

The Constitution (updated 25.04.15)

1. Name

The name of the Association shall be *The Association of British Sign Language Teachers and Assessors* "ABSLTA".

2. Aims

ABSLTA aims to advance the profession of British Sign Language "BSL" education in the UK through its ongoing commitment to professional development and its promotion of the interests of its members and BSL users to the public.

3. Objectives

ABSLTA will seek to achieve its aims by:

- 3.1 providing a forum in which its Members can come together and offer each other advice and support;
- 3.2 encouraging its Members to sign and adhere to a Code of Practice which includes a commitment to the Aims of ABSLTA and Continuing Professional Development;
- 3.3 promoting the importance of BSL Teachers, Assessors and Verifiers having relevant qualifications;
- 3.4 advertising appropriate qualifications and Continuing Professional Development courses;
- 3.5 developing, providing and monitoring opportunities for Continuing Professional Development;
- 3.6 providing advice and information to its Members and the wider public;
- 3.7 engaging in activities that will enhance the status of British Sign Language and its teaching and supporting and co-operating with any other organisations in activities that do the same, including making representations to governing bodies as appropriate;
- 3.8 promoting the education in BSL profession and working proactively with other organisations and professions to shape its future development

4. Membership

- 4.1 ABSLTA shall be open to anyone satisfying the eligibility requirements of one of the **three** categories of membership regardless of disability, race, nationality, gender, sexual preference or beliefs, whether religious, political or otherwise. The only condition for membership shall be to meet the requirements of one of the three categories:
- 4.2 *Full Members* –
A Full Member is either:
 - 4.2.1 a currently practising **qualified BSL Teacher** who is able to provide evidence of relevant qualifications in:
 - (i) teaching; and
 - (ii) British Sign Language; and
 - (iii) BSL linguistics; or
 - 4.2.2 a currently practising **BSL assessor / verifier** who is able to provide evidence of relevant qualifications in:
 - (i) assessment / verification; and

- (ii) British Sign Language; and
- (iii) BSL linguistics.

4.2.3 For clauses 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 relevant qualifications defined include PGCE, Cert Ed., DTLLS, CTLLS, C & G 7303 C & G 7407, QTLS, Signature NVQ/ Level 6 Certificate in BSL, BSL Linguistics,

Assessor: - A1/TAQA, D32/D33/Level 3 Certificate in assessing vocational achievement,

Verifier: - Level 4 D34/V1/IQAA - Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Process,

External Verifier D35/V2 /EQA/ Level 4 External Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice

4.3 *Affiliate Members –*
An Affiliate Member is

4.3.1 an **organisation** whose Aims and Objectives are aligned with and supportive of that of ABSLTA.

4.3.1.1 A Member organisation shall be entitled to appoint a representative to attend any Annual or Extraordinary General Meetings to vote on its behalf provided that it notifies the Secretary in writing of the representative's name by 17:00 the day before the meeting

4.4 *Associate Members –*
An Associate Member is either:

4.4.1 an individual **training to qualify** as a BSL Teacher or a BSL Assessor / Verifier but does not meet the requirements of a Full Member and can provide evidence of;

- i) PTTLs; and
- ii) NVQ Level 3 Certificate in BSL and
- ii) BSL Linguistics.

or

4.4.2 an individual who satisfies the qualification requirements for a Full Member but has now **retired**; or

4.4.3 an individual interested in and **supportive** of the Aims and Objectives of ABSLTA.

4.5 Only current paid-up Full and Affiliate Members shall be eligible to vote at any Annual or Extraordinary General Meeting.

4.6 The only exception to clause 4.4 will be the issue of Membership Fees for Associate Members where all Members will be eligible to vote.

