Language of Examinations

2nd edition 2003 – updated October 2011

BAI ODI

The British Association of Teachers of the Deaf

Contents

Foreword

The first discussions on the possibility of modifying examination questions for deaf candidates took place over thirty years ago. These involved the City and Guilds Examination Board (C&G) and Teachers of the Deaf (ToDs) working in Further Education (FE).

Deaf students using practical skills at work might well understand the reasons behind what they were doing but their problem lay in passing the written examination without which they could earn neither the qualification nor the recognised money for the job. ToDs had the difficult task, at trial examination meetings, of persuading C&G to let them demonstrate how they wished to modify the examination questions and then convincing Examiners to let them do so.

Concurrently the National Study Group in Further and Higher Education (which became NATED) was starting up with the aim of providing mutual support to ToDs working in isolation, often in an initially hostile college setting. This new group ran the first training sessions for ToDs willing to modify C&G papers.

In 1986, following some years of success with the modification of various vocational examination papers, the National Bureau for Handicapped Students (which became SKILL) decided in advance of the new GCSE examinations to set up a committee to advise Examination Boards on the arrangements necessary to give disabled candidates access to them. This committee included a representative from each main disability and a year later joined with a representative from each Examination Board to form the Advisory Board, responsible for special arrangements for candidates with disabilities. For deaf candidates the emphasis was on modification of questions, so many more modifiers would be needed. The BATOD GCSE sub-committee was therefore set up to liaise with the representative on the Advisory Board and to be responsible for training more teachers to do this work.

In view of the changes in the format of many examination questions it is time for a more detailed replacement of the booklet produced in 1989. I am very pleased to have been asked to write a foreword for the 2003 2nd edition. I am sure that the examples given will offer valuable guidance to many teachers, both those new to the job of modification and those with experience. I hope that they find as much interest and satisfaction as I have always done in this very challenging and important work.

<div align="right">

Joyce Sutton
(member of the original BATOD GCSE sub-committee)
April 2003

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The review of this publication in October 2011 is an interim. BATOD is currently in the process of preparing an accredited on-line course which will be available to a range of professionals and will cover the language needs of a wide range of candidates.

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Introduction

The main purpose of this publication is to offer guidelines to Teachers of the Deaf (ToDs) and others who write examinations or who modify the language for the benefit of deaf candidates. Throughout this publication the term deaf will be used to denote the full range of hearing loss.

It is important to remember that language modification also benefits a range of other candidates.

The principles outlined in the publication may be applied to any written examination or to the language modification of any text. We hope this publication will help teachers and support staff to become more familiar with the principles of language modification. Perhaps it will also stimulate ideas about how to make written material more accessible to deaf students, or others whose limitations of language inhibit learning.

The number and type of examinations are growing and there is an increasing number of modular courses which require frequent assessment. As a consequence, more modification and more language modifiers capable of revising public examinations are required.

Language modification can be requested for general and vocational examinations. These examinations are now administered by awarding bodies, The main awarding bodies in England and Wales are:

  * Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA)
  * Education Excellence (EDEXCEL)
  * Oxford, Cambridge and RSA (OCR)
  * Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC)

In Scotland, examinations are administered by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and in Northern Ireland by the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)

Both the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf (BATOD) and the National Association for Tertiary Education for the Deaf (NATED) are concerned that there should be enough language modifiers and that the standard of language modification should be consistent and of good quality. A joint committee (BATNAT) was therefore established to train potential language modifiers, to assess their capability and to supply the four awarding bodies with a list of modifiers accredited by BATNAT. It is hoped that the awarding bodies will continue to rely on accredited language modifiers so that standards can be maintained. This booklet owes much to material presented in the BATNAT training sessions undertaken in 2001-2. During 2011-12 BATOD is involved in establishing an online course to train language modifiers.

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The role of ToDs in language modification of examinations

Most awarding bodies now recognise the role that can be played by ToDs in modifying questions for deaf candidates. Examiners are also increasingly aware of unwittingly using language that effectively tests reading skills and consequently obscures a paper's function in assessing the skills and concepts taught in a particular subject. Some awarding bodies now employ ToDs to share their expertise when an examination paper is prepared.

Modification at source

* The Chief Examiner (CE) or Principal Examiner (PE) sets the paper.
* The paper is sent to a reviser who checks the paper to ensure it fulfills the criteria and checks the comparability with other papers.
* The Awarding Body sends the paper to the committee members, including the language modifier and the subject reviser.
* The committee members scrutinise the questions and send in a report on the paper. The ToD has a reviser status, but with a brief to ensure that the questions are accessible to deaf candidates.
* The CE/PE redrafts the paper in the light of comments received. The paper is sent out to the committee again, together with all original reports. The ToD is not involved at this stage.
* Committee meets to agree final draft.

