

Access to General (GCE/GCSE) Qualifications-update on oral communicators and certificate indications

The Regulatory Authorities in England (QCA), Wales (DELLS), and Northern Ireland (CCEA) have recently been considering Oral communicators in examinations and Certificate Indications on examination certificates.

Oral Communicators

Changes made to Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) regulations in 2004/5 have meant that Oral Communicators (OCs) are no longer allowed in examinations, although the use of British Sign Language (BSL) has been strengthened. BSL users now have greater support available to them than children with hearing impairments who do not use BSL and, as a result, there have been requests to reinstate the use of Oral Communicators.

The Regulatory Authorities recently reviewed the issue and believe that steps need to be taken to reintroduce the facility of having Oral Communicators in examinations. They would like to see this introduced as soon as possible. The issue is being discussed with the awarding bodies in order to agree appropriate guidelines together with the necessary quality assurance arrangements. We hope to have a clear way forward in the near future and will communicate this to all relevant organisations.

Certificate Indications

Certificate indications and exemptions are currently used when candidates with certain disabilities are exempted from part of the assessment requirements for an examination specification. In the light of the imminent extension of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) in Great Britain and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Order in Northern Ireland (SENDO) to general qualifications, the Regulatory Authorities are working with Government officials, awarding bodies, organisations representing disabled people and legal advisors to determine the future of Certificate Indications from September 2007. The outcome of the discussions will be communicated widely when agreement is reached. The Regulatory Authorities are committed to ensuring that all candidates have their achievements recognised.