BSL FIRST

INTERPRETER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR HERITAGE SIGNERS

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 Contract.**

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, Communication Support and Modifying Written English Texts for Deaf People.

- ✓ Signature Level 1 Award in British Sign Language
- ✓ Signature Level 2 Certificate in British Sign Language
- ✓ Signature Level 3 Certificate in British Sign Language
- ✓ Signature Level 4 Certificate in British Sign Language
- ✓ Signature Level 6 Certificate in British Sign Language
- ✓ Signature Level 6 Diploma in Sign Language Interpreting
- ✓ Signature Level 6 Diploma in Sign Language Translation
- ✓ 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!



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

2. Course Overview

The Interpreter Development Programme for Heritage Signers (IDP-HS) course is open to hearing native, near-native and heritage signers who would like to pursue a career as a qualified sign language interpreter. You will achieve the Signature Level 6 Diploma in Sign Language Interpreting and Translation and the Signature Level 6 Certificate in British Sign Language qualifications. This course leads to Registered Sign Language Interpreter (RSLI) status with the NRCPD. This is currently the only course of its kind in the UK.

We have developed the IDP-HS course based on our extensive experience in the interpreting, translation and training fields. The course is made up of 360 hours of guided learning and 360 hours of independent learning spread over 3 years. This is an intensive programme and requires your full commitment.

This course will take you from little or no knowledge of sign language interpreting to Registered Sign Language Interpreter (RSLI) status. **You do not need any qualifications in BSL to join this course**, but you must come from a signing home and be able to demonstrate competency in BSL at minimum Level 2.

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

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

2.1 Course Content

2.1.1 Year 1

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

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

Module	Topics covered
Intermediate British Sign Language	You will develop your skills in British Sign Language from level 2 (A2) (or equivalent) towards intermediate level (B1). You will develop your productive and receptive skills, vocabulary and grammar. You will also study the history of BSL and deaf culture, including the role and identity of hearing heritage signers and child language brokers. This module is benchmarked to the Level 3/4 qualifications in BSL. Topics include: home life, social and recreational activities, education, employment and jobs, science and technology, medicine and law and politics.
Theoretical principles in interpreting and translation	This module will introduce students to some of the key theoretical frameworks in interpreting and translation studies, including functionalist theories, ethical models and the role of the interpreter and translator. It will introduce students to some of the current principles and issues in the public service interpreting profession, with a focus on signed language interpreting. It will also look at some of the unique issues that arise for heritage signers and the relationship between heritage signers and the interpreting profession.

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

2.1.2 Year 2

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

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

Module	**Topics covered**
Advanced British Sign Language	You will develop your skills in British Sign Language from level 3 (B1) towards advanced level (C2). You will develop your productive and receptive skills, vocabulary and grammar. You will also study the history of BSL and deaf culture, including the role and identity of hearing heritage signers and child language brokers within the deaf world. You will achieve the Level 6 Certificate in BSL qualification upon completion of this module. Topics include: medicine, politics and the law, employment and finance, education, science and technology and media and society.
Professional interpreting	You will continue to develop your interpreting skills in one-way and two- way interpreting. You will study some of the key theories in interpreting and translation studies and learn how to apply them to your practice. This module will give you the skills to analyse your interpreting performance by understanding the cognitive processes and stages of the interpreting process. You will continue to practise your skills in consecutive interpreting in addition to developing skills in simultaneous interpreting. You will also be introduced to interpreting in a wider range of domains, including health, education, employment and performance. At the beginning of the second year, you will be assessed against the National Occupational Standards for Trainee Interpreters, which will enable you to register with the NRCPD as a Trainee Sign Language Interpreter (TSLI) and start working as a professional sign language interpreter.
Prepare for interpreting assignments	You will learn about the importance of preparing for interpreting assignments, applying key theories in interpreting and translation studies to plan and prepare appropriately for assignments. You will be able to assess your own ability to undertake, and accept, interpreting assignments, as well as plan and prepare for assignments as part of a team of interpreters. You will learn about the importance of maintaining a glossary for domains you regularly work in. You will critically evaluate and apply a range of preparation strategies and you will produce evidence of preparing for 4 assignments.

Plan and implement continuous professional development	You will work with your professional supervisor to plan your development points over the course of your studies. You will create, maintain and update a Professional Development Plan throughout your studies. Your plan will be informed by trends, developments and good practice in the sign language interpreting/translation profession as well as your own evaluation of your gaps in knowledge, skills and competence. You will have regular meetings with your supervisor to review your PDP (required to maintain your TSLI registration).
Remote interpreting	You will learn about the emerging field of Video Relay Interpreting (VRI) and engage critically with current debates about VRI in the sign language interpreting field. You will learn how to prepare and perform VRI assignments, including how to set up, check and monitor equipment effectively and how to manage the specific demands relating to this mode of delivery. You will also be introduced to subtitling and audiovisual translation.

2.1.3 Year 3

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

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

Module	**Topics covered**
Advanced professional interpreting	This module will bring together your skills in interpreting in order to refine your skills in interpreting between English and BSL at native level. You will master a range of interpreting techniques, particularly in simultaneous interpreting. You will also be introduced to interpreting in specialist domains, including conferences, mental health and court. You will be assessed in both two-way and one-way interpreting and in both simultaneous and consecutive modes. Assessment takes the form of 6x evidence or observations of one-way and two-way interpreting performance.
Work as part of a team of professional interpreters	This module will give you the knowledge and skills to work effectively as part of a team of interpreters. It will equip you with a range of co-working techniques, such as feeding, checking and monitoring skills, as well as strategies to work with other professionals (i.e. relay interpreters and English>BSL translators). You will consider a wide range of co-working techniques in various situations and domains, using key principles and ethical models to justify your decisions.
Sight translation	You will learn about the situations when you might be required to produce sight translations of written and signed texts. You will consider the appropriateness and feasibility of the sight translation task. You will be able to apply a wide range of interpreting and translation theories and principles to justify your translation approach and ethical decisions.

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

2.2 Assessment

There are total of 17 assessments for this qualification over the total three-year duration. The assessments cover the assessment requirements for the Signature Level 6 BSL and Level 6 Interpreting qualifications. Year 1 and Year 2 cover BSL and written assessments. Practical interpreting assessments are done in Year 3. Most of the assessments will be conducted in the classroom through simulations, but students may be required to collect some evidence in the community.