Modification at source creates a common examination in which deaf candidates have the same status as others. The ToD learns examination procedure and requirements and the committee becomes more aware of language used in writing questions. Issues of layout can be discussed as well as the language of questions. On the other hand, some compromises have to be made. There may also be issues related to the ToD attending meetings in work time. The ToD is not always invited to the meeting and their written comments will be considered

Secondary Modification

* The examining panel finalises the paper.
* If there has been a request for a modified version for a deaf candidate, a ToD or other accredited modifier is asked to modify it.
* The modified version is then available for issue to all candidates taking that paper.
* The ToD is either invited to the examination group's premises to modify the paper or the finalised paper is sent to the modifier's home. In either case, modification may be rejected without the ToD's knowledge.
* If paper has been modified at source, no further language modification is available.
* Modifying from home obviously involves confidentiality and security. In this situation, papers must be kept safe, there should be no discussion of questions except with the subject officer and correspondence should be by post or secure email.

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General advice on language modification of examinations

1   The first axiom of modification is that a modified question should require the same subject skills, knowledge and concepts as the original question and enable the candidate to meet the same assessment objectives.

2   The whole question should be considered, its meaning and the response required ascertained. If in doubt, the mark scheme or a subject officer should be consulted. This is assuming that the procedure in operation allows this. Otherwise, if the question is really felt to contain some ambiguity, it may be necessary to offer two versions, leaving the choice to the examiners.

3   Modify a question only when it is necessary to make it accessible. Identify vocabulary that is technical or subject-specific; such words and phrases cannot be modified.

4   Consider modification of paragraphs and full sentences rather than of phrases and single words. It is possible to use bullet point lists, tables and diagrams if they solve a carrier language difficulty. The style of language modification should be consistent throughout the paper.

5   Although considerable re-structuring of long questions will almost always be necessary, changes which interfere with the matching of questions to the mark scheme are unlikely to be acceptable.   So sections and sub-sections of questions (a, b, c; (i), (ii), (iii) etc) should be retained in the same form.

6   There are two groups of words or phrases which present difficulties but which it is often necessary to retain.

There are the standard forms of question and instruction which occur in most examination papers, for example: *describe briefly, suggest, explain.* It is not usually considered appropriate to simplify these, for example to change *describe* to *write down*. There is a case for modifying instruction words with double meaning such as *sketch* or *illustrate*.

Identify command words. These should rarely be changed and only then with awareness of the hierarchy of command words and reference to the mark scheme.

There is also a substantial body of vocabulary which is abstract and undoubtedly difficult for many candidates, but which is used in a wide variety of contexts and is almost impossible to change in an acceptable way (for example: *cause, effect, suitable, factor, feature, reason*). Students should be aware of the meaning of such words.

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7   Many examination papers make use of 'source material.' Within this term it is possible to differentiate between genuine source material and examiner-generated material. Genuine source material is from real documents, for example a quote from a text book or an extract from a letter or newspaper. Examiner-generated material is not attributed to a particular source or is 'based on' a certain source. It may be possible to modify the latter category of source material but not the former. The use of a small glossary might also be considered.

8   Modification of examination language should not be regarded as a concession but as a right for those needing this access arrangement as a reasonable adjustment. Nevertheless, any suggested modifications may be rejected by examiners. Possible reasons could be that the meaning of a question has, in their opinion, been altered, that certain words or phrases are essential to the study of a particular subject, or that the style is inappropriate. We hope that now a list of accredited modifiers is established, there might be more dialogue between examiners and language modifiers so that each party can learn from the work and experience of the other.

Modification and the awarding bodies

Two important documents are available both in hard copy and online.

- *'Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration 2011112. General and Vocational Qualifications'* is published by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). This document clarifies all special considerations available for SEN candidates and how to apply on behalf of these candidates.

- *'Fair Access by design: Guidance for qualifications regulators and awarding bodies on designing inclusive qualificaions 2010, CCEA, DCELLS, Ofqual'* This document clarifies aspects of modification with examples and could/should be used with *'Language of Examinations'* (BATOD 2003)

The present situation is that BATOD holds a list of all BATOD accredited language modifiers. It is hoped that the awarding bodies will request language modifiers from this list but they are not obliged to do so. To extend the number and calibre of language modifiers BATOD is planning to introduce a new course which will be available to a wide range of professionals and will cover the language needs of a wide range of candidates.

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Useful Addresses

England

Office of Qualifications and Examination Regulation
Ofqual
Spring Place
Coventry Business Park
Herald Avenue
Coventry
CV5 6UB
Tel: 0300 303 3344
www.ofqual.gov.uk

Joint Council for Qualifications
JCQ
Sixth Floor
29 Great Peter Street
London
SW1P 3LW
Tel: 020 7638 4132
www.jcq.org.uk

AQA
Stag Hill House
Guildford
Surrey
GU2 7XJ
Tel: 01483 506506
www.aqa.org.uk

Senior Special Requirements Officer
Edexcel
190 High Holborn
London
WC1V 7BH
Tel: 0844 5760026
www.edexcel.org.uk

Special Arrangements Manager
OCR
Syndicate Buildings
1 Hills Road,
Cambridge
CB1 2EU
Tel: 01223 553998
www.ocr.org.uk

