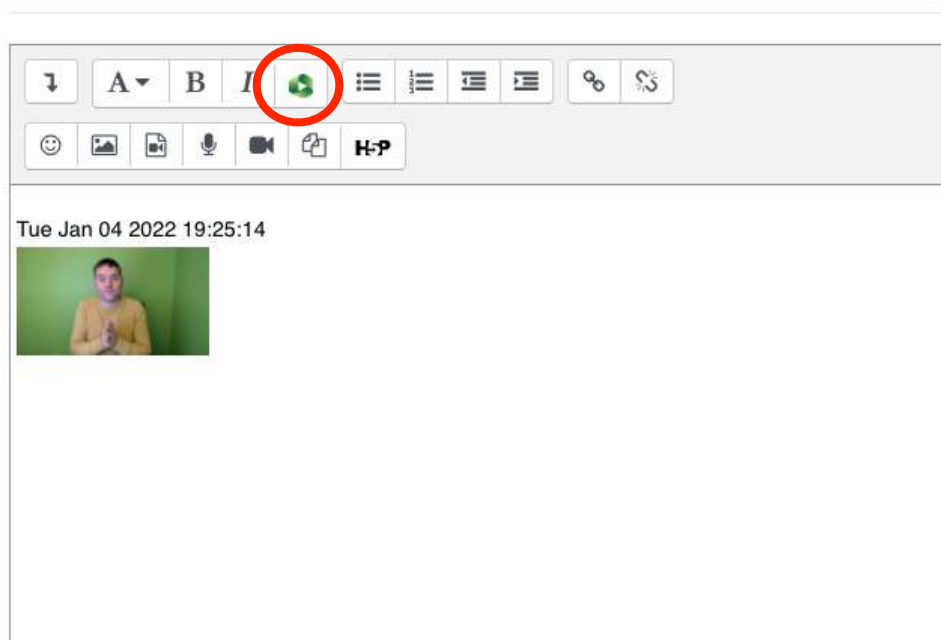
6) You will see the submission status change to green 'Submitted for grading'. This means your work has been successfully submitted.

Submission status

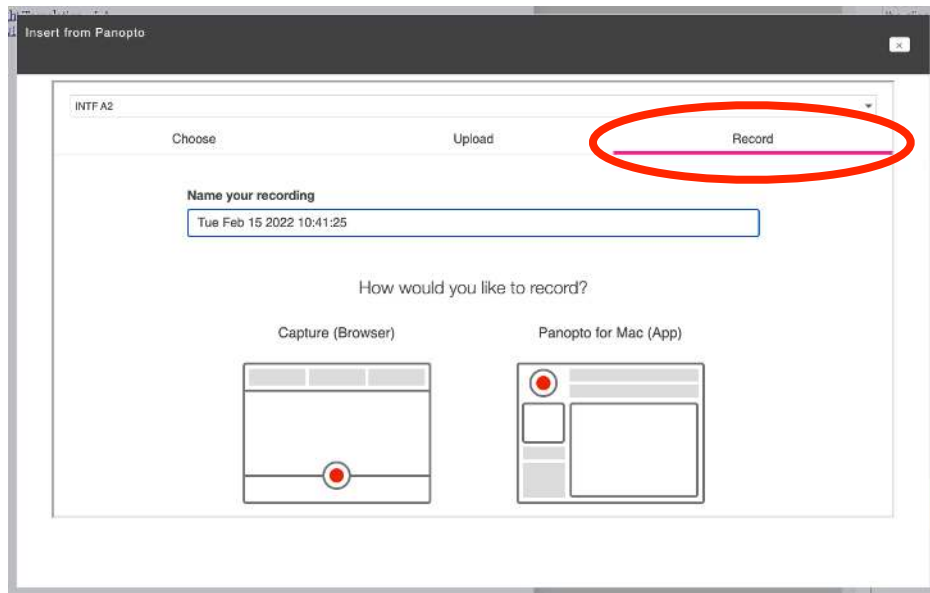
Attempt number	This is attempt 1.
Submission status	Submitted for grading
Grading status	Not marked
Due date	Friday, 1 April 2022, 6:00 PM
Time remaining	44 days 7 hours
Last modified	Wednesday, 16 February 2022, 9:06 AM
File submissions	Glossary Links.docx 16 February 2022, 9:05 AM
Submission comments	► Comments (0)