4.7 All Members will be required to support the aims of ABSLTA and **sign a declaration** to this effect.

4.8 The Executive Committee may terminate the Membership of any Member for good reason.

4.9 Notice of any Officer's proposal to remove a Member must be given to the Member in writing and provide for a period of not less than **two weeks** in which the Member can make their case to the Executive Committee either in writing or in person, for example at a meeting of the Executive Committee. Following consideration of any representations made by the Member, **all seven** Officers shall vote and **at least five** Officers must vote in favour of the Member's removal for the proposal to

be successful. In any event, the Member should be informed of the Executive Committee's decision on the day that the final vote is cast.

- 4.10 Should a Member wish to appeal a decision to terminate their Membership, they should inform the Secretary in writing within **fourteen days** of being notified of the Executive Committee's decision. The Member shall then be invited to make representations to the Membership at the next General Meeting (whether it is an AGM or EGM). The Executive Committee will also be given a chance to explain their decision before a vote is taken with a successful appeal requiring one more than half of the votes (50%+1) in favour of the Member's restoration.

5. Membership Fees

- 5.1 Although ABSLTA is a voluntary group that does not operate for a profit, it is necessary to charge Membership Fees to cover the properly incurred expenditure of the Association, such as venue hire for the AGM, IT costs and the expenses of the Executive Committee.
- 5.2 Membership Fees are payable from the **1st April each year** for 12 calendar months.
- 5.3 The amount of the Membership Fee for each Membership category will be agreed at each AGM and shall apply from the **1st April** of the following calendar year.
- 5.4 Proposals for the amount of the following year's Membership Fee may be made by
 5.4.1 the Executive Committee; or
 5.4.2 a current Full Member.
 Proposals need not be made in advance of the AGM and, indeed, may be made at the AGM itself. For the amount of the Membership Fee to be agreed, **two-thirds of those eligible to vote in respect of the issue must be in agreement**. In the event that no agreement can be reached, the Membership Fee will remain the same as the previous amount.
- 5.5 For new Members, the Membership Fee payable for the first year will be **pro-rated** to the proportion of the year for which they were a Member. The Membership Fees for subsequent years shall be payable at the **full** annual rate.

6. Executive Committee

- 6.1 ABSLTA shall be managed by an Executive Committee consisting of **seven Officers**, all of whom must be current paid-up Full Members:

6.1.1	Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Chair all meetings of ABSLTA and the Executive Committee b. Represent ABSLTA at functions/meetings c. Act as a spokesperson for ABSLTA when necessary d. Create newsletter for ABSLTA members on a quarterly basis e. Assist the Secretary to prepare agendas for all meetings of ABSLTA and the Executive Committee f. Deal with general complaints and complaints not resolved at first instance by the relevant Officer
6.1.2	Vice-Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. In the absence of the Chair, assume the role of the Chair b. Support the Chair in all their duties
6.1.3	Treasurer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ensure all monies owed to ABSLTA are collected b. Respond appropriately to all requests for money to be paid out c. Maintain complete records of all monies collected and paid out d. Prepare the accounts to 31 December each year in time for