2.2.1 Year 1 Assessments

No.	Assessment	Method
1	Business Plan	Coursework - internally assessed
2	BSL Glossary	Coursework - internally assessed
3	Informal one-to-one discussion in BSL	Filmed clip - internally assessed
4	Professional Development Plan	Coursework - internally assessed

2.2.2 Year 2 Assessments

No.	Assessment	Method
1	Informal group debate in BSL	Filmed clip - internally assessed
2	Formal group meeting in BSL	Filmed clip - internally assessed
3	Formal presentation in BSL	Filmed clip - internally assessed
4	Formal group meeting in BSL	Filmed clip - externally assessed
5	BSL receptive skills exam	Filmed clip - externally assessed
6	Prepare for interpreting assignments x4	Filmed clip - externally assessed
7	3,000 Word essay	Coursework - internally assessed

2.2.3 Year 3 Assessments

No.	Assessment	Method
1	One-way consecutive BSL>English and critical analysis	Live observation or filmed clip - internally assessed
2	One-way consecutive English>BSL and critical analysis	Live observation or filmed clip - internally assessed
3	One-way simultaneous interpreting BSL>English and critical analysis	Live observation or filmed clip - internally assessed
4	One-way simultaneous interpreting English>BSL and critical analysis	Live observation or filmed clip - internally assessed
5	Two-way face-to-face interpreting BSL/English and critical analysis	Live observation or filmed clip - internally assessed
6	Two-way remote interpreting BSL/English and critical analysis	Live observation or filmed clip - internally assessed
7	One-way simultaneous interpreting BSL>English	Filmed clip - externally assessed
8	One-way simultaneous interpreting English>BSL	Filmed clip - externally assessed
9	Two-way face-to-face interpreting English/BSL	Filmed clip - externally assessed
10	Two-way remote interpreting English/BSL	Filmed clip - externally assessed
11	Sight translation English>BSL	Filmed clip - externally assessed
12	Immediate translation BSL>English	Written product - externally assessed

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

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

2.3 Feedback and Tutorials

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

2.4 Homework and Independent Learning

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

Independent study activities for this course include:

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

3. Practical and venue information



This section contains useful practical information on the training venue, travel, car parking and accommodation for BSL First students.

3.1 Venue address

Antoinette Hotel Wimbledon
The Broadway
Wimbledon
London
SW19 1SD

3.2 Travel

The Antoinette Hotel is conveniently located on The Broadway in the heart of Wimbledon town centre. There are direct trains every 5 minutes to London Waterloo (20 minutes) and Clapham Junction (10 minutes).

Train: Wimbledon station (10 minutes walk), direct trains every 5 minutes from London Waterloo (20 minutes) and Clapham Junction (10 minutes)

Tube: South Wimbledon (Northern line) (5 mins walk), Wimbledon (District line) (10mins walk). Northern line is 24 hours on Friday and Saturday nights.

Car: From M25, exit at junction 10 on to A3 and then take exit on to A298 towards Wimbledon.

Bus: local bus services from Kingston, Tooting, Clapham, Morden and Sutton. N87 is the night bus from Aldwych/Drury Lane (central London) to Wimbledon.

3.3 Car parking

Free on-site car parking is available at the hotel for guests only. If you are not staying at the hotel, you can park in the hotel car park for £12 per day.

If not staying overnight, please see list of alternative car parks:

Broadway (70 spaces)
London Borough Of Merton
Broadway
Russel Road
London
SW19 1QG

Hartfield Road (151 spaces)
London Borough Of Merton
Hartfield Road
London
SW19 3TB

The Bridge
Hartfield Road
Wimbledon
London
SW19 3RU

Queens Road (159 spaces)
London Borough Of Merton
Queens Road
London
SW19 8LJ

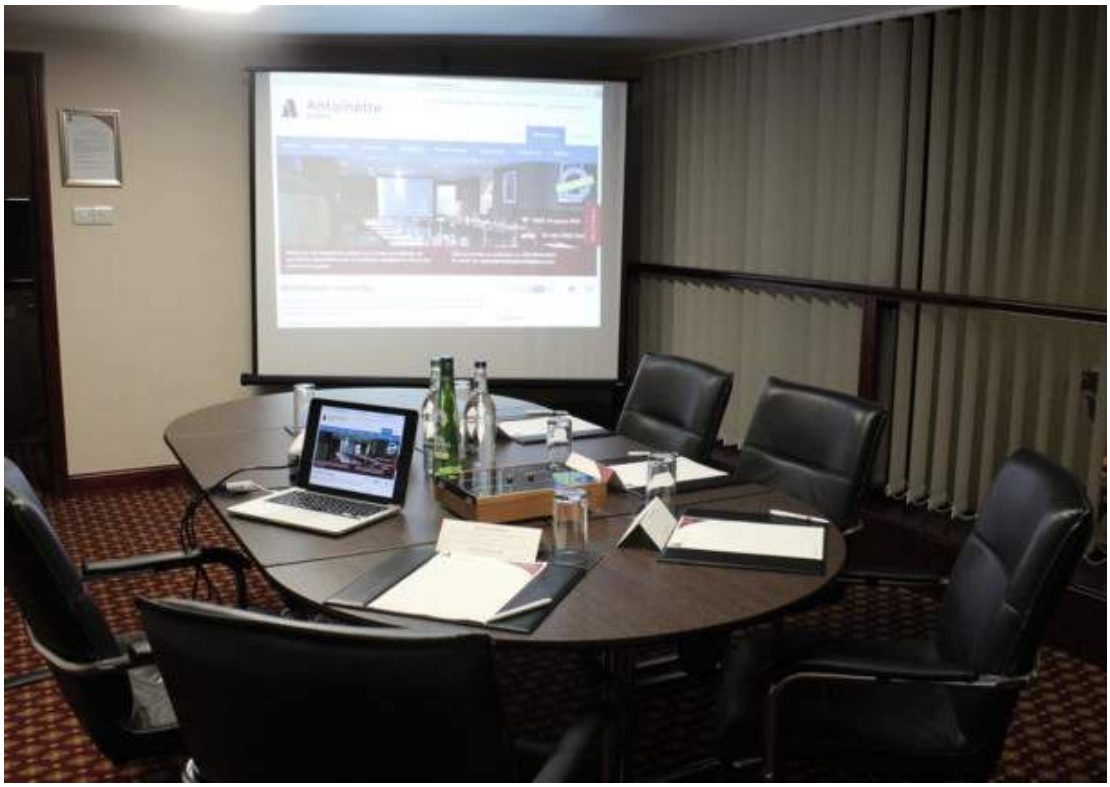
On-street car parking is residents only Monday-Saturday. Limited on-street car parking available on Sunday.

3.4 Training rooms

We have 2 training rooms available to us at the hotel: a main training room on the ground floor and a smaller breakout room on the first floor. Tea and coffee is provided throughout the day.







Lounge area

There is a comfortable lounge area to take your breaks, or to chill out and socialise if staying at the hotel overnight.





3.5 Local area

The Antoinette Hotel is located in the heart of Wimbledon town centre, with plenty of restaurants, bars and cafes on the doorstep. Wimbledon village and All England Lawn Tennis club are a short bus ride away. Central London (London Waterloo) is a 20-minute direct train from Wimbledon station.



The Broadway



Wimbledon Markets



All England Lawn Tennis Club

3.6 Accommodation

Overnight accommodation is available at the Antoinette Hotel. We have agreed a discounted rate for our students staying overnight at the hotel. There is also the option to share rooms in order to save on costs.

The following rooms are available:



Single room



Snug double room



Classic double room



Executive twin room

3.7 Room rates

We have negotiated discounted room rates for our students at the Antoinette Hotel. Please contact the office (admin@bslfirst.com) for current rates.

4. Progression and Careers

4.1 Progression

The IDP-HS is a unique course that gives you the skills to interpret between English and BSL at native level (AA language combination).

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

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

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

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

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

4.2 Careers

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

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

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

National Union of British Sign Language Interpreters (NUBSLI): https://nubsli.com/

Association of Sign Language Interpreters (ASLI): https://www.asli.org.uk/

Visual Language Professionals (VLP): https://vlp.org.uk/

Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI): https://www.iti.org.uk/

Chartered Institute of Linguists (CIoL): https://www.ciol.org.uk/

International Association of Conference Interpreters: https://aiic.net/

European Commission: https://ec.europa.eu/info/jobs-european-commission/working- eu/interpreters-recruitment-european-commission_en

United Nations: https://careers.un.org/lbw/home.aspx?viewtype=LCEFD&Fld=2

5. Entry Requirements

All candidates must meet the following minimum entry requirements:

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

You must have a good level of literacy to be able to read and understand the course materials. Preference will be given to candidates with a university degree.