7.5 How to add a video in Moodle using Panopto

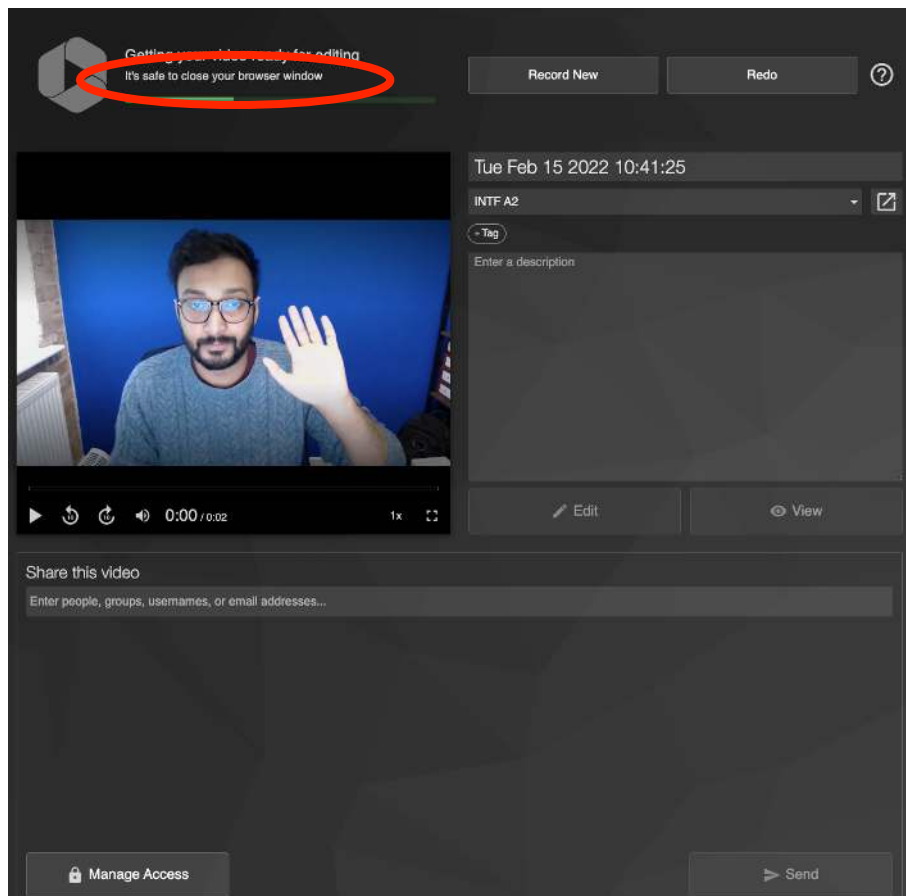
1) In the online text box, click on the green Panopto button - this will open the Panopto pop up



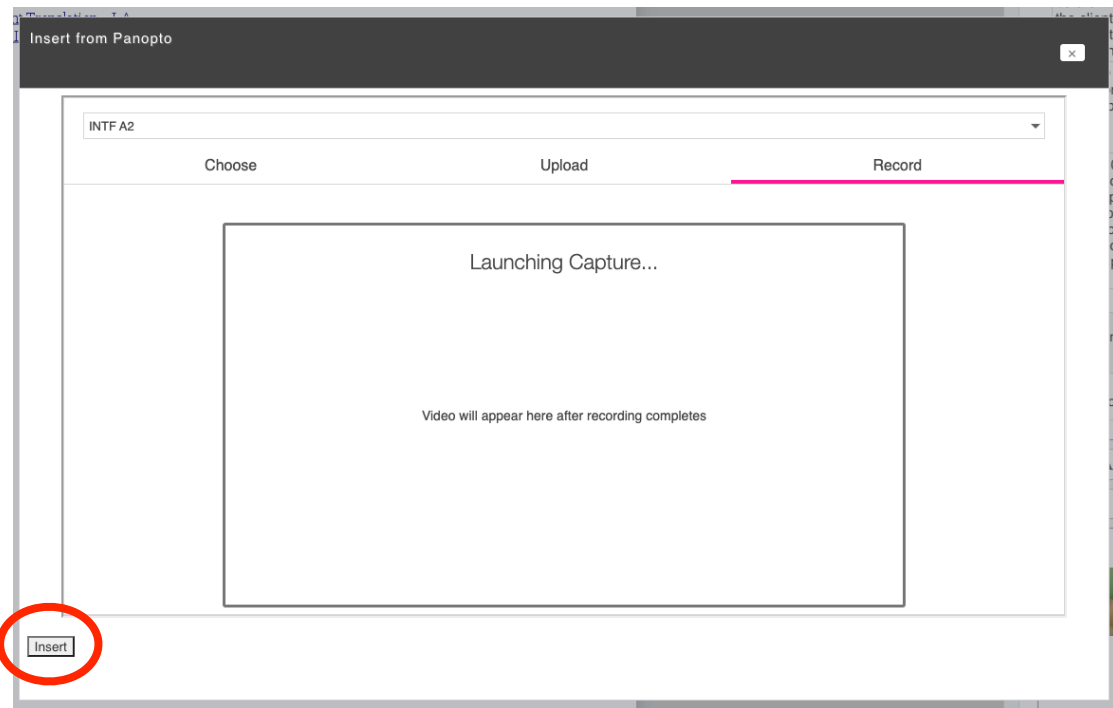
- 2) To record a new video - click on 'Record' then choose if you want to record in your browser or in your desktop app. You can also choose a video if it's already stored in your Panopto account, or you can upload a video from your computer. If you have recorded on your phone using the Panopto app, it will automatically be sent to the Panopto cloud, so you can simply search for the clip and insert.



- 3) Record your video and wait until it says it safe to close the browser. Close the browser and return to Moodle.