		<p>distribution to the Members in advance of the AGM</p> <p>e. Make a report to the Members on the financial affairs of ABSLTA at the AGM</p> <p>f. Maintain the membership list</p> <p>g. Deal with at first instance any complaints relating to finances or membership</p>
6.1.4	Secretary	<p>For all meetings of ABSLTA and the Executive Committee:</p> <p>a. Book the date and venue</p> <p>b. Notify the relevant people</p> <p>c. Prepare and distribute agendas</p> <p>d. Take and keep minutes</p> <p>e. Distribute the minutes within two weeks of the meeting taking place</p> <p>f. Keep abreast of incoming correspondence (post and email) and either respond or refer to another Officer for response as appropriate</p> <p>g. Create and maintain, as necessary, policies for ABSLTA</p> <p>h. Deal with at first instance any complaints relating to meetings</p>
6.1.5	Events and Liaison Co-ordinator	<p>For all events (not including meetings):</p> <p>a. Organise dates and venues and inform Members of the same</p> <p>b. Work with the Training Co-Ordinator to decide on the content of an event and take responsibility for the advertising /promoting of it</p> <p>c. Prepare, distribute and collect Registration Forms</p> <p>d. Create a register of attending Members</p> <p>e. Prepare and distribute tokens of appreciation for any deserving contributors</p> <p>f. Prepare, distribute (and collect) CPD certificates and evaluation forms</p> <p>g. Maintain a register of useful contacts, including their potential benefit</p> <p>h. When new potential contacts are identified, devise a contact strategy</p> <p>i. Deal with at first instance any complaints relating to events</p>
6.1.6	Training Co-ordinator	<p>a. Monitor the need for CPD within the profession</p> <p>b. Create high quality CPD materials/resources for events, on-line and in hard copy</p> <p>c. Monitor quality of training provided by ABSLTA, including evaluation forms</p> <p>d. Deal with at first instance any complaints relating to training</p>
6.1.7	IT Co-ordinator	<p>a. Manage and update all computer accounts, to include:</p> <p>i. website</p> <p>ii. Twitter account</p> <p>iii. Facebook account</p> <p>b. Inform and update the Executive Committee of any significant activities on websites as appropriate, including where it would assist them with their role</p> <p>c. Deal with at first instance any complaints relating to any IT accounts</p>

6.2 The Executive committee shall meet at least **four times** a year.

6.3 The quorum of an Executive Committee meeting shall be **four**.

6.4 Voting at the Executive Committee shall be by show of hands. If there is a tied vote then the Chairperson shall have a **second** vote.

6.5 The Executive Committee may, if necessary, be elected from the floor at an Annual or Extraordinary General Meeting.

- 6.6 The Executive Committee shall be elected for a term of **two years** and shall be eligible for re-election without restriction.
- 6.7 Any Officer will not be required to serve their full term where:
- 6.7.1 the Executive Committee have a good and proper reason for the removal of the Officer and their removal is supported by **two-thirds** of the Executive Committee; or
- 6.7.2 a Full Member presents the Executive Committee with a written proposal calling for the removal of the Officer at a properly convened Annual or Extraordinary General Meeting and signed by a total of **10 Full Members**. **Two-thirds** of those present at the General Meeting must be in support of the proposal for it to be successful; or
- 6.7.3 the Officer presents their written resignation giving **two week notice** to the Chairperson.
- 6.8 Before any vote is taken to remove an Officer under 6.7.1 or 6.7.2, the Officer in question has the right to address those that will be voting, either in writing or verbally.
- 6.9 Where an Officer's term is brought to an early conclusion at a General Meeting, the Membership shall seek to appoint a replacement Officer otherwise the Executive Committee shall have the power to make this appointment. In any event the replacement Office will serve just the remainder of the term but will be eligible for re-election in the same way as an Officer that has served the full Term.
- 6.10 The Executive Committee shall have the power to **co-opt** any number of people it may require to carry out business; such persons will have no vote at meetings.
- 6.11 The Executive Committee shall have the power to deal with any matter not covered by the constitution.
- 6.12 Although all the positions on the Executive Committee are unpaid, voluntary roles and Officers will not be paid for their time, they should not be left out of pocket as a result of undertaking their duties and will therefore be entitled to claim expenses for items purchased during the course of their role. Details of all expenses claimed shall be included in the Treasurer's Report provided at each AGM.

7. Annual General Meeting "AGM"

- 7.1 The AGM will be held each April, or as soon as possible thereafter.
- 7.2 The process for calling the AGM shall be as follows:
- 7.2.1 The date and venue of the next AGM shall be announced at the end of the previous AGM having been decided upon and booked by the Executive Committee.
- 7.2.2 Formal notice of the AGM, and the minutes of the previous AGM shall be sent to the Membership at least **four weeks** beforehand.
- 7.2.3 Members will have **six weeks**, until **four weeks** before the meeting, in which to provide the Secretary in writing of any items for the Agenda or motions for consideration.
- 7.2.4 Nominations for candidates to stand as an Officer on the Executive Committee may be sent with **named proposer** and **seconder** to the Secretary in writing **four weeks** before the AGM.
- 7.2.4.1 the proposer should brief details as to why the named candidate should be nominated onto the Executive Committee.