Standard and Testings Agency
STA
Test papers: 0300 303 3013
STA publications order line: 0300 303 3015

Northern Ireland

Senior Executive Officer
Centre Support
CCEA
29 Clarendon Road
Clarendon Dock
Belfast BT1 3BG
Tel: 02890 261200
www.rewardinglearning.org.uk

Scotland

Special Assessment Arrangements
Scottish Qualifications Authority (**SQA**)
Ironmills Road
Dalkeith
Midlothian
EH22 1LE

Scottish Qualifications Authority
The Optima Building
58 Robertson Street
Glasgow
G2 8DQ
Tel: 0303 333 0330
Candidate and General Enquiries 0845 279 1000
www.sqa.org.uk

Wales

Assistant Director (Communication)
Welsh Joint Education Committee (**WJEC**)
245 Western Avenue
Cardiff
CF5 2YX
Tel: 02920 265000
www.wjec.co.uk

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Modifying language

Notes on question paper instructions/rubric

1 Advice

Advice should be in the second person (ie 'you') and in the active voice, for example:

You must use all the information to get full marks.

2 Instructions

The plain imperative should be used and the number of questions answered should be in words, for example:

*Answer **five** questions*
*Answer Questions 1 and 2 and **three** other questions*

3 Repeated Instructions

Even if instructions are clearly stated on the front page, the instructions for each section should be repeated below the heading for the section, for example:

On the front page   *answer **two** questions from Section A*
At the top of Section A   *answer **two** questions from this section*

Where a paper has a mixture of compulsory and optional sections, an instruction should be printed under the option headings, for example:

On the front page   *Answer Section A and either Section B or Section C*
Under Section C   *Do not answer this section if you have answered Section B*

4 Arrangement

Separate the instructions, for example:

*Answer **two** questions*

*Choose **one** question from Section A and **one** question from Section B*

5 Marks

The following should be used to give the mark value for each question or part question:

The number of marks is given in brackets ( ) at the end of each question or part question.

This should be under the heading *'Information for Candidates'*.

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Example of modifying the rubric

These modifications were made for a 'mock' Dance GCSE exam.
Modifications include changes in timing and procedure normally allowed by an awarding body.

Original version

Instructions to Candidates

Answer **all** the questions in the spaces provided in the answer book

* After the first viewing, ten minutes will be allowed for you to read the question paper. During this viewing and reading time you must not begin writing.
* The extract will be shown four more times with approximately a two minute interval between each viewing. You may make notes on the supplementary sheets provided throughout these four viewings and intervals but you should not write your answers on the question paper.
* You will have a further one and a half hours in which to complete the paper.

Information for Candidates

* You will be shown a video extract from 'Still Life at the Penguin Café' choreographed by David Bintley and performed by the Royal Ballet. You will see this extract five times.
* An insert has been provided for use with Question 17.
* The number of marks is given in brackets at the end of each question.
* You will be awarded marks for accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar.

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Modified version

Information

♦ You will watch a video extract from 'Still Life at the Penguin Café' choreographed by David Bintley and performed by the Royal Ballet.
You will see this extract five times.

♦ There is a picture to help you with Question 17.

♦ The number of marks is given in brackets ( ) at the end of each question.

♦ You are given marks for accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Instructions

♦ Watch the video for the first time.
You then have twelve minutes to read the question paper.
You must not write anything yet.

♦ Watch the video **four** more times. The tape will be stopped so that you can make notes.

♦ Write notes on the sheets, **not** on the question paper.

♦ You have another 1 hour 53 minutes to finish the paper.

♦ Answer all the questions.

♦ Write your answers in this book.

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Ground rules for modifying an examination paper

1   Separate the question from the information.

Weak readers find it easier to have introductory information followed by a question in a simple form presented as a separate sentence and on a separate line.

2   Use shorter sentences.

Shorter sentences are easier to assimilate and are less likely to include difficult grammatical structures.

3   Separate multiple questions.

Examiners sometimes include several parts of a question in one sentence. These should be separated and presented as individual items.

4   Refer to mark scheme, specification and subject material and Awarding Bodies' websites to confirm and further your understanding.

Successful modification depends on knowing what the examiner is expecting from the candidate.
Subject knowledge also helps to identify technical vocabulary.

5   Choose the most frequently used word or phrase when possible for the non-technical terms (carrier language); for example, make not *produce,* use not *utilise,* need not *require.*

The 'COBUILD'* dictionaries identify the frequency with which words are used.

6   Try to avoid
   - double meanings (for example: *present, stable, key*)
   - idioms (for example: *trigger off, wide of the mark*)
   - phrasal verbs (for example: *get up, cut off, put over, fall in, set to,* etc.)
   - jargon (for example: *hype, spin-doctor*).