4) Click on 'insert' to insert your video into the Feedback box



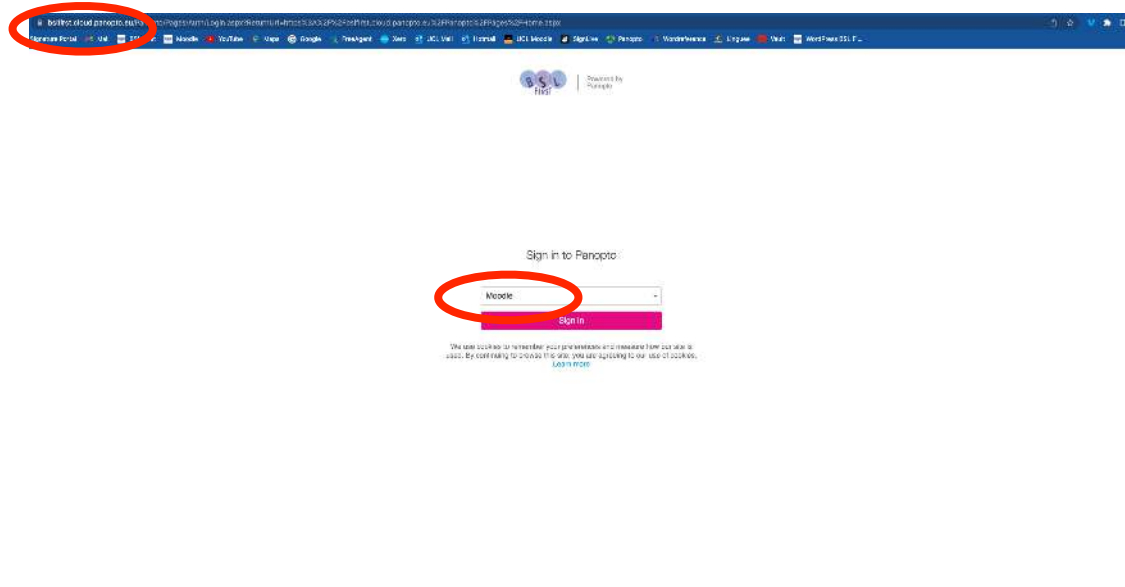
7.6 Moodle help centre

For in-depth support on using Moodle, you can visit the Moodle help centre here: <https://moodle.org/course/view.php?id=5>

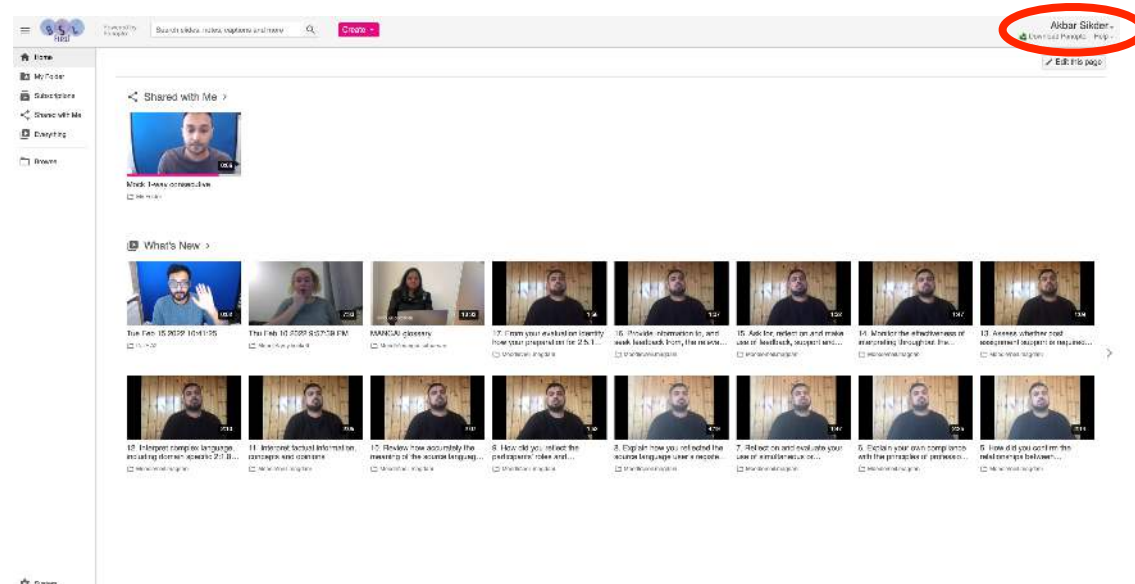
8. How to use Panopto

8.1 How to log into Panopto

- 1) We have our own Panopto site, which you must log into: www.bslfirst.cloud.panopto.eu (you can also click on the Panopto button on our website: www.bslfirst.com)
- 2) Select 'log in with Moodle' - it is the same log in details as you use to access Moodle, you do not need a separate log in.