- 7.2.5 The agenda and all supporting documentation for the AGM shall be sent to the Membership at least **two weeks** beforehand.
- 7.2.6 Members who are unable to attend an AGM may be eligible to vote in writing the named candidate voting for, by notifying the Secretary **by 17:00 the day before** the meeting.
- 7.3 The agenda must include:
- 7.3.1 a report from the Chair on ABSLTA's activities over the past year; and
- 7.3.2 a report from the Treasurer on the finances;
- 7.4 Where relevant, the election of a new Executive Committee must also be on the agenda.
- 7.5 The quorum for an AGM will be **XX** of the Membership, **XX** of which must be eligible to vote.
- 7.6 The Chair shall preside at the AGM. In their absence the role shall be undertaken by the Vice-Chair. In the event that the Chair and Vice-Chair will not be in attendance within **thirty minutes** of the scheduled start time, the Officers present shall elect one of their numbers [an Officer] to chair the meeting.
- 7.7 Voting at the AGM shall take place as follows:
- 7.7.1 votes shall normally take place by show of hands with at least half the votes plus one (50%+1) required to pass a motion; including any votes received in writing by the Secretary at 17.00 the day before the meeting, however
- 7.7.2 votes to
- 7.7.2.1 elect or remove an Officer; or
- 7.7.2.2 decide an appeal against the removal of a Member; or
- 7.7.2.3 make an amendment to the Constitution,
- shall be decided by a paper ballot, to be counted by **two neutral** or otherwise suitable persons and **witnessed by three other neutral** or suitable persons. For the purposes of this provision, Members who are not eligible to vote shall be considered suitable persons. The threshold for a successful motion shall be at least **two thirds** (66%) of those present and eligible to vote.
- 7.8 All members, **except** Officers, shall be liable for their own expenses when attending AGMs. Should they be required to attend the venue the night before as part of the preparations may Officers claim for overnight accommodation.
- 7.9 Minutes of the AGM are to be taken by the Secretary and circulated to the Membership **within two weeks** of the date of the AGM.

8. Extraordinary General Meeting "EGM"

- 8.1 An EGM may be called for by:
- 8.1.1 the Executive Committee at any time; or
- 8.1.2 a letter sent to the Secretary, and signed by at least **25%** of the Membership.
- 8.2 The process for arranging the EGM shall be as follows:
- 8.2.1 The date and venue of the next AGM shall be announced at the end of the previous AGM having been decided upon and booked by the Executive Committee.

- 8.2.2 Formal notice of the EGM including the time, location and an explanation about the purpose of the EGM shall be sent to the Membership at within **twenty-eight** days of the Secretary receiving notice of the request for an EGM.
- 8.2.3 The EGM must be convened between **fourteen** and **twenty-eight** days of the date of the notice.
- 8.3 The quorum for an EGM will be **XX** of the Membership, **XX** of which must be eligible to vote. Anything voted upon at a meeting that does not satisfy this requirement will be null and void.
- 8.4 The Chair shall preside at the EGM. In their absence the role shall be undertaken by the Vice-Chair. In the event that the Chair and Vice-Chair will not be in attendance within **thirty minutes** of the scheduled start time, the Officers present shall elect one of their numbers [an Officer] to chair the meeting.
- 8.5 Voting at the EGM shall take place as follows:
- 8.5.1 votes shall normally take place by show of hands with at least half the votes plus one (50%+1) required to pass a motion; however
- 8.5.2 votes to
- 8.5.2.1 elect or remove an Officer; or
- 8.5.2.2 decide an appeal against the removal of a Member; or
- 8.5.2.3 make an amendment to the Constitution,
- shall be decided by a paper ballot, to be counted by **two neutral** or otherwise suitable persons and **witnessed by three other neutral** or suitable persons. For the purposes of this provision, Members who are not eligible to vote shall be considered suitable persons. The threshold for a successful motion shall be at least **two thirds** (66%) of those present and eligible to vote.
- 8.6 All members, except Officers, shall be liable for their own expenses when attending EGMs. Should they be required to attend the venue the night before as part of the preparations may Officers claim for overnight accommodation.
- 8.7 Minutes of the EGM are to be taken by the Secretary and circulated to the Membership within **two weeks** of the date of the EGM.