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

6. Additional Support

6.1 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 session-by-session basis to complement and reinforce learning in the classroom.

6.2 Professional Development Series
The Professional Development Series is a series of lectures by experienced interpreters and translators in specific domains. A variety of guest speakers will deliver interactive workshops and presentations to all interpreting students about their area of expertise. It's a great way to learn more about the different domains of interpreting and to learn from experienced practitioners. The list of topics is published on the Moodle site. The workshops take place on the last Wednesday of the month between 7-8pm online via Zoom. Check the calendar on Moodle for dates and links.

6.3 Peer Support Groups
You will be put into a peer support group of 3-4 students and you will work in your groups to support each other with the independent study activities. The aim of the sessions is to support each other to understand the course content and to practise interpreting skills with each other. You will be required to do group assignments with your peer support group throughout the course.

6.4 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. Contact the office for current rates.

6.5 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 pauline.gregson@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.

6.6 Therapeutic Support
If you feel you need to access professional therapeutic support, you can contact Matthew Shrine at Matt.Shrine@icloud.com or 07706225822.

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

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

6.7 Professional Supervision and Mentoring
A professional supervisor can help you to reflect on your own practice by providing a safe and non-judgemental space.

A professional mentor can support you throughout your journey as a trainee interpreter and in the first few years after qualifying by providing guidance about ways you can develop your

skills. A mentor can also help you to learn a specialism and to undertake interpreting work in a new domain. You can find a list of recommended professional supervisors and mentors on Moodle.

6.8 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. BSL First students are eligible for a discounted rate for Signature Learning Hub.

6.9 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.**

6.10 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/

7. Teaching Staff

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



Akbar Sikder MA, RSLI, RSLT, MASLI, A1

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



Cathy Nassimi-Green CTLLS, A1

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



Tessa Padden MA, RSLI, RSLT

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

8. 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.

8.1 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

8.2 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.

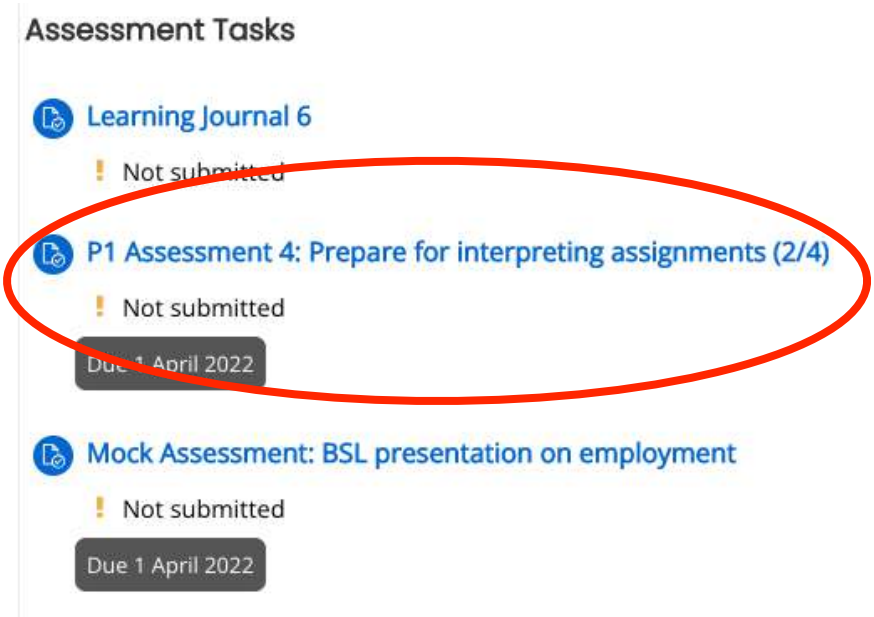
There is also a Moodle app for iPhone, which is handy for checking Moodle when on the go. You can download the Moodle app from the app store (and then follow the steps in section 8.3)

8.3 Moodle app for iPhone and iPad

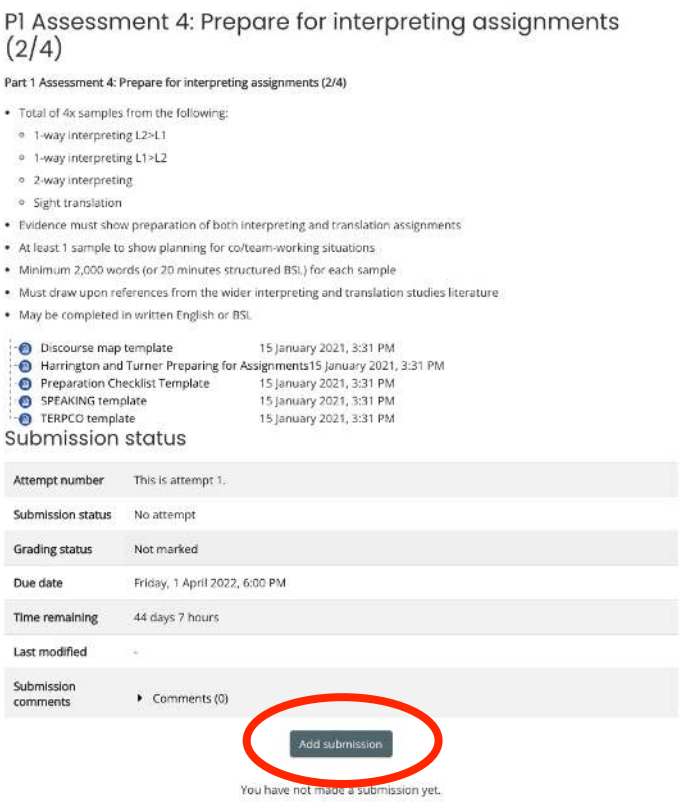
1) Go to the Apple or Android app store (depending on which device you have)
2) Search for Moodle and download the app
3) Enter the BSL First Moodle site: moodle.bslfirst.com
4) Log in with your Moodle username and password