- 3) You will see your Panopto dashboard - check your name is in the top right hand corner

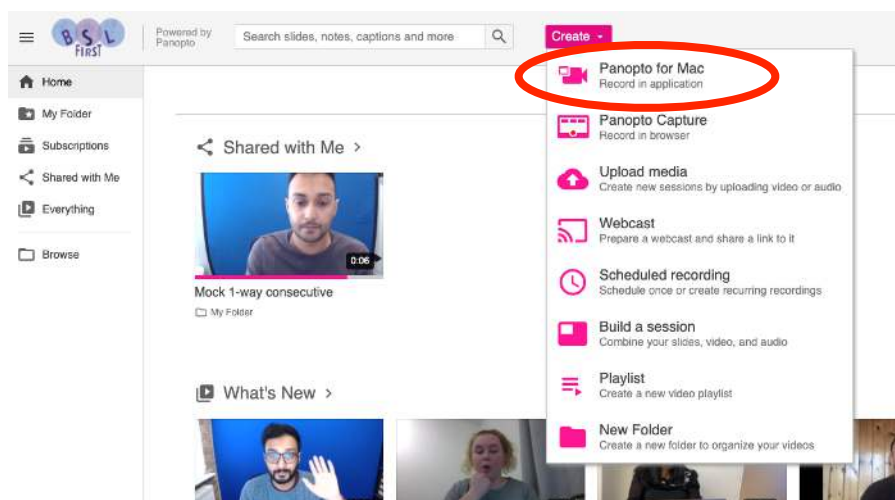


8.2 Downloading the Panopto mobile app

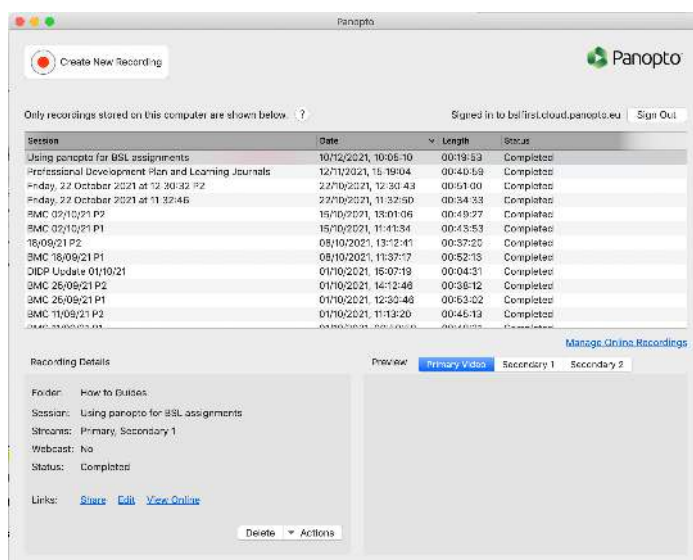
- 1) Depending on which phone you have, go to the Apple or Android app store. Search Panopto and download the app.
- 2) Open the app and enter the URL for the BSL First site: bslfirst.cloud.panopto.eu
- 3) This will take you to our site where you can log in with your normal Moodle log in details
- 4) When you have logged in, you will see your dashboard and you can record videos from your mobile directly to Panopto
- 5) See more guidance on using the Panopto mobile app here: <https://panoptosupport.force.com/support/s/article/How-to-Use-the-Panopto-Mobile-App>

8.3 Downloading the Panopto desktop app

- 1) Log into Panopto the normal way
- 2) Click on 'Create' to open the dropdown menu. Click on 'Panopto for Windows/Mac' (depending on whether you have a PC or Mac)



- 3) This will download the desktop app onto your computer



- 4) You can use the Panopto desktop app to record to Panopto from your computer - see more guidance here: <https://panoptosupport.force.com/support/s/article/Install-Panopto-for-Windows>

8.4 Self help guides

There are self help videos that explain how to use features in Moodle (in spoken English with subtitles).

How to use Panopto to record video clips: <https://bslfirst.cloud.panopto.eu/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=7f12a047-66f0-4d79-a443-ad9600db718b>

How to find and share video URL from Panopto: <https://bslfirst.cloud.panopto.eu/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=d54127aa-89d8-4f70-9be1-ad9600de5207>

8.5 Panopto help centre

For in-depth support on using Panopto, you can visit the Panopto help centre here: <https://support.panopto.com/s/>

9. Technical requirements for online courses

If you are studying remotely, please make sure your set up meets the technical specifications below:

- Minimum required internet speed: 75MB/S download speed at least 5MB/S upload speed
- Test your internet speed here: <https://www.speedtest.net/>
- Download Zoom app onto the computer - don't use the web version
- When screen sharing, click on 'view options' and 'side-by-side mode' on the dropdown menu - this will allow you to see the PowerPoint and the signer side by side.
- Pinning - click on the 3 dots on person's image and click on 'pin' on the dropdown. You can only pin more than 1 person if multi pin is enabled - ask the host to the 'Allow multi pin'.
- To pin more than one person - follow the step above and click 'add pin'
- Google Chrome downloaded and installed as this works best with Moodle
- Laptop or desktop computer (not phone or tablet)
- Dual screen is preferred/advantage
- Good lighting
- Plain background, e.g. wall
- Quiet and private space - not a public space with people walking around
- A proper desk with a comfortable chair

9.1 Using Zoom for online learning

9.1.1 Screen sharing



9.1.2 Gallery view and spotlighting



10. Frequently Asked Questions

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/about-us/our-team.

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

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.

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. Provisional exam dates will be published on Moodle at the start of the course. Your teacher will confirm 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 finance department at finance@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 21-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 21-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.

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), or a waiver of outstanding course fees if paying by Direct Debit, if you withdraw within **21 days** of starting the course. After 21 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.

11. 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.

12. 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 awarding body 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.

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.