9. Accounts

- 9.1 ABSLTA shall have a bank account.
- 9.2 Any monies obtained by ABSLTA shall only be used in furtherance of ABSLTA's Objectives.
- 9.3 The account, including any cheques payable from it, shall be operated jointly by the signatures of any two of three named Officers - one of which should be the Treasurer. None of the signatories should be related in any way.
- 9.4 Accounts shall be drawn up annually to **31st December** each year and be presented to members at the AGM where the Members shall be asked by the Treasurer to approve an auditor to audit them.

10. Amendments to the Constitution:

- 10.1 Any current paid-up Member may make proposals for amendments to the Constitution. Such proposals must be made in writing to the Secretary not less than **four weeks** before an AGM or in accordance with the procedure for an EGM. The Secretary must then inform all Members of the

proposal and include any supporting documentation when sending out the agenda for the meeting for an AGM and notice of the meeting for an EGM.

- 10.2 Proposals for amendments to the Constitution will be considered on a clause by clause basis. For a clause to be adopted, at least **two thirds** (66%) of Members eligible to vote must be in support of its inclusion.

11. Equality of Opportunity:

ABSLTA is committed to a policy of equality of opportunity and non-discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, religious or political belief, marital status and physical/sensory disability, on behalf of all members involved in the teaching of Sign Language.

12. Dissolution of ABSLTA and Disposal of assets:

- 12.1 ABSLTA may be dissolved at either an AGM or EGM at which **three quarters** of those members present and voting are in support of the motion.
- 12.2 Should the motion to dissolve ABSLTA be passed, the following must also be agreed by at least half plus one (50%+1) of those present and voting:
- 12.2.1 the identity of three people to oversee the dissolution "Dissolution Committee", such people to be current paid-up **Full** Members of ABSLTA who have **not**:
- 12.2.1.1 served as an Officer;
- 12.2.1.2 previously been involved in calls to dissolve the Association.
- 12.3 There shall then be no further meetings of ABSLTA
- 12.4 The Dissolution Committee shall work with the Officers to:
- 12.4.1 ensure that all proper debts and liabilities are paid;
- 12.4.2 report on the progress of the dissolution are provided to the Members at least every six months with the final report to include:
- 12.4.2.1 the amount of the assets remaining;
- 12.4.2.2 confirmation of the transfer to the Dissolution Committee; and
- 12.4.2.3 contact details for each member of the Dissolution Committee.
- 12.5 Any assets remaining shall be transferred into a new account in the names of all the Dissolution Committee for which two signatories shall be required to effect any transactions.
- 12.6 Once this transfer has been effective, the Officers shall be released from their roles and shall hand to the Dissolution Committee all information and other items belonging to ABSLTA in their possession or control.
- 12.7 The remaining assets are to be held by the Dissolution Committee for a period of **five years**, during which time, if an organisation is established with the same Aims and Objectives of ABSLTA, such organisation may request that the Dissolution Committee considers whether they are so closely aligned as to be considered a reconstitution of ABSLTA and thereby deserving of the remaining funds.
- 12.8 Upon the expiry of **five years** from the date that the bank account is opened, should the funds remain, the Dissolution Committee shall distribute the assets to such other not-for-profit charitable organisations as it sees fit.
- 12.9 In any event, the Dissolution Committee shall inform the Members; at their last recorded contact address with ABSLTA, of the distribution of the assets, following which all information belonging to ABSLTA shall be destroyed in a suitably confidential manner.