*   www.cobuild.collins.co.uk
Harper Collins Publishers
Westerhill Road
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Example to show
- separating question from information
- separating multiple questions
- using shorter sentences

Original version

(a) *Before data are inputted to the ENTRY file, validation tests are carried out by the system.*

(i) *Explain, with the aid of a suitable example, how it is possible for incorrect data to pass the validation tests.*

(ii) *Explain how these errors can be reduced*

(b) *The candidate number starts with the college registration number. State one advantage to WEB of using this system.*

(c) *(i)* *Draw a diagram to illustrate the structure of one record of the ENTRY file. Indicate the length of each field, and hence calculate the maximum length of one record.*

(d) *Describe a suitable backup system that would reduce the risk of losing data from the ENTRY file in the event of a hardware failure.*

Modified version

(a)   You want to input data to the ENTRY file.
        First the system does validation tests, then you input the data

(i)   Explain how incorrect data can pass the validation tests.
        Give a suitable example.

(ii)   What can you do to reduce these errors?

(b)   *As original*

(c)   (i)   Draw a diagram to show the structure of one record of the ENTRY file.
               Write down the length of each field.
               Then calculate the maximum length of one record.

(d)   There may be a hardware failure.
        You might lose data from the ENTRY file.
        You need to reduce the risk of losing data from the entry file.
        Describe a suitable backup system.

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Example of use of double meaning and phrasal verb

Original version

double meaning

*Midtown Council plans to **conduct** a survey. They want to find out if people want money to be spent on improving the sports facilities in the town.*

*This is how the Council plans to **carry out** the survey…*

phrasal verb/ double meaning

Modified version

Midtown Council is planning a survey. They want to know if people want money to be spent on improving sports facilities in the town.

This is how the Council plans to do the survey…

NB
An examiner may refuse to accept 'do the survey' as a modification, claiming that 'carry out the survey' is a commonly used expression.

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Grammatical structures which are difficult for weak readers

This section looks at grammatical structures that are particularly difficult for weak readers, including many deaf candidates. It focuses on features which often occur in examination questions.

Examples, shown in red italics and bulleted, are taken from a range of examination papers. The main aim of this section is to show how to recognise difficult structures rather than to provide model modifications.

Subordinate Clauses

Complex sentences are created when subordinate clauses are linked to the main clause in a sentence. Weak readers often find such sentences hard to interpret. To make a text easier to read, we can reduce the amount of subordination, or make sure that where it does occur, it is in short, easy-to-read sentences.

Most subordinate clauses are introduced by a connecting word.
The most common subordinators include:
> *who, what, which, whose, where, when, how, if, whether, that*

Very often, using a complex sentence is a way of condensing a lot of information into a small unit of writing. These can be very hard for weak readers.

- *Psychologists have suggested **that** the effect of the audience on the players would disappear **if** the audience wore blindfolds.*

There are two subordinators here: **that** and **if**.

We could rewrite it to separate out these subordinate clauses:

Psychologists saw that the audience had an effect on the players.
But what would happen if the audience could not see the players?
The psychologists wanted the audience to wear blindfolds.
They thought the effect of the audience on the players would then disappear.

In this example the word *blindfolds* has been clarified. It may be a technical term in GCSE Psychology, as the word comes up in many experiments. It would be sensible to check this sentence with the examiner.

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Examiners often use relative clauses; that is, subordinate clauses that modify a noun.

• *Name one extraneous variable **which** should be controlled in this experiment.*

Which is the subordinator here. The relative clause modifies the noun variable. Relative clauses can often be overcome by using shorter sentences.

One solution to this question might be:
Extraneous variables should be controlled.
Name one extraneous variable in this experiment.

Impersonal and Passive Verbs

Passives are widely used in educational texts, particularly for science or technical subjects. The passive voice is useful because the focus is on the process, not on who did it. Good readers can deduce who did it and interpret the verb phrases correctly. Weak readers don't get the overall idea of what has happened.

• *Two metal plates may be riveted together by placing a white-hot rivet in the hole through the two plates. The head of the rivet is then hammered flat. Explain why the plates are held more tightly together when the rivet has cooled.*

The solution for weak readers is to change the passives to actives as far as possible. This does mean that the person doing the action becomes more of a focus than is wanted in a question about process. However, we know that weak readers have great difficulty in working out who is doing the action when they read passives.

One solution to this metal work question would be:
A metal worker rivets two metal plates together.
He puts a white-hot rivet in the hole through the two plates.
Then he hammers the head of the rivet until it is flat.
The rivet cools and the plates are now very tightly held together.
Why are the plates held so tightly together, now they are cold?

There is still one passive verb phrase in here, but it is easier to understand because the sentence length is much shorter. Some examiners do not like the introduction of characters and particularly not names.

Question writers often introduce names to avoid the passive, but in some cases this backfires because weak readers do not always recognise them as names, especially when they come at the start of a sentence.

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Adverbial connectors

These are words or phrases which connect sentences or parts of sentences.
Common examples are *unless, provided that* and *although*.
Weak readers often can not understand the logical connections.

