
Quality control

Guidance from UKAAF

Why format quality matters

"When organisations send me information in formats that I can read myself it allows me to be independent, feel informed and appreciated - just like every other customer."

End-user

"Producing consistently high quality accessible formats helps us to maintain our reputation, to gain new customers and to retain existing ones."

Transcription agency

"We are committed to ensuring that our customers with print disabilities receive the same information, of the same quality, as everyone else."

Service provider

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Who is this guidance for?

This guidance from the UK Association for Accessible Formats (UKAAF) is primarily aimed at individual and organisational transcribers of accessible formats.

The guidance includes information on:

- The purpose of quality control
- Quality control measures
- The appropriate level of quality control
- Record keeping
- Security and data control

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Contents

1	Introduction	5
2	About UKAAF.....	6
3	Definition of print disability	6
4	The purpose of quality control.....	7
5	Quality control measures	7
6	Selecting the appropriate level of quality control	11
7	The importance of record-keeping	14
8	Security and data control	15
9	Where to get further help	15
10	Additional resources	16
11	Your feedback is welcome	16

1 Introduction

By obtaining these guidelines you are demonstrating your commitment to helping people with a print disability to read your materials if they find reading standard print materials difficult or impossible.

This guidance concentrates specifically on materials suitable for blind and partially sighted people - such as large print, audio, braille and electronic file formats. However, others with a print disability, for example with dyslexia or motor-difficulties, may also find such materials necessary.

The provision of accessible information is a key requirement of the Equality Act which service providers must follow, but good customer service and business practice includes communicating with your customers and staff in ways which meet their reading needs. By providing accessible format materials, you not only demonstrate your commitment to equality and inclusion, but also increase your reach and customer base. It therefore makes good business sense.

This guidance will help you and your organisation to incorporate good practice into your business and provide good quality accessible format materials in a timely and appropriate way.

Note: This guidance contains recommendations for the frequency and detail of quality control measures for the transcription of accessible formats. The guidance cannot cover all eventualities, but aims to give broad principles on which to base in-house policies and procedures.

The type of quality control to be applied to a transcribed document will depend on its nature and purpose. Appropriate quality control

measures should ideally be agreed for each document (or set of documents) with the customer before any transcription work starts.

2 About UKAAF

The UK Association for Accessible Formats (UKAAF) is the industry association whose mission is to set standards for accessible formats that meet end-user needs through:

- development, delivery and promotion of codes, standards, and best practice for the production and provision of accessible formats
- consultation and collaboration with transcribers, service providers and users of accessible formats.

Members of UKAAF include organisations and individuals with an interest in the provision of quality accessible formats, such as service providers, transcribers, educators, researchers, print services, publishers, and end-users.

Through its leadership and representation, standards-setting, and by fostering a spirit of cooperation between members, UKAAF ensures that the needs and requirements of end-users are understood by service providers and transcribers to help improve the quality of accessible formats.

Please see the section on "Where to get further help" towards the end of this document for more information about the benefits of being a member of UKAAF.

3 Definition of print disability

A print-disabled person is anyone for whom a visual, cognitive, or physical disability hinders the ability to read print. This includes all visual impairments, dyslexia, and any physical disabilities that

prevent the handling of a physical copy of a print publication.

Source: Copyright Licensing Agency Print Disability Licensing Scheme, Guidelines for Licensees 2010.

4 The purpose of quality control

Errors can be introduced in the course of editing and transcribing a document into an accessible format. Whilst it is impossible to guarantee that all documents will be completely error-free, the use of appropriate quality control measures, as outlined in this guidance from UKAAF, will minimise the quantity and impact of errors in finished documents.

Much of the accessible format material currently transcribed contains important information, where the need for accuracy is paramount. An end-user should be confident that, for example, their large print bank statement accurately shows the amount of money in their account, and a student revising for final university exams should be able to depend on the information provided in their audio lecture notes. Quality control is important for all accessible formats, whether large print, audio, braille or electronic formats.

5 Quality control measures

Any material that is available in print could potentially be required in accessible formats - a huge range of documents for a wide variety of purposes. Issues of time and cost mean that it is not usually practical to fully proofread all material. However, some types of document will require more attention than others.

The following sections outline a range of quality control measures and the types of material to which they might be applied.

5.1 Full proofread

This measure involves a detailed comparison of each word in the original document against a hard copy of each accessible format, e.g. an audio copy burned to CD or a braille copy embossed on paper. An electronic transcribed file viewed on screen or a printed transcribed ASCII file are insufficient for this level of proofreading. See UKAAF's other guidance documents for more information.