8.4 How to submit an assignment

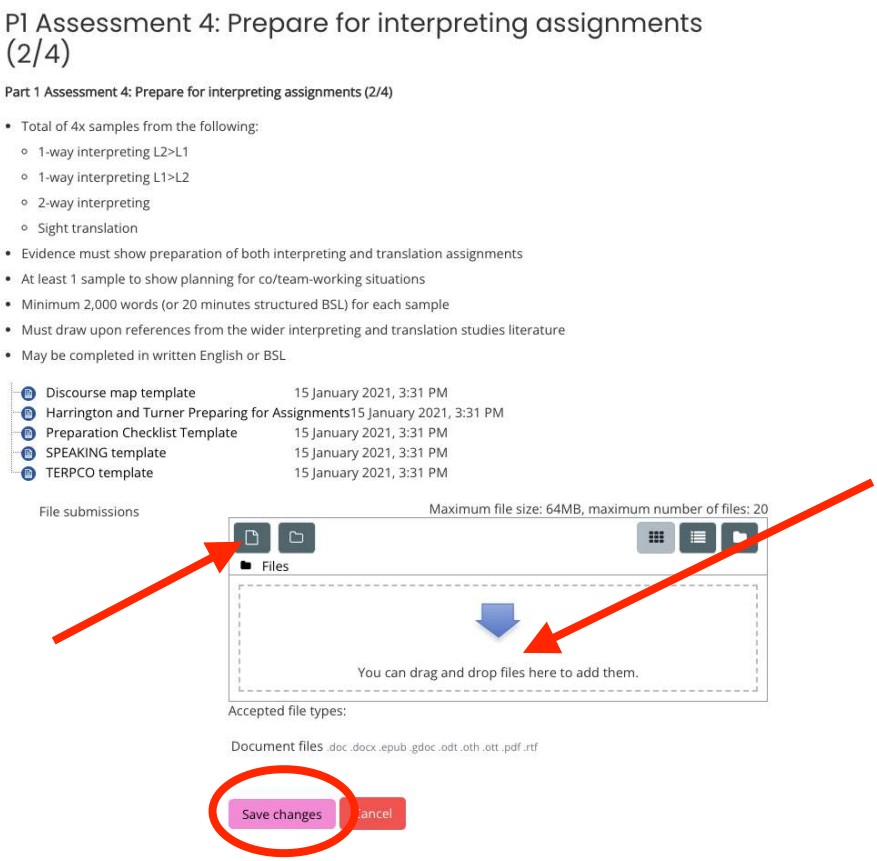
1) Find the assignment you want to submit and click to open

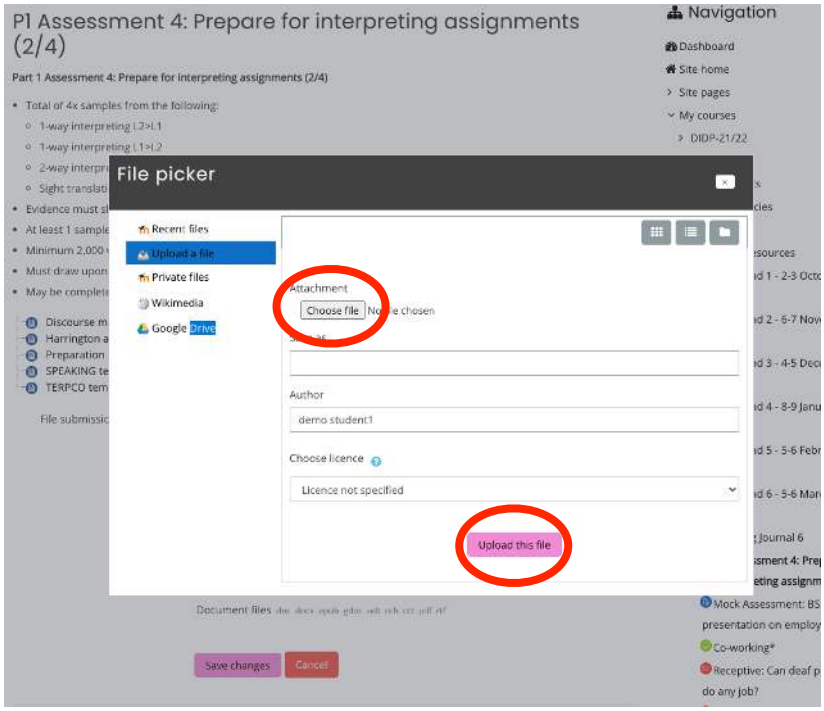


2) Click on ‘Add submission’

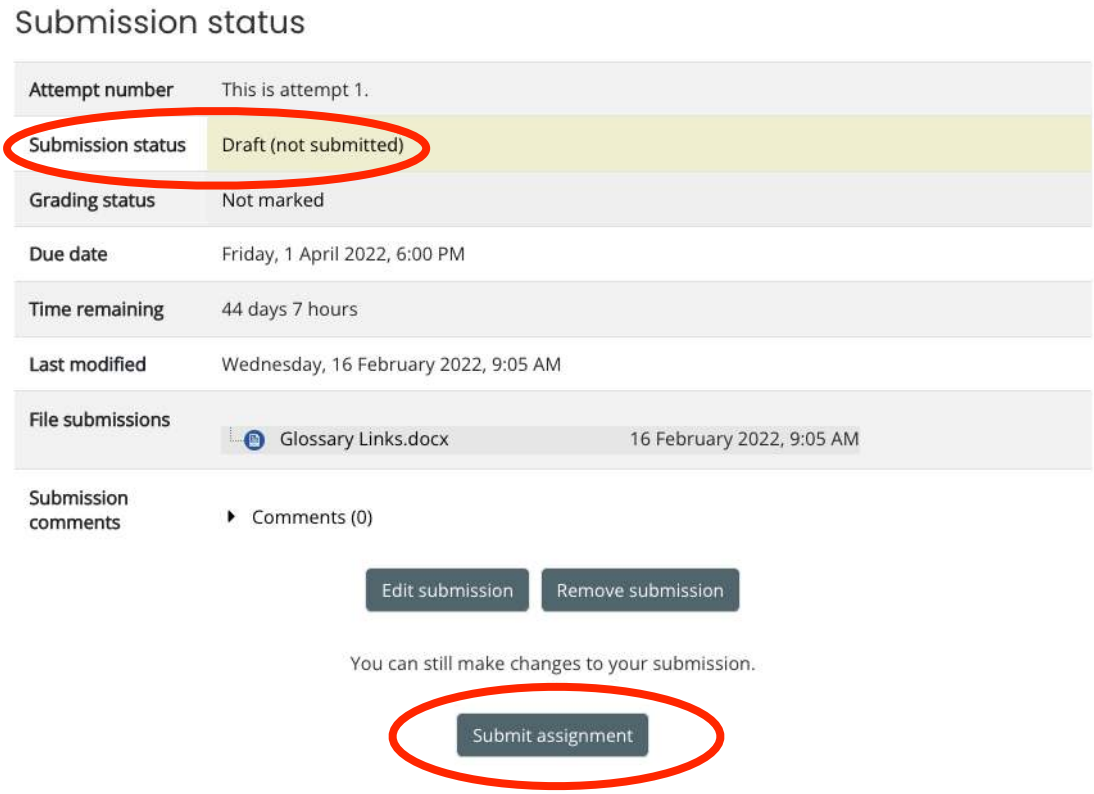


3) Drag the files you want to upload or click on the document icon. Click save changes.