- *Finally, <u>only when</u> he hit a bouncing ping pong ball with his beak towards another pigeon was Buris given a food pellet.*

One solution might be:

> In the last experiment, scientists gave Buris a food pellet when he did a complicated series of actions. He had to hit a bouncing ping pong ball and his beak had to be towards another pigeon.

This version gets rid of the adverbial subordinator *only when*. It seems to be an introduction to a question which could be improved by the addition of a picture.

- *How does a real-life setting affect the rate of bystander intervention <u>when compared with</u> a laboratory setting?*

An attempt at modifying this GCSE Psychology question could be:

> Bystander intervention happens in the laboratory and in real-life settings.
> Compare the rate of bystander intervention in these two places.

This example shows how important it is to have a subject specialist modifying exam papers. It would be useful to check with the examiner that the modified question is not likely to mislead the candidate

Two negatives near each other

These are likely to be confusing for all readers, especially weak ones. Sometimes, one of the negatives is shown by word choice; for example, *hardly, lack, despite, nor, neither*.

- *Experimental studies of obedience have been criticised for a number of reasons. Discuss two <u>criticisms</u> which are <u>not</u> based on ethical issues.*

The word *criticism* has negative meaning, and the *not* is nearby. In addition the first sentence has a passive.

One solution might be:

> Psychologists have criticised studies of obedience because of ethical issues.
> Some psychologists have criticised studies of obedience for other reasons.
> Discuss two criticisms that are for other reasons.

There is no one correct way to modify language. When you find complex exam questions, check with the examiner that your version has exactly the same meaning.

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Questions embedded in statements

This format is often used in tests and exams. Weak readers are penalised because they can't easily see what the question is asking. A good solution is to give the information first and then ask the question in a separate sentence.

* *How has the introduction of man-made boards to <u>replace wooden boards</u> affected the method of fixing tabletops to frames?*

A possible modification:

> Fifty years ago joiners used wooden boards to make table tops.
> Explain how they used to fit wooden boards to the table frames.
>
> We use man-made boards to make table tops now.
> Explain how we fix man-made boards to the table frames today.

Check with the examiner to see if the modified version is too laborious. The mark scheme may not require the candidate to explain earlier fixing methods.

Ellipsis

Writers often leave out a phrase in order not to repeat it. Repeated phrases are seen as clumsy. Poor readers don't know to look back to reconstitute the full phrase.

* *Thirty-eight of her neighbours came to their windows when she cried out in terror. <u>None</u> came to her assistance even though her stalker attacked her for over an hour.*

This is another example from GCSE Psychology. It shows the word *none* referring back to the noun phrase *'thirty-eight of her neighbours'* in sentence one. The reference needs to be made more explicit for weak readers.

Thirty-eight of her neighbours came to their windows when she cried out in terror.
But none of these neighbours came to help her, even though the stalker attacked her for over an hour.

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Difficult question words

Some question words are more difficult to interpret than others.
'*How*' is particularly hard and can usually be rephrased to make the meaning clearer to the candidate.

- *How would you decide whether or not there was inter-observer reliability in your study?*

The question will still need to be a *how* question, but it would be easier to interpret if it were shorter.

> Did you have inter-observer reliability in your study?
> Explain how you know if you have inter-observer reliability.

To modify this question successfully you would need to see the complete question and the mark scheme, to make sure that the modified version produces the correct response. The phrase underlined is technical vocabulary that could not be modified.

Combinations

Examination questions are more difficult to read if they include several of the above constructions at once. A very common combination is a relative clause and a passive.

(a)   Passive and **relative clause**

- *Describe a study in which it was shown that perception was affected by motivation.*

- *Apart from the bystander effect, discuss at least two other ways in which the presence of others has been shown to influence the behaviour of individuals.*

(b)   Two **relative clauses**

In this example, one relative clause is embedded in other

- *Write down the co-ordinates of a point that is on the line whose equation is x + y = 6*

(c)   **Subordinate clause** and passive

- *Indicate in your answer the reason why the study was conducted.*

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Non-finite clauses

These often make sentences in examination questions unnecessarily long. A non-finite clause can be identified because it cannot stand alone as a sentence. It is better to make a finite and shorter separate sentence with the same meaning.

These examples are from A level Sociology:

- *Using information from the items and elsewhere, assess the usefulness of 'individualistic' theories of the causes of poverty.*

A possible modification:

> Are 'individualistic' theories about the causes of poverty useful?
> Assess how useful they are. Use information from the items and from your other reading.

- *Identify and briefly describe two problems in trying to measure how much poverty there is in society.*

A possible modification:

> Can we measure how much poverty there is in society?
> Identify and briefly describe two problems we may find when we try to measure poverty.

- *Calculate the ratio of the sides of Rectangle A to the corresponding sides of Rectangle B giving your answer on the form of 1:n.*

A possible modification:

> Calculate the ratio of the sides of Rectangle A to the corresponding sides of Rectangle B.
> Give your answer in the form 1:n.