The customer should be made aware that this level of quality control is time-consuming and is likely to be expensive. Nevertheless, the content of some documents (for example, exam papers) will make it essential.

Another factor in whether to propose a full proofread to the customer of the accessible formats is how much automation there is in the transcription process. For instance, where the original document is only available as a hard copy, there is a greater danger of introducing errors while scanning or manually typing-in, than if the original document is available electronically. Where the document is provided as a source electronic file, not a scan of a printed document, less rigorous checking may be sufficient.

5.2 Random full proofread

Where a number of documents are being produced of a similar nature, such as bills or statements, UKAAF suggests a programme of initial intensive quality control checking to ensure accuracy of the transcription with total confidence, then of random proofreading to ensure the general accuracy of the whole transcription run. The frequency of the proofreading should be agreed with the customer, but UKAAF suggests a minimum of 10% of the transcription run should be proofread against the original print version.

Random proofreading is especially useful where a degree of automation is involved in the transcription process. Automation is often used to make the transcription process more cost-effective and efficient, but it does not guarantee that errors won't be introduced. Random proofreading will also highlight any problems caused by a change to the layout of the original print document.

A full proofread of a random selection will ensure that any problems are identified quickly and will highlight any issues with the automated processes.

5.3 Peer review

This quality control measure involves transcribed work being reviewed against the original document and approved by an experienced transcriber colleague. This quality control measure may not be ideal for transcribers who work individually, but other accessible format transcribers may be able to help transcribers working alone.

This measure gives the opportunity for discussion about modifications that have been made and for the sharing of best practice. The parameters of the review should be made clear to the reviewer before the process starts, as should the method of providing feedback to the original transcriber.

This quality control measure is most useful for documents that are not critical and where there is little automation in the transcription process. Documents such as information leaflets and newsletters might fall into this category.

5.4 Manual "back" translation

For small braille documents manual back translation can be a very effective quality control measure. However, this measure is best

applied to items of no more than a few lines of text, such as labels or business cards.

This measure involves a proof of the braille item being produced and then read without reference to any other information by an appropriately qualified transcriber colleague. The colleague reads the braille and the print translation is written on the proof. The proof then goes to another colleague and, this time, the written back translation is read against the print text as confirmed with the customer of the items.

When using this quality control measure, it is extremely important that each step is carried out accurately. The reader of the braille must not be aware of the intended content of the label and must note or dictate the translation letter-for-letter. When the back translation is checked against the text confirmed with the customer, it must be done by a colleague with no prior knowledge of the content.

This quality control measure is best applied in situations where a small amount of text is to be reproduced in high volumes. Where there is any more than a few lines of text to read, it is best to use other quality control measures, such as a proofread or peer review.

5.5 Hardware tests

Wherever machinery is involved in the physical production of accessible formats, regular tests and servicing of the machinery will guard against errors appearing in accessible format material. The majority of machinery such as braille embossers, printers and CD duplicators allow the user to produce test pieces to examine the output.

The frequency of such tests will depend on the throughput of each machine. UKAAF suggests however, that as a minimum, machines

should be tested at least once per day of use, or more frequently if they are running continuously for many hours.

Braille embossers should be checked for missing dots, inconsistent dot height and dot wobble. Printer test pages should identify where ink levels are low and other issues, such as dusty or dirty rollers. CD duplicators should be checked to make sure the image has been burned correctly onto the CDs.

5.6 Final check

Before any accessible formats are provided to the customer or to the end-user a final visual or tactile check of the documents should be made. This may identify issues such as mis-collated and mis-aligned pages, and damaged or faulty binding or packaging.

This measure should not replace any of the previous measures but is the final step to ensuring that the end-user receives good quality accessible formats.

6 Selecting the appropriate level of quality control

Factors affecting the level of quality control to be agreed by the customer and the transcriber will include the content of the document, the number of copies to be produced, the method of production, needs of the end-user and the prestige of the transcribed document. Every document is different, and customers may have strong (and sometimes conflicting) views on the importance of accuracy and the importance of keeping costs to a minimum.

6.1 Number of copies

If many copies of a document are being produced in accessible formats, this may indicate that a high level of quality control is advisable. An example might be a magazine to be sent in accessible formats to 100+ members of an organisation.