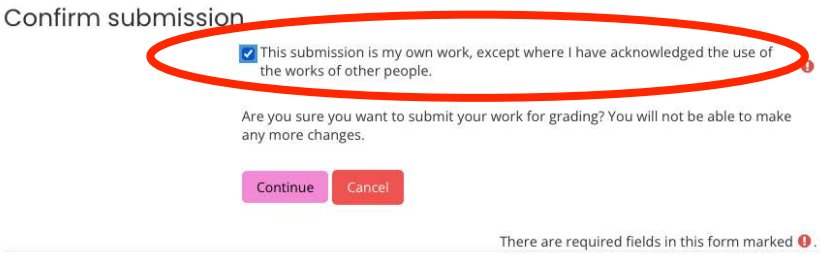




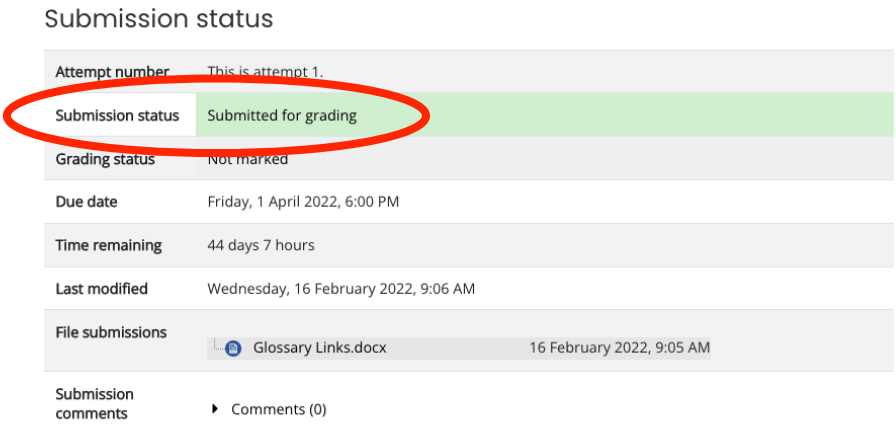
4) You will see the file has been uploaded and is in draft. At this stage, you can still edit the submission if required. If you are ready to submit the assignment, click 'Submit assignment'. You won't be able to make any more changes to the assignment after you have submitted.



5) Tick the plagiarism disclaimer and click ‘Continue’

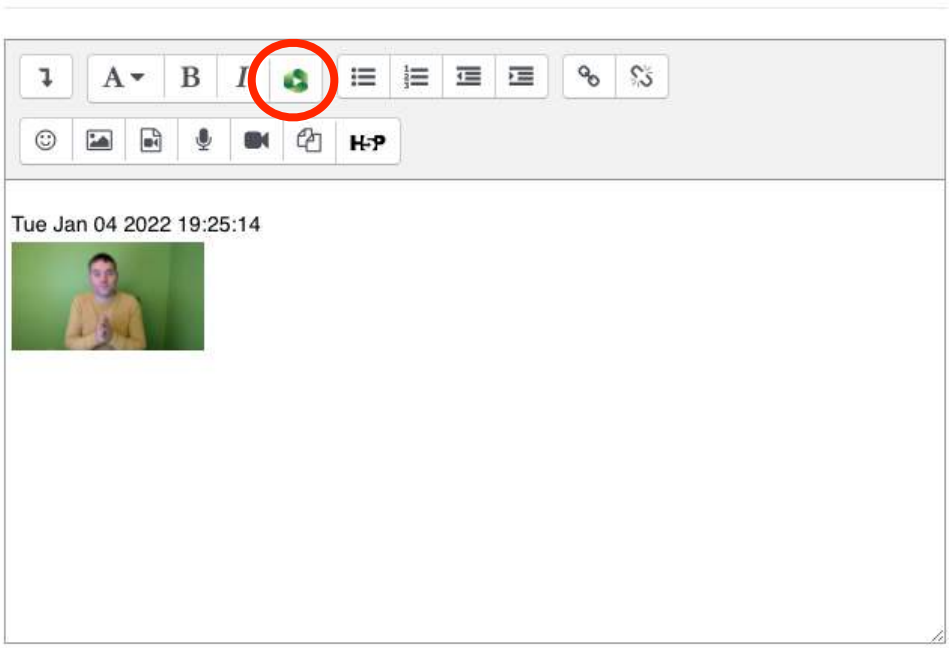


6) You will see the submission status change to green ‘Submitted for grading’. This means your work has been successfully submitted.

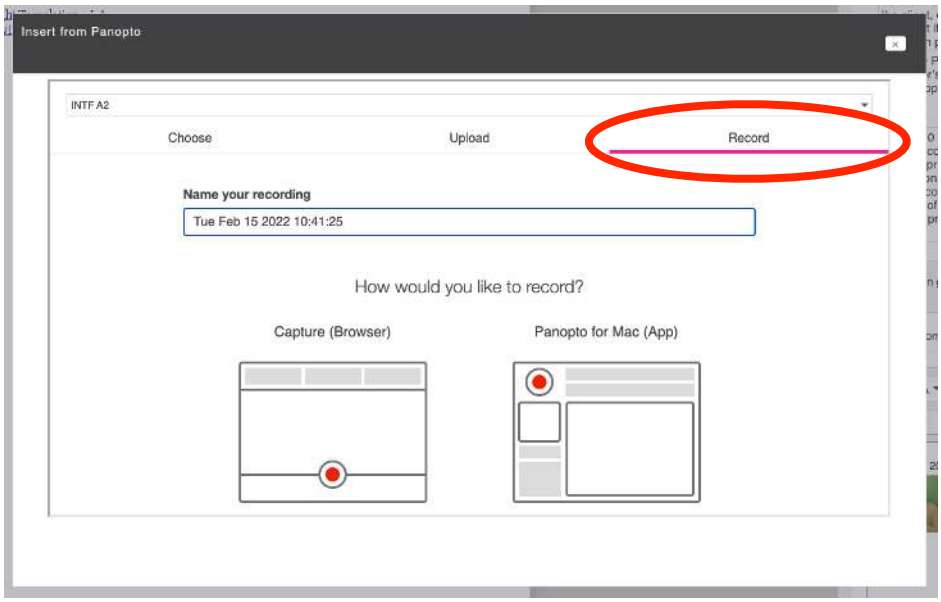


8.5 How to add a video in Moodle using Panopto

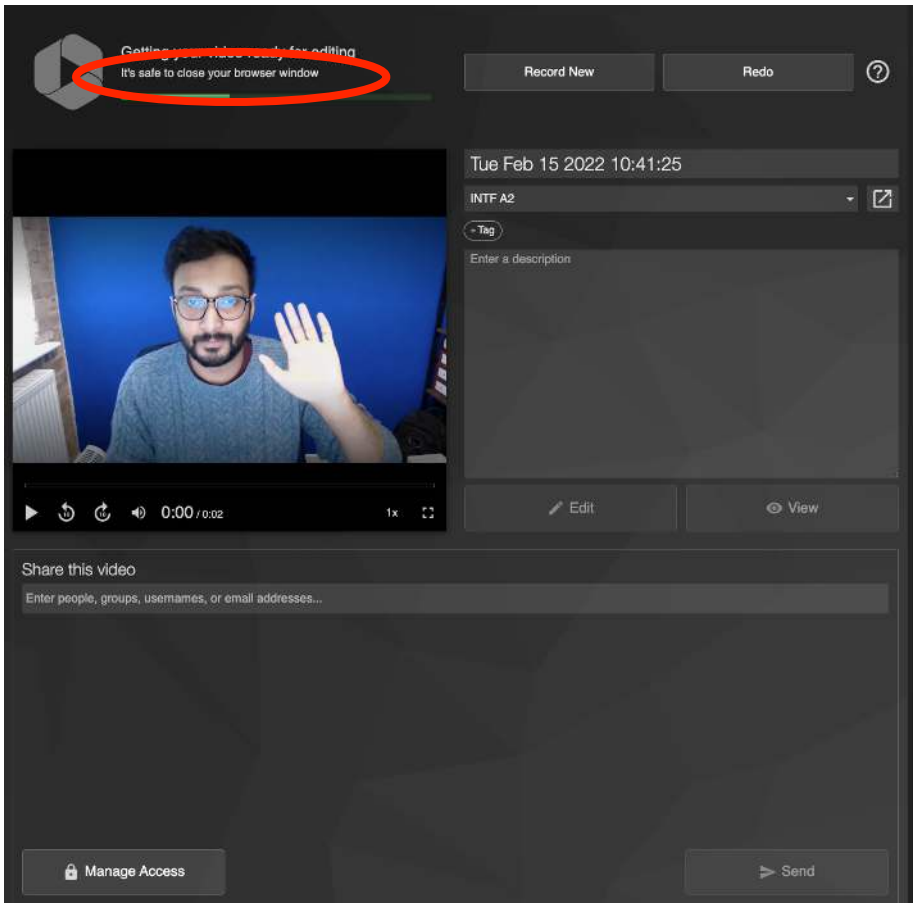
1) In the online text box, click on the green Panopto button - this will open the Panopto pop up