Conclusion

As a modifier, you don't have to be able to analyse exam questions grammatically, but if you can spot a complex structure, you will be more confident in deciding which sentences need to be altered.

If you are in an examiners' meeting, it also helps if you can explain why you want to modify a particular sentence.

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Modifying source material/longer texts/case studies

Modifying longer texts requires additional skills. You may find the following suggestions helpful.

- Before starting the modification, study all the questions in detail alongside the text.
- Read the whole paper and mark scheme (if available) to get a feel for tone and style.

Then you can do any combination of the following:

- Red-pen editing.
    Get rid of any unnecessary, unhelpful information.

- Re-organisation of information
    Put information into logical or chronological order.

- Creation of fact files
    Separate facts using lists or bullet points.

- Tabulation
    Information is often more accessible in a table.

- Creation of webs
    Use 'spidergrams' or similar to illustrate information.

- Highlighting
    Use bold. Try to avoid using upper case letters to highlight as the 'coastline' of words or phrases is then lost.

- Framing key information
    Use boxes to focus attention.

- Creating headings - 'key idea'; 'extra information'
    To draw attention to important information and give this prominence.

- Re-draft using all the other advice on the modification of language.

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Notes on Legibility and Layout

NB   Many of these suggestions can not be implemented when making secondary modifications. Font type and size need to be consistent throughout the paper. Highlighting words may be seen as giving deaf candidates an unfair advantage, although some subjects in an awarding body may have a highlighting policy.

Legibility

Font
- Choose fonts which have clear shapes of letters and numbers.
- Use at least 12 point for main text. No part of the paper should be less than 10 point.
- Use bold to highlight specific words and phrases.

Spacing
- Long lines of text set closely together are difficult to read. The longer the lines, the more important the amount of space between them becomes.
- Double spacing between statements or questions and treble spacing between sections helps to improve legibility.

Diagrams, Pictures and Photographs
- Ensure good contrast and definition
- Reproduce at a size that ensures relevant points and text are easily seen
- Ensure titles and labels are clear and set against a contrasting background.
- Lines and arrows joining labels to diagrams can be confusing. A key might be clearer.

Layout

- Consider the structure of a page. Use headings and sub-headings that cue readers in to the content of the text.
- Long or complex sentences are better split up by using bullet points or numbered lists.
- Use features such as bold, italic or boxes to provide reading cues and to focus attention.
- Instructions should be clear. They should be separate from and precede the question. They should be repeated when necessary.
- It may help to use a new line for a sentence containing a new idea.
- Weak readers are helped by regular spacing. Thus *'align left'* might be a better alignment than '*justify'*.
- Put text close to relevant pictures/diagram to enable candidate to relate the two effectively.
- A question should begin and end on the same page or at least on the same double spread.

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Examples of questions
with suggestions for language modification

Sample questions/part questions and supporting texts with suggestions for modification (our underlining)

1   ***Original***

*Sunlight contains ultra violet radiation called UVB. Ozone in the atmosphere absorbs UVB radiation. Experiments have shown that UVB radiation kills phytoplankton near to the surface of the sea. This may result in plankton **being driven down** to deeper depths in the ocean. **Man-made pollutants** eg CFCs can severely reduce the amount of ozone in the atmosphere.*

(passive)

(superfluous information)

*Using this information explain why the energy available to consumers in the food web in Fig.3 **is likely to be reduced as a result of pollution due to CFCs.***

(passive... need to separate information and question)

Possible modification

- Sunlight contains ultra violet radiation called UVB.
- Ozone in the atmosphere absorbs UVB radiation.
- Experiments have shown that UVB radiation kills phytoplankton near to the surface of the sea.
- Radiation can force plankton down to greater depths.
- CFC pollution can reduce the amount of ozone in the atmosphere.

CFC pollution means that there is likely to be less energy for consumers in the food web in fig.3.
Explain why.
Use the information in the bullet points above to help you explain.

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2　***Original***

[adverbial connector]

[abstract noun]

Since 1970 there has been a great increase in fishing for krill. Concern about potential overfishing in the Antarctic has led to the establishment of the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). (Information supplied by the Worldwide Fund for Nature).

With reference to the food web in Fig.3 explain why there is such concern over the potential overfishing of krill.

[question is hidden after a long phrase]

Possible modification

There has been a great increase in fishing for krill since 1970.
People have been concerned about overfishing, so they have set up the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR).

Why are people worried about the overfishing of krill?
Use the food web in Fig.3 to help you explain.

3　***Original***

[complex comparative sentences]

The yellow alloy brass does not corrode easily.
Brass is a mixture of the metals copper and zinc. The more zinc in the brass the lighter the colour becomes. More zinc in brass makes it hard-wearing. The bigger the percentage of copper in brass, the easier the brass is to shape. More copper in brass makes the yellow colour darker.

[confusing layout]

Possible modification

Here is some information about brass

- Brass is a yellow alloy. It does not corrode easily.
- Brass is a mixture of the metals copper and zinc.
- More zinc makes the brass a lighter yellow colour.
- More copper makes the brass easier to shape.
- More copper makes the brass a darker yellow colour.