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- Failing to conduct the assessment in line with awarding body's assessment regulations where the failure to comply with assessment regulations has the potential to influence the outcome of the assessment.
 - 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 Limited 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.
- Mandating training for teaching staff found to have failed to comply with awarding body or centre assessment regulations.
- Dismissal of teaching staff in the most serious cases and reporting them to the awarding body.

13. Complaints Policy

This complaints policy sets out BSL First's procedure for dealing with complaints.

Complaints regarding hired building or facilities

All face-to-face courses take place in hired venue facilities, therefore BSL First has limited control over the building or facilities.

If you have a complaint about the building or facilities at a hired venue, the following procedure applies:

1. Discuss your concerns with your teacher in the first instance. It's possible the teacher may be able to liaise with the venue managers to rectify any minor issues.
2. Discuss your concerns with the management of the venue directly.
3. If you feel the venue has not addressed your concerns after attempting to liaise with them directly, you can contact the Director at director@bslfirst.com. You should describe the complaint and specify whether you have already attempted to resolve the issue with the venue directly. The Director will attempt to liaise with the venue management to reach a solution.
4. We will acknowledge the complaint within **48 hours** of receipt by email. We aim to resolve complaints within **6 weeks**, although this is dependent on how efficiently we can liaise with the external venue management to reach a solution. We will then write to you with the outcome of the complaint and our proposed solution.

We cannot guarantee that the proposed solution will meet your expectations. BSL First will take all reasonable steps to ensure a fair outcome for all parties.

If you experience problems with the hired venue building or facilities that affect your ability to continue with the course, and this is identified and raised within the first **21 days** of the course start date, we might consider this to be grounds for a part refund or a waiver of outstanding course fees.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of a complaint, where in our opinion a fair a reasonable solution has been proposed, we would not consider this to be grounds for a part or full refund, waiving of outstanding course fees or withdrawal from the course.

Complaints regarding Zoom and Moodle

All online courses take place via the Zoom platform. Therefore, there are technical limitations that are beyond BSL First's control. It is assumed that by applying for, and accepting, a place on an online course that you are accepting that there may be technical issues relating to the Zoom platform, including lesson recordings.

Complaints about the use of the Zoom platform for the delivery of online courses, or about Zoom recordings, will not be upheld beyond the 21-day cooling off period. If you feel the Zoom platform does not meet your learning needs, you may withdraw from the course within the 21-day cooling off period without penalty, in line with our refund policy.

If you have a complaint about the online resources on Moodle, the following procedure applies:

1. Write to the relevant person responsible for managing Moodle (currently Akbar Sikder at akbar.sikder@bslfirst.com) detailing your complaint, problem(s) and desired solution(s).
2. We will acknowledge your complaint within **48 hours** of receipt by email and investigate the issues raised. We aim to resolve complaints within **6 weeks**.
3. We will write to you with the outcome of the complaint and our proposed solution. We cannot guarantee that the proposed solution will meet your expectations, especially as there are technical limitations to what we can achieve with the online resources.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of a complaint, where in our opinion a fair a reasonable solution has been proposed, and the complaint is made after the 21-day cooling off period, we would not consider this to be grounds for a part or full refund, waiving of outstanding course fees or withdrawal from the course.

If you are not satisfied with the online resources on Moodle, and you notify us within the 21-day cooling off period, you may withdraw from the course without penalty, in line with our refund policy.

Complaints regarding the course structure, course expectations or assessment requirements

BSL First will endeavour to manage the expectations of students at the beginning of the course, including explaining the course structure, course expectations and assessment requirements. Students then have up to 21-days to withdraw from the course without penalty if the course does not meet their expectations.

If you wish to make a complaint about the course structure, course expectations or assessment requirements, the following procedure applies:

1. Discuss the issue with your teacher in the first instance. In most cases, complaints arise due to misunderstandings or differences in expectations, and can be resolved through mediation and expectation management.
2. If you cannot resolve the issue with your teacher and would like to take the complaint further, you should contact the Director responsible for the course at director@bslfirst.com. You should describe the complaint and specify how you have attempted to resolve the issues with your teacher.
3. We will acknowledge your complaint within **48 hours** of receipt by email. We aim to resolve complaints within **6 weeks**.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of a complaint, where in our opinion a fair a reasonable solution has been proposed, and the complaint is made after the 21-day cooling off period, we would not consider this to be grounds for a part or full refund, waiving of outstanding course fees or withdrawal from the course.

Example complaint:

A student has complained about the requirement to source their own participants for the Level 6 BSL internal exams. The complaint is made halfway through the course after the coursework has been set. The student explained that they work full time, so they don't have time to socialise or work with deaf people. They are struggling to find suitable people to film the assessment clips with. The student is unhappy with the assessment requirement and feels they are being unfairly treated due to working full time. The student feels they are being unfairly treated due to the expectation to socialise and meet deaf people outside of course hours when they work full time. The student also claims that the assessment requirements and course expectations were not made clear at the start of the course and therefore they feel blindsided and that the course was not advertised correctly. The student is asking for a full refund due to the course not meeting their expectations and due to the stress and anxiety that struggling with managing the course expectations has caused them.