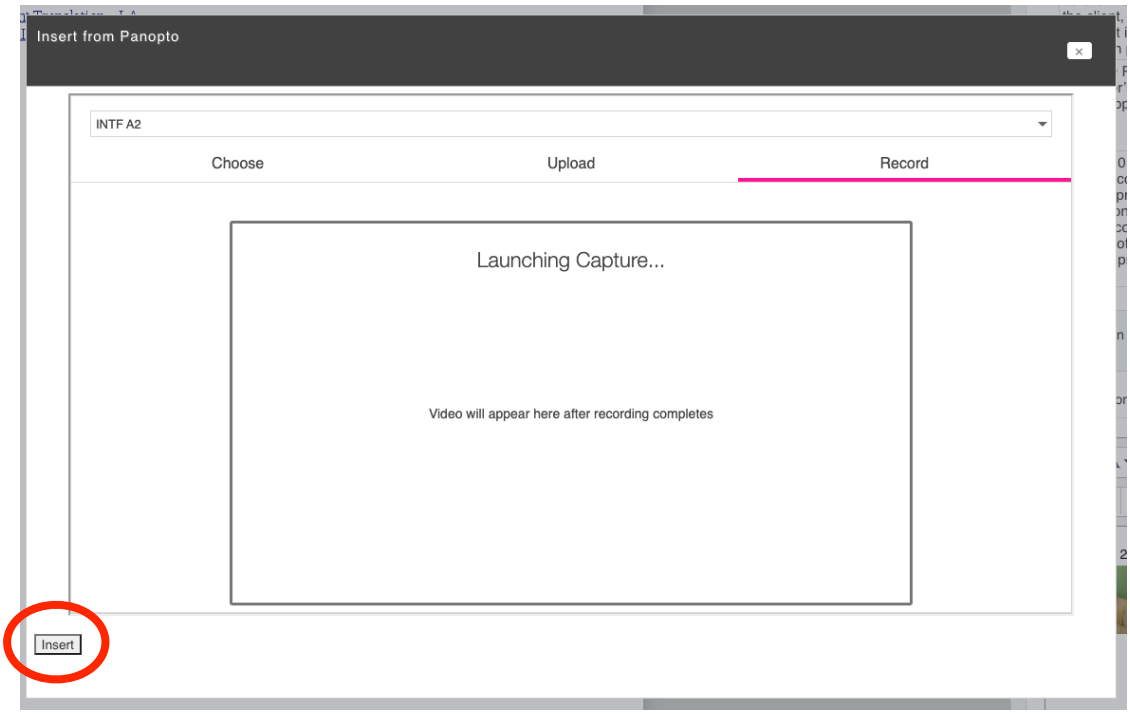
2) To record a new video - click on ‘Record’ then choose if you want to record in your browser or in your desktop app. You can also choose a video if it’s already stored in your Panopto account, or you can upload a video from your computer. If you have recorded on your phone using the Panopto app, it 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



8.6 Moodle help centre

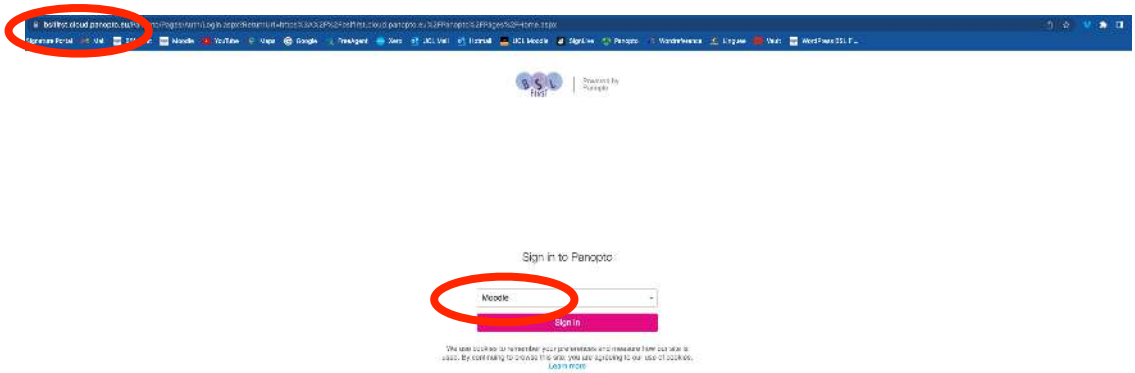
For in-depth support on using Moodle, you can visit the Moodle help centre here: https://moodle.org/course/view.php?id=5