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4 *Original*

Uniforms can be used to identify people and members of specific groups, eg pupils at certain schools. — unhelpful information

An infant school has decided to re-design their summer uniform.

(a) *Give* **five** *important design criteria* [technical vocabulary - do not modify] *you would consider when designing an infant school uniform.* [relative clause]

Possible modification

An infant school wants a new summer uniform.
You are asked to design the new uniform.

(a)   What five design criteria do you think are important?

5 *Original*

[unnecesary information] [non-finite clause]

It is impossible to stop earthquakes from occurring but it is possible to prevent the extent of the damage and loss of life. Suggest THREE things that people should do in the event of an earthquake. [hidden question]

Possible modification

There is an earthquake.
What should people do to reduce damage and loss of life?
Suggest three things that people should do if there is an earthquake.

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6   *Original*

difficult question word

embedded question and relative clause

(i)   How much use could Richard Pipes (Source A) make of both the origin and content of Source F to justify his view that 'Stalin sincerely regarded himself as a disciple of Lenin' (Source A line 55)?

multiple question

(4)

(ii)   Both Richard Pipes (Source A) and Isaac Deutcher (Source C) make use of the evidence of Source E to support each of their interpretations of Stalin's rise to power. Explain why this same evidence can be used to support contrasting arguments.

need for direct questions

(6)

Possible modification

(i)   Richard Pipes writes in Source A that 'Stalin sincerely regarded himself as a disciple of Lenin' (Source A line 55).

How useful is Source F in supporting Pipes' view?   (4)
Think about both the origin and content of Source F

This is still difficult but it is a common question format on evidence-based GCSE History papers, which candidates should recognise.

(ii)   Richard Pipes (Source A) and Isaac Deutcher (Source C) interpret Stalin's rise to power in different ways. They both use evidence from Source E to support their views.

Why can the same evidence be used to support these two contrasting arguments?   *(6)*

7   *Original*

three relative clauses

Identify any two factors which you should avoid when you design a building where physically disabled people must be able to access the building.

Possible modification

You are designing a building.
Physically disabled people must have access to the building.

Give **two** factors you should avoid when you design your building.

A better word to use here may be *'features'*, but the modifier would need to look at the whole question and perhaps give the examiner an alternative. Both *'factor'* and *'feature'* are words that candidates are expected to learn.

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Example of a full examination question

Original version

There are three main carbohydrate groups. Sugar is one of <u>these</u>.

> ellipsis

(a)   Name the <u>other two groups</u>.

(2)

> passive / infrequent word / adverbial connector

(b)   Sugar, <u>if consumed</u> in large amounts, can lead to health problems. What are the three major health problems <u>created by consuming large amounts of sugar</u>?

(3)

> unnecessary information

(c)   Sugar is mainly used to sweeten food.

> embedded question

If you were trying to reduce your sugar intake, <u>how could you cut down on sugar when</u>

(i)   drinking tea or coffee?
(ii)   choosing fruit juice?
(iii)   choosing canned fruit?
(iv)   making a cake?

> ellipsis - direct questions might be better

(8)

> difficult question word

(d)   <u>How</u> may parents ensure that their child does not develop a '<u>sweet tooth</u>'?

(4)

> idiom*

(e)   A customer <u>leaving a supermarket</u> says that his family does not eat any sugar. His <u>shopping trolley</u> contains no bags of sugar. <u>Explain, giving examples, why it is unlikely that</u> he can make <u>this claim</u>?

> unnecessary information   subordination   embedded question

(3)

(f)   Glucose is a sugar. <u>It is often said that</u> it gives us instant energy. Explain why.

(3)

> difficult question word   unnecessary

(g)   <u>How</u> has modern labelling of convenience foods enabled the consumer <u>to make sensible choices if trying to reduce their sugar intake</u>?

(2)

> embedded question

> * You may need to consult the subject officer to ensure that 'sweet tooth' is not technical vocabulary.

Modified version

1   There are three main carbohydrate groups.
Sugar is one of these carbohydrate groups.

(a)   Name the other two carbohydrate groups.

(2)

(b)   If you eat too much sugar, you can get health problems.
Name three of these health problems.

(3)

(c)
     (i)   How could you reduce the amount of sugar when you are drinking tea or coffee?
     (ii)   How could you reduce the amount of sugar when you are choosing fruit juice?
     (iii)   How could you reduce the amount of sugar when you are choosing canned fruit?
     (iv)   How could you reduce the amount of sugar when you are making a cake?

(8)

> Some modifiers see this repetition as clumsy and think that candidates would have no problem with the original.

(d)   Some children get a liking for sweet things.
What can parents do to make sure their children do not eat too much sugar?

(4)

(e)   A shopper says he never buys bags of sugar, so he never eats sugar.
However, he probably *does* eat sugar.
Explain why he probably does eat sugar. Give examples of foods containing sugar in your answer.