Resolution:

Upon investigation, the assessment requirements and course expectations were made clear to students during the first lesson and a PowerPoint containing this information has been available on Moodle. The specific assessment requirements are detailed in the Signature qualification specification, which students were instructed to read for homework after the first lesson. BSL First accepts the feedback that the course expectations and assessment requirements could be presented in a clearer format and will take this feedback on board to make improvements for future courses. However, since students were informed of the course expectations and assessment requirements at the start of the course, the student had the opportunity to withdraw from the course within the 14-day cooling off period without penalty, but decided to continue with the course and only make the complaint after they started to struggle with completing the assessments. The assessment requirements and course expectations cannot be changed to suit individuals. Therefore, the complaint was not upheld and no refund was due.

Example complaint:

A Level 1 BSL exam is booked but the teacher cancelled at the last minute due to a personal bereavement. The student has made a formal complaint saying that the last-minute cancellation has caused them undue stress and anxiety and said that the course organisation was chaotic.

Resolution:

BSL First management apologised for the last-minute cancellation, inconvenience and undue stress and anxiety and re-arranged the exam for the following week, in agreement with the teacher. Personal bereavement is an acceptable extenuating circumstance, as detailed in our extenuating circumstances policy. The course was extended by an additional week to account for the cancelled session due to the bereavement. There were no other changes to the course structure, so we disagree with the comment that the course organisation was chaotic. The complaint was not upheld.

Complaints regarding a teacher

If you wish to make a complaint about your teacher, the following procedure applies:

1. You should attempt to resolve any issues directly with your teacher in the first instance. Contact your teacher by email to arrange a meeting with an interpreter (if necessary). In most cases, issues can be resolved through effective mediation.
2. If you cannot reach a solution with your teacher, then you can contact the Director at director@bslfirst.com. You should describe your complaint and specify how you have attempted to resolve the issue with your teacher directly.
3. We will acknowledge the complaint within **48 hours** of receipt by email. We aim to resolve complaints within **6 weeks**.
4. As part of any investigation regarding a teacher, the Director will need to speak to the teacher to understand their perspective of events. We will then write to you with the outcome of the investigation and our proposed solution. We cannot guarantee that the proposed solution will meet your expectations. BSL First will take all reasonable steps to ensure a fair outcome for all parties.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of a complaint, where in our opinion a fair a reasonable solution has been proposed, and the complaint is made after the 21-day cooling off period, we would not consider this to be grounds for a part or full refund, waiving of outstanding course fees or withdrawal from the course.

Complaints will only be upheld where there is evidence of material harm or where no fair or reasonable solution can be achieved. For example:

- The teacher is unable to make appropriate reasonable adjustments for a student's disability. No fair or reasonable solution can be achieved in this instance, so the complaint would be upheld and compensation/refund due.
- There is evidence of gross misconduct by the teacher that has caused material harm to a student. This is a serious issue that will require further investigation. In this instance, the complaint would be upheld and compensation/refund due.

Examples of situations where a complaint against a teacher will not be upheld:

- You do not like the teacher's personality or teaching style.
- The teacher has not made reasonable adjustments for your disability or learning need, but you did not inform the teacher of your disability or learning need at the beginning of the course.
- You feel the teacher is treating you unfairly but unable to provide proof.
- You find it difficult to communicate with the teacher because they are deaf, or you are uncomfortable with deaf culture.

Complaints regarding the Director

If you wish to make a complaint against the Director, then the only way we can manage this is through mediation. The following procedure applies:

1. Contact the Director at director@bslfirst.com detailing your complaint and desired solution.

2. We will acknowledge the complaint within **48 hours** of receipt by email and we aim to resolve complaints within **6 weeks**.
3. The Director will either respond by email or arrange a telephone or videoconference call to discuss the issue and to reach an agreement.

We cannot guarantee that the proposed solution will meet your expectations. BSL First will take all reasonable steps to ensure a fair outcome for all parties.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of a complaint, where in our opinion a fair a reasonable solution has been proposed, and the complaint is made after the 21-day cooling off period, we would not consider this to be grounds for a part or full refund, waiving of outstanding course fees or withdrawal from the course.

14. 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 director@bslfirst.com. Complaints will be handled in line with our Complaints Policy.

A data subject's personal information will not be disclosed to them until their identity has been verified.

15. Extenuating Circumstances Policy

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'.

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.

Impaired Performance in a Completed Assessment

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

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

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 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.

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 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.

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.

16. 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 overarching 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 Students

- 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 Directors

- 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.

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.

17. Examinations Policy

This policy sets out BSL First's approach to conducting and managing examinations.

Reasonable adjustment and special consideration

BSL First Limited works to the guidelines specified in its Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration Policy. Any reasonable adjustment or special consideration 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.

All requests for reasonable adjustment or special consideration for exams must be made in writing to the Managing Director and accompanied by suitable evidence (e.g. medical evidence of dyslexia).

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, or has failed to provide satisfactory medical evidence.