9. How to use Panopto

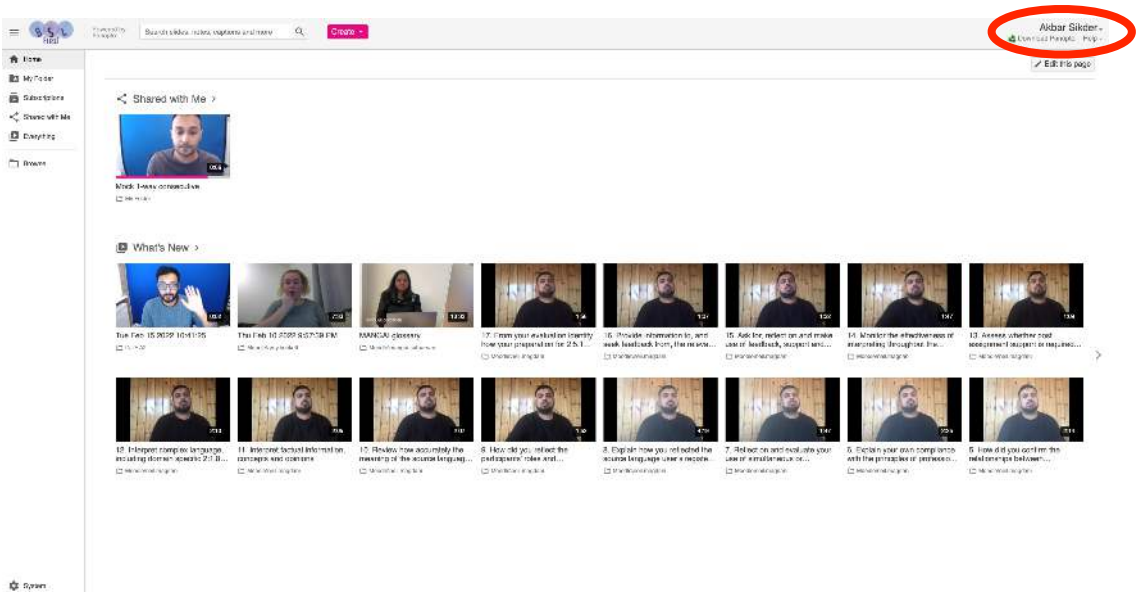
9.1 How to log into Panopto

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



9.2 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

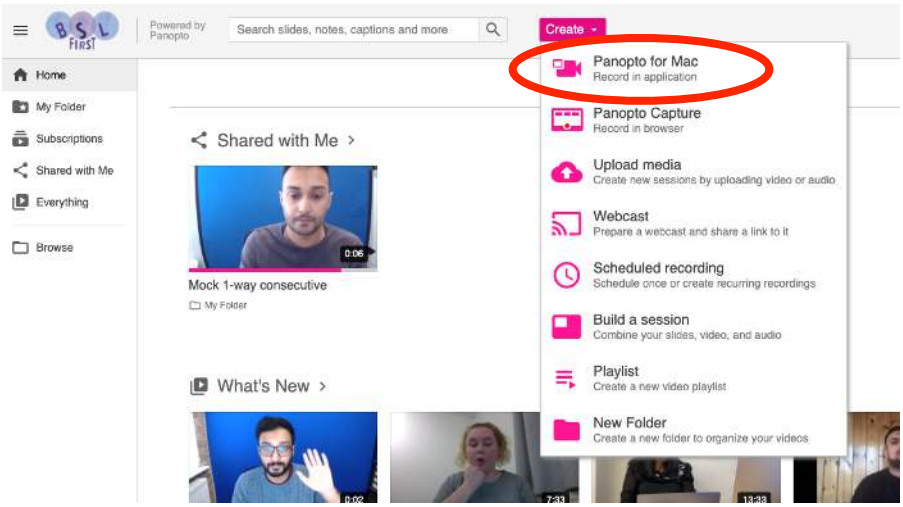
4) When you have logged in, you will see your dashboard and you can record videos from your mobile directly to Panopto

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

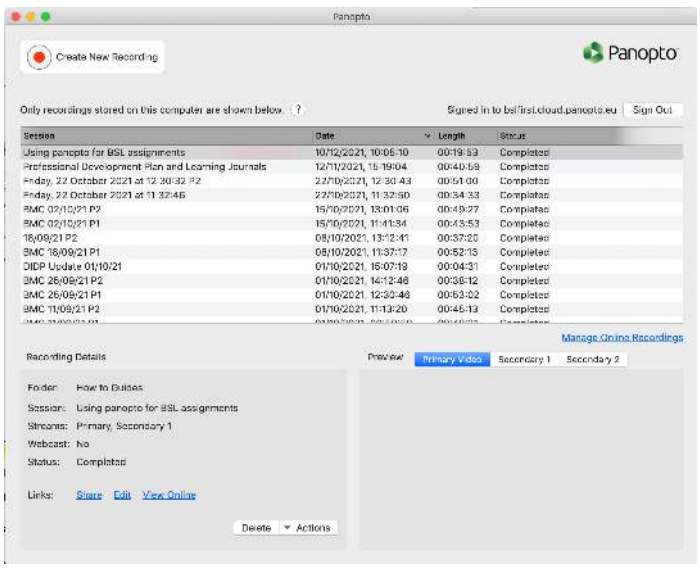
9.3 Downloading the Panopto desktop app

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

9.4 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

9.5 Panopto help centre

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

9.6 Additional technical support

If you are experiencing problems with Moodle and require additional technical support, please contact Yasin, our Media and Technical Officer, at yasin.ahmed@bslfirst.com in the first instance. He will escalate anything for Akbar's attention if necessary.

Please make sure you consult all the self help guides and you have read the instructions in this handbook before you contact us.

10. 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

10.1 Using Zoom for online learning

10.1.1 Screen sharing



10.1.2 Gallery view and spotlighting



11. Academic Referencing

All students must use the Harvard referencing system to reference academic literature. Here is a list of useful resources for academic referencing and where to finding academic literature:

Anglia Ruskin University Harvard referencing guide: https://library.aru.ac.uk/referencing/harvard.htm

University of Manchester academic phrase bank: https://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/

BSL First Interpreting Handbook – this has a summary of all of the main theories studied on the course and lots of quotes you can use: https://moodle.bslfirst.com/mod/book/view.php?id=2511

Course reading list - this gives a list of recommended reading for each of the topics with direct links to the PDF copy of the journal article: https://moodle.bslfirst.com/mod/page/view.php?id=2509

BSL First Library - this has over 200 different references, most with PDF links. Not all have the PDF, but many do: https://moodle.bslfirst.com/mod/data/view.php?id=2510

Google Scholar - public repository of academic articles, free to access: https://scholar.google.com/

Academia.edu - public repository of academic articles, most are free to access: https://www.academia.edu/

12. 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.

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. Your teacher will book the exam date in consultation with the whole class.

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

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

14. Who do I contact about payment queries?
For all queries relating to payments, including changing the date of your Direct Debit, please contact the main office on admin@bslfirst.com.

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

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

16. Who do I contact about applying for a TOTUM card?
Please contact the main office for TOTUM card enquiries.

17. How do I sign up for the Signature Learning Hub and other online resources?
Your teacher will guide you through the sign up process for the Signature Learning Hub, Sign World and Moodle during class.

18. I want to progress on to the next level – how do I do this?
Your teacher will give you information about progression at the end of your course. You can also find full details of, and apply for, all our courses on our website: www.bslfirst.com.

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

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

13. 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 give 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.

14. Malpractice Policy

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

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

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

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

Examples of Malpractice

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

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

Centre Staff Malpractice

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

- Assisting learners in the production of work for assessment, where the support has the potential to influence the outcomes of assessment, for example where the assistance involves centre staff producing work for the learner
- Producing falsified witness statements, for example for evidence the learner has not generated allowing evidence, which is known by the staff member not to be the

learner's own, to be included in a learner's assignment/task/portfolio/ coursework facilitating and allowing impersonation
- Misusing the conditions for special learner requirements, for example where learners are permitted support, such as an amanuensis, this is permissible up to the point where the support has the potential to influence the outcome of the assessment
- Failing to keep learner computer files secure
- Falsifying records/certificates, for example by alteration, substitution, or by fraud
- Fraudulent certificate claims, that is, claiming for a certificate prior to the learner completing all the requirements of assessment
- Failing to keep assessment/examination/test papers secure prior to the assessment/ examination/test
- Failing to validate the identity of learners taking an examination/test obtaining unauthorised access to assessment/examination/test material prior to an assessment/examination/test.

Penalties and Sanctions Applied by BSL First

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

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

15. Complaints and Appeals Policy

Complaints regarding the building or facilities

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

Complaints regarding a course

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

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

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

Appealing against an external assessment decision

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

For more information about Signature's appeals policy, please see: http://www.signature.org.uk/documents/deliver/document_library/appeals_procedure.pdf.

Appealing against an internal assessment decision

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

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

16. Data Protection Policy

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

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

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

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

Individuals will be made aware that their information has been collected, and the intended use of the data specified either on collection. This may be verbally or written.

Personal data will be collected and processed only to the extent that it is needed to fulfil business needs or legal requirements.

Personal data held will be kept up to date and accurate.

Personal data will be processed in accordance with the rights of the individuals about whom the personal data are held.

Appropriate technical, organisational and administrative security measures to safeguard personal data will be in place.

Staff will report any actual, near miss, or suspected data breaches to the Managing Director for investigation. Lessons learned during the investigation of breaches will be relayed to those processing information to enable necessary improvements to be made.