(3)

(f)   Glucose is a sugar. It gives us instant energy.
Explain why glucose gives us instant energy.

(3)

(g)   You want to reduce the amount of sugar in your diet.
How does the labelling of convenience food help you to do this?

(2)

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Finally

This booklet contains advice and gives some solutions to problems you might encounter. These solutions are not definitive and do not cover every possible case that requires modification. Language modification is not an exact science. There is an infinite variety of problems and there are always various possibilities for solving each one. Your awareness of the problems is the starting point.

Good luck with your attempts at language modification.

The 2003 edition of this publication was compiled by Derek Heppenstall with a lot of helpful advice from Jane Couper. Thanks to Rachel O'Neill, Jenny Baxter and others from both BATOD and NATED in the 'BATNAT' committee whose material has been included, knowingly or otherwise. We hope that awarding bodies, past and present, will forgive us for not seeking permission to reproduce parts of examination questions. We deliberately did not attribute these and in some cases could not easily trace their origin. We are also grateful to the authors of previous 'Language of Examination' booklets whose work we have used in compiling this publication.

Maureen Jefferson
reviewed October 2011

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Appendices

Abbreviations used in this document

A	Advanced
AS	Advanced Subsidiary
AQA	Assessment and Qualification Alliance
BATNAT	BATOD/NATED group
BATOD	British Association of Teachers of the Deaf
C&G	City and Guilds (Examination Board)
CCAMLR	Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources
CE	Chief Examiner
CFC	Chlorofluorocarbon
EDEXCEL	Education Excellence
FE	Further Education
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
NVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
NATED	National Association for Tertiary Education with Deaf people
NB	Nota Bene (Latin: Note Well)
CCEA	Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
OCR	Oxford, Cambridge and RSA
PE	Principal Examiner
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SKILL	previously National Bureau for Handicapped Students
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
ToD	Teacher of the Deaf (ToDs Teachers of the Deaf)
UVB	ultra violet radiation (in sunlight there is UVA and UVB)
WJEC	Welsh Joint Education Committee
www	world wide web

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Some basic examination vocabulary

The following terms may be difficult, but occur so often in a wide range of examination papers that it is suggested that students should be expected to learn them. Therefore generally they should not need to be changed when papers are modified. This list is not exhaustive and therefore it is important to check with the subject officer when you are unsure about the vocabulary. It is also useful to refer to the subject specification and past papers which can be found on the relevant Awarding Body's website.

accurate	effect	necessary
advantage	essential	precautions
affect	example	prevent
amount	explain	problem
approximate	factor	process
assess	fault	properties
briefly	feature	purpose
calculate	(the) following	quality
carry out	fully	reason
cause	function	similar
characteristics	illustrate	sketch
compare	include	state
complete	increase	suggest
define	information	suitable
decrease	label	table (ie chart)
describe	likely	term (ie word/phrase)
details	list	type (ie sort)
diagram	maximum	
disadvantage	method	
	minimum	

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This explantory sheet was prepared for OCR to be sent in by Teachers of the Deaf to accompany suggestions for modifications, to inform Examiners and help to explain the reasons why the modification should take place. This may help when seeking special arrangements.

The modification of question papers for deaf candidates
Why is language modification necessary?
Many people do not realise that congenital deafness is often accompanied by a linguistic problem. Hearing children acquire their native language through listening and constant auditory enforcement. For hearing children, reading is a visual symbol system of the spoken language they have already acquired. Some deaf children may be slower at learning to read and may, at the time of taking GCSE examinations, have a much lower reading age than that which may be expected.

It must be emphasised that the purpose of the exercise is to make the questions more accessible and not easier, as the concepts and technical content of the question must stay the same even though the language may be changed. If the question is accessible to the deaf candidate, they have the opportunity to attempt to frame an answer provided that they have the appropriate knowledge to do so. It also follows that a number of these candidates will have difficulty in presenting their answers in good English.

What modifications may be made?
In addition to vocabulary changes some modification to sentence structure may be required. Apart from vocabulary difficulties, such as abstract terms, idiomatic words and phrases, knowing only one word for a concept, taking literal meaning of words, finding Anglo-Saxon words easier than ones derived from Latin and problems with wordy often Latinate phrases, many deaf candidates also have problems with the structure of sentences*. This list is not comprehensive.

Therefore Teachers of the Deaf may break down long sentences, try to put verbs next to their subjects, put sentences and clauses into the correct temporal sequence and use active rather than passive constructions.

What about technical vocabulary?
Teachers of the Deaf are well aware that this must not be changed.

It must be emphasised that the readability and clarity of question papers have improved so much since the introduction of the GCSE syllabus that often very few modifications have to be made.

* Further reading
Maureen Mobley (1987)   ***Making ourselves clearer: readability in the GCSE***   Secondary Examinations Council

JCQ (2010)   ***Fair Access by Design***

Derek Heppenstall (2003)   ***Language of Examinations 2nd edition 2003 - updated October 2011***

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