Appealing against an internal assessment decision

Qualified A1 Assessors and Internal Quality Assurers at the centre are responsible for marking all internal assessments. If you have failed an internal assessment, you have the right to appeal the decision. The following procedure applies:

1. Write to the course director informing them that you would like to appeal an assessment decision. We will acknowledge the appeal within 48 hours of receipt by email.
2. Your assessment will be sent to a different assessor for a second opinion. In order to ensure a fair assessment process, the second marker will not have access to the original feedback from the first marker.
3. The second marker has up to 6 weeks to complete their assessment. We will then contact you within 7 days of receiving the assessment results from the second marker.
4. If the second marker has marked the assessment as a pass, the result will be overturned. If the second marker has marked the assessment as a fail, the fail result will still apply.
5. If you disagree with the second marker, then you can ask the course director to refer your assessment to the awarding body to be reviewed by an external assessor. There is no timeline on how long this could take. The external assessor's decision is final.

You do not have the right to appeal assessments that have passed. For example, if you have received a Pass mark but think you should have received a Merit or Distinction, you do not have the right to appeal the grade.

Appealing against an external assessment decision

Signature external assessors are responsible for marking all external assessments. If you have failed an external assessment, you have the right to appeal the decision. The following procedure applies:

1. You can normally request a breakdown of marks from the awarding body to see why the external assessor has failed your assessment. A request for a breakdown of marks must be made within 2 weeks of receiving the results. There is a fee for this service charged by the awarding body.
2. If, after reviewing the breakdown of marks, you decide to appeal the assessment, you should notify the course director in writing that you disagree with the result and would like to make a formal appeal.
3. Any appeal must be supported by the centre. The course director will review your assessment and decide whether they support an appeal.
4. If the course director does not support an appeal, they will explain to you why they do not support an appeal and suggest alternative options, e.g. a re-sit.
5. If the course director decides to support an appeal, they will make the appeal through the centre portal. There is a fee for appeals charged by the awarding body.

6. The awarding body will then send the assessment to a different assessor to be re-marked. If the second marker passes the assessment, the result will be overturned. If the second marker fails the assessment, the Fail result will still apply. The result of the appeal is final.

You do not have the right to appeal assessments that have passed. For example, if you have received a Pass mark but think you should have received a Merit or Distinction, you do not have the right to appeal the grade.

If you are unhappy with the way the awarding body has managed your appeal or assessment, you should refer to Signature's complaints and appeals policy, available on their website: http://www.signature.org.uk/documents/deliver/document_library/appeals_procedure.pdf.

Assessment dates

All assessments will take place during normal class hours.

The provisional date(s) of the assessment(s) will be published on Moodle. The student is responsible for checking the provisional exam dates on Moodle. 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 of 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 students who are unable to make the agreed assessment date will be offered an alternative date. An additional fee may be payable for students who cannot do the assessment during normal classroom hours.

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

Where applicable, students will be given a timeslot for their exam and this will be communicated to students during normal classroom hours.

Face-to-face assessments

Students should 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 displayed inside the waiting room. When it is time to do the exam, the invigilator or teacher will collect the candidate from the preparation room and accompany them to the exam room. The exam room will be marked by the appropriate sign outside the room and exam regulations will be 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, invigilator, and participants involved in conducting the assessment.

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.

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

Remote assessments

Candidates should join the Zoom meeting 10 minutes before their allocated time slot. The candidate will be placed in the waiting room until the teacher or invigilator approves entry.

When the candidate enters the Zoom meeting, the teacher or invigilator will ask the candidate to scan the room to check that there are no unauthorised items that may lead to malpractice or disqualification (see Malpractice Policy for more details). All mobile phones and electronic equipment must be switched off, unless required for the exam itself.

Once the teacher or invigilator is satisfied that the candidate's environment is suitable to continue with the exam, the candidate will be placed into a breakout room labelled 'preparation room' to complete their preparation. When it is time for the exam, the teacher will move the candidate from the preparation breakout room to the exam breakout room to conduct the exam.

The exam will be recorded using the Zoom software.

When the assessment is finished, the candidate should leave the Zoom meeting straight away. There should be no contact between learners who have finished an assessment and those preparing for one.

Exam results and certificates

The course administrator will email all learners their results within 7 working days after the centre has received the results from the awarding body.

BSL First administration will notify learners when certificates are ready and will post certificates out via Royal Mail 2nd Class. Certificates will not be posted signed for unless specifically requested and there will be an additional charge for signed for deliveries. The candidate is responsible for checking that their postal address is up to date.

If a certificate is lost, the candidate can request a replacement certificate for an additional fee that is charged by the awarding body. The replacement certificate will be stamped as 'replacement certificate'.

Resits and additional submissions

The course administrator will contact students who have failed an exam to offer a resit.

Resits will take place on set days throughout the year. You will receive a link to the booking system to choose your preferred date and book the resit. You will also be able to pay for the resit via the booking system by credit/debit card. We cannot guarantee that the resit will take place with the same teacher you had for the course.

The course fee includes one set of exam fees. Any resits of external exams will be charged.

For internal assessments, marked by assessors at the centre, the course fee includes a first submission and a second submission. Any submissions after this will be charged extra.

18. Withdrawal of Qualification Policy

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 students from, the centre) BSL First will implement the following arrangements where appropriate.

Upon receipt of the notification, the Centre Director 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:

1. Work with Signature and/or any students 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.
2. If no alternative Centres are available/suitable for any Learners affected by the withdrawal, and/or the students do not wish to carry on with the qualification(s), they will seek to ensure the students 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.