Any unauthorised use of corporate email by staff, including sending of sensitive or personal data to unauthorised persons, or use that brings BSL First into disrepute will be regarded as a breach of this policy.

Staff will use appropriate protective markings to protect and secure any document containing personal information. In this way informing recipients of the document of the measures that need to be employed for its appropriate handling.

Members of staff will have access to personal data only where it is required as part of their functional remit.

Data subjects, who wish to make a comment or complaint about how BSL First is processing their data, or about BSL First's handling of their request for information, should contact the Managing Director at akbar.sikder@bslfirst.com.

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

17. Extenuating Circumstances Policy

Section 1: Introduction

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

The procedure applies to all forms of assessment which:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Section 3: Impaired Performance in a Completed Assessment

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

Section 4: Standard of Evidence

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

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

Section 5: Acceptable Circumstances

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

- **Long-Term Illness**
  An original medical certificate or letter from an appropriate medical professional (or equivalent) confirming the nature of the illness and the likely impact it has had on the student's ability to undertake formal assessment.
- **Short-Term Illness**
  Short-term illness (less than 7 days) will not normally be regarded as an extenuating circumstance with regard to assessed coursework, where the student is given a number of weeks/months to complete and submit such work. It shall be for the teacher or Managing Director to decide whether this has affected the student's performance and whether an extension to a deadline should be granted.
- **Bereavement**
  Where there is a demonstrably close relationship between the student and the deceased, a death certificate or a letter confirming the death from an independent person (usually not a family member) with their contact details provided.
- **Acute Personal/Emotional Circumstances**
  An original medical certificate or letter from an appropriate medical professional (or equivalent) confirming the nature of the illness and/or circumstances and the likely impact it has had on the student's ability to undertake formal assessment.
- **Hospitalisation**
  A medical letter/certificate from the relevant hospital confirming the nature and severity of the student's circumstances and the likely impact it has had on the student's ability to undertake formal assessment.
- **Family illness**

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

- **Victim of Crime**
  A written statement of events, which is supported by written evidence from the Police (including a crime reference number). Where relevant, an original medical certificate or letter from an appropriate medical professional (or equivalent) confirming the impact the reported crime has had on the student's ability to undertake formal assessment.
- **Religious Observance**
  If the student has submitted an extenuating circumstances request by the required deadline and it has not been possible to make alternative arrangements, BSL First should take reasonable steps to provide an alternative assessment opportunity. Absence from an assessment for reason of religious observance, where no extenuating circumstances request has been submitted, or where the relevant permission for absence has not been obtained prior to the assessment, will not be deemed an acceptable extenuating circumstance.

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

Section 6: Confidentiality of Evidence

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

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

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

Section 7: Unacceptable Circumstances

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

- **Transport issues**
  It is expected that students will ensure that they arrive at the assessment on time, irrespective of the form of transport used or relied upon. An inability to travel as a result of circumstances beyond the student's control may though constitute sufficient cause.
- **Pre-booked holidays**
  It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they are available for all assessments. All holidays should take place at a time that will not impact on the student's availability to undertake or prepare for an assessment.
- **Misreading the examination timetable**
  It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they know and remember the location, time and duration of all formal assessments.
- **Paid employment or voluntary work**
  It is expected that students will ensure that any paid employment or voluntary work does not interfere with their ability to engage with their studies or assessments.
- **‘Exam Stress'**
  Feeling ‘below par' leading up to and during an assessment(s) is a common experience of many students. It is not considered to be an acceptable extenuating circumstance.

- **IT and/or Computer failure**
  Loss or corruption of files is not an acceptable extenuating circumstance. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all work, which is electronically stored, generated and/or submitted, is sufficiently backed up.
- **Criminal conviction**
  If a student is convicted of a criminal offence any disruption caused by the investigation or sentence is not an acceptable extenuating circumstance.

18. Equality and Diversity Policy

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

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

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

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

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

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

Role of Learners

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

Role of Managing Director

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

Role of Teaching Staff

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

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.

19. Examinations Policy

Before the Exam

Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations

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

Complaints and Appeals

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

Assessment Dates

All assessments will take place during normal classroom hours.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Taking the Assessment

Learners must arrive 10 minutes before their allocated time slot.

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

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

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

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

All mobile phones and electronic equipment must be switched off.

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

After the Exam

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

Exam Results

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

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

20. 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 Learners from, the Centre) BSL First will implement the following arrangements where appropriate:

1. Upon receipt of the notification, the Head of Compliance and Quality Assurance will be responsible for taking the request forward and for ensuring that BSL First takes all reasonable steps to protect the interests of any learners currently registered on the qualification(s). This will include:

2. Work with Signature and/or any Learners affected by the withdrawal in order to transfer them – where possible and feasible – to another Centre to enable them to carry on with the qualification(s) they are registered on.

3. If no alternative Centres are available/suitable for any Learners affected by the withdrawal, and/or the Learners do not wish to carry on with the qualification(s), they will seek to ensure the Learners are certificated for any units they have completed to date in accordance with the requirements of the associated qualification specification(s).

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

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

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

What if learners are unhappy about the situation?

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

21. Refund Policy

A full refund will be made in the following circumstances:

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

A part refund will be made in the following circumstances:

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

No refund will be made in the following circumstances:

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

22. Course Withdrawal and Deferral Policy

This policy sets out how BSL First aims to deal with and support students in the event they are forced to withdraw or defer their studies due to non-completion of coursework, missing deadlines or failing assessments.

Students have two options:

Option 1: Withdraw from the course and find an alternative supervisor or training provider to take over their TSLI supervision. No refund is due.

In this case, the student will be unenrolled from BSL First and will lose their student status, access to Moodle and TSLI endorsement. The new TSLI supervisor or training provider will become responsible for transferring the student to an approved development plan and submitting this to NRCPD for approval.

Option 2: Pay a monthly fee to remain enrolled as a student.

In this case, the student will continue be enrolled with BSL First and will keep their student status, access to Moodle and TSLI endorsement. The student must continue to submit outstanding coursework via Moodle.

A monthly rolling fee is due for each month the student remains enrolled. Contact the office for current fees. This is in addition to the original course fee and any outstanding course fees must still be paid.

The following process will apply:

If a student does not complete or fails Part 1 internal assessments

In the event that a student does not complete or fails Part 1 internal assessments, the student will not be allowed to continue on to Part 2 and must defer their Part 2 assessments.

The student must continue to submit Part 1 assessments until all assessment requirements have been satisfied.

The student will be allocated a named supervisor and assessor. The student must have a supervision meeting with their nominated supervisor/assessor at least once every three months.

If there is no contact from the student after 3 months or if no assessments have been submitted after 3 months of the deferral date, the student will be automatically unenrolled form the course. This will result in their access to Moodle and TSLI endorsement being cancelled. No refund is due.

If a student does not complete or fails Part 2 internal assessments

In the event that a student does not complete or fails Part 2 internal assessments, the student will not be entered for the Part 2 external assessments.

The student will need to defer the external assessments until the following year (subject to availability) or sit the external assessments with another training provider.

The student must continue to submit outstanding coursework to Moodle.

The student will be allocated a named supervisor and assessor. The student must have a supervision meeting with their nominated supervisor/assessor at least once every three months.

If there is no contact from the student after 3 months or if no assessments have been submitted after 3 months of the deferral date, the student will be automatically unenrolled form the course. This will result in their access to Moodle and TSLI endorsement being cancelled. No refund is due.