6.2 Needs of the end-user

If the document is destined for a child or for an adult with low levels of literacy or understanding, a high level of quality control is advisable. Anything containing personal, billing or financial information requires a high level of accuracy and quality control.

6.3 Prestige

If a document is aiming to impress or to attract custom, a high level of quality control is advisable. An example might be a corporate report or piece of high-profile marketing, a letter to a dignitary, an invitation to a prestigious event, or in a document where inaccuracies are likely to have wider implications, for instance, ballot papers.

6.4 Production method

The greater the human intervention in the production process, the higher the likelihood of errors being introduced. Where the document is transcribed automatically from an original electronic file using well maintained production equipment some checking may be required, especially regarding layout, but there are likely to be fewer unexpected errors.

6.5 Content

The following information can be used as a starting point for discussions with customers around accuracy levels. These are examples only, and customers may require greater accuracy for their materials than suggested here.

Accuracy is desirable but not essential

- Magazine
- Meeting agenda
- General letter
- Novels
- Publicity material
- Menu
- Advertising leaflet

Accuracy is important but not essential

- Course material (as opposed to tests and examinations)
- Non-fiction book
- TV guides
- Sports fixtures list
- Meeting minutes
- Instruction manual
- Business letter

Accuracy is essential

- Legal document
- Tests and examination papers
- Knitting pattern

- Financial statements
- Literacy materials
- Travel timetable
- Utility / telecoms bill
- Ballot papers
- Medical notes / letters

In the examples listed, the customer of the material may choose to have more or less of a guarantee of accuracy. This will form part of the negotiation of the service and the cost that you are offering your customers.

7 The importance of record-keeping

A thorough and efficient transcription process involves several administrative elements including documentation, archiving and data control (which is covered in separate UKAAF guidance).

Documentation of current transcription work includes looking after the document itself as well as logging the processes and quality control measures applied to it during the transcription process. For recurrent documents, such as bills and statements, a record of each item, its date of receipt and its distribution should be kept.

Archiving involves keeping a detailed list of all documents transcribed. This will be of use if the individual who commissioned the transcription should subsequently require an additional copy, or inadvertently request transcription to an existing format.

The tools that you use to document your transcription work can be as simple as text files that record the processes and checks each document has been subject to and spreadsheets that list the transcription work you have completed for each customer. There

are also more sophisticated methods, which may involve a self-made database, or using off-the-shelf management software.

8 Security and data control

Robust security and data control measures are essential for anyone transcribing material into accessible formats. These measures will need to apply not only to the transcription process but also to proofreading, packaging, storage and disposal of hard copy and electronic data. There will be implications for personnel, practice and premises.

This is covered in more detail in UKAAF's guidance "Security and data protection" G004.

9 Where to get further help

UKAAF assists businesses and organisations by advising how to meet the needs of customers and clients with print disabilities; providing guidance on how to source and provide quality accessible formats like large print, audio, braille, electronic file formats and Easy Read; and helping you to understand your responsibilities as a service provider.

Through our website and magazine, members will also gain access to:

- findings from public consultations and end-user research
- research and innovation in accessible formats
- information on suppliers of transcription services
- guidance and advice on standards for accessible formats
- opportunities to review and help to develop standards and guidance.

In addition to supporting service providers and transcribers, UKAAF also represents people with print disabilities. We believe that because format quality matters, end-users should have genuine input into the development of standards for accessible information. By collecting and sharing users' views with service providers and transcribers we can help them to deliver a quality service which meets users' needs.

UKAAF has a User Advisory Group (UAG) so we can include blind and partially sighted people and others with print disabilities in ongoing research and consultation on key accessible format issues.

There are many benefits of being a member of UKAAF, not least to demonstrate your commitment to quality accessible formats. For more information visit us at www.ukaaf.org.

10 Additional resources

The Government's Business Link website has information for businesses on a range of issues. There is advice on implementing a quality system and information on ISO standards that may help you develop your business processes www.businesslink.gov.uk

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) has information on quality management and assurance www.iso.org

RNIB's "See it Right" pack contains information and guidance to help you make your information accessible to people with print disabilities www.rnib.org.uk/seeitright

11 Your feedback is welcome

We would welcome your views on this guidance, any suggestions for additions, or case studies of how this guidance has helped you.

You might like to share your experience in an article in our magazine 'Format Matters'.

You can phone, email or write to us - our details are at the back, or use the feedback form on our website www.ukaaf.org.

If you find UKAAF's guidance valuable, please encourage others to join by visiting our website.

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