19. 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. Students who decide to withdraw from the course within 21 days following the first session are entitled to a waiver of outstanding course fees. The deposit, any credit/debit or payment processing fees or interview fees will not be refunded.
3. BSL First ceases to offer a qualification, has qualification approval withdrawn by the Awarding Body or ceases its business operations, as detailed in our Withdrawal of Qualification Policy.

A part refund will be made in the following circumstances:

1. A student is unable to complete the course due to acceptable extenuating circumstances, as detailed in the Extenuating Circumstances Policy. If paying by direct debit, the obligation to pay the outstanding course fee may be waived. If the student has paid in full, a part refund will depend on how much time has elapsed since the learner has started the course.
2. A student is forced to withdraw from their course due to BSL First being unable to make an appropriate reasonable adjustment and where no fair or reasonable solution can be achieved, as detailed in our Complaints Policy.
3. A student is forced to withdraw from their course due to evidence of gross misconduct by BSL First that has caused material harm to the student, as detailed in our Complaints Policy.

No refund will be made in the following circumstances:

1. A student is unable to complete the course due to unacceptable extenuating circumstances, as detailed in the Extenuating Circumstances Policy.
2. A student is forced to withdraw from the course due to poor attendance, poor organisation or not keeping up with homework. This applies where the student has decided to withdraw from the course themselves or where BSL First has removed a student from the course.
3. A student does not finish the course.
4. A student fails an exam or assessment decision.
5. A student decides to withdraw from the course after 21 days of the first session because they decide that the course does not meet their expectations.
6. A student fails to inform BSL First that he or she has decided to withdraw from the course. Students must inform his or her teacher of his or her intention to withdraw from the course.
7. A student makes a complaint. Making a complaint does not automatically entitle a student to a refund. All complaints and requests for refunds will be dealt with in accordance with our Complaints Policy.
8. Interview fees are always non-refundable.

20. Safeguarding Policy

What this policy covers

BSL First is committed to protecting service users against all forms of abuse. You have a responsibility towards service users to ensure that they are protected from abuse.

This policy sets out BSL First's approach to ensuring the safeguarding of minors on our courses. It also sets out the responsibilities of staff for reporting suspected abuse and the procedure for doing so.

What is "abuse"?

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human or civil rights by another person and may consist of a single act or multiple acts. As well as physical and psychological abuse, acts of neglect or an omission to act may amount to abuse. Abuse may also occur when a child or vulnerable adult is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented or cannot consent.

Children attending courses

Children, defined as any person under the age of 18, may enrol on a British Sign Language course up to Level 3. Children cannot enrol on a course at Level 3 or above. Children who wish to enrol on a course must have written permission from an appropriate adult, e.g. parent or guardian.

All minors must be supervised by an appropriate adult, e.g. parent or guardian, at all times during class. Minors must not attend a class unsupervised. The teacher is responsible for checking that the child has an appropriate adult present during class. If the child attends without appropriate supervision, the teacher must instruct the child to leave the class.

Minors must not share their personal contact details with other students under any circumstances. All communication between BSL First teachers and administration must be done through a nominated appropriate adult, e.g. parent or guardian. BSL First management will only hold the contact details of the appropriate adult on file.

Regulation of teaching staff

All teaching staff must provide a satisfactory Enhanced Disclosure with a barred list check from the Disclosure and Barring Service in order to teach a class with a minor present.

If a teacher appears on the Barred List, BSL First will investigate whether they can continue to be employed in activities that are not regulated activities, but BSL First reserves the right to dismiss you or to refuse you employment.

If a teacher is added to a barred list during their current employment, BSL First will be legally obliged not to allow them to continue to engage in regulated activity, including teaching classes with vulnerable adults or children present. This may mean that BSL First cannot continue to employ the teacher.

If BSL First receives notification that a teacher has been barred, BSL First will investigate whether the teacher can continue to be employed in activities that are not regulated activities, but in these circumstances BSL First reserves the right to dismiss the teacher without notice.

BSL First's duty to refer information

By law, BSL First has a duty to refer certain information to the Disclosure and Barring Service. This includes:

- If the Business has dismissed an individual because he or she has harmed, or may harm, a vulnerable adult or child.
- If an individual has resigned from employment in circumstances where there is a suspicion that he or she has harmed, or may harm, a vulnerable adult or child (this will

apply where an allegation has been made and the employee resigns before BSL First can take disciplinary action).

- If BSL First has suspended an individual and has reason to think the employee has engaged in "relevant conduct" or has harmed, or may harm, a vulnerable adult or child, or has received a caution or a conviction for, a relevant offence.

Procedure

All staff and students must remain vigilant at all times of the risk of abusive behaviour from different sources including members of their family, other students and teaching staff.

If teachers suspect that a student has been subjected to abuse, they should refer the circumstances to their manager (or another manager if appropriate) for full investigation.

If the alleged perpetrator of abuse is another employee, the circumstances will be investigated fully under the Business' Disciplinary Procedure.

If necessary, BSL First will refer details of the circumstances to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

If, following full investigation of the circumstances, BSL First determines that the perpetrator should be dismissed, the perpetrator's details will be referred to the Disclosure and Barring Service.