



Common questions about NQ ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) qualifications for session 2016/17

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Section A: General questions

When will candidate exemplars be available?

Candidate exemplars are now available for both course and assessment. Further information on Understanding Standards is available on this link www.sqa.org.uk/understandingstandards

Understanding Standards packs for unit assessment and IACCA are available on the SQA Secure website.

External Course assessment exemplars (past papers) are available on the ESOL pages of the SQA website.

Are learning and teaching materials which teachers have been using until now still relevant?

Yes, lots of existing materials are still very relevant for delivering the new qualifications. Many of these are listed in Appendix 2 of the Course and Unit Support Notes on the NQ ESOL pages of the SQA website. The Course and Unit Support Notes have recently been updated to include an updated Appendix 2 and also a new Appendix 1 which contains Illustrative Language Tables (ILTs) for each level.

The SQA ESOL learning and teaching materials have been re-labelled for the NQs and can be found on the SQA NQ ESOL pages for each level from National 2 to Higher <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/33703.html>. The SQA E-learning materials are in the process of being updated.

Education Scotland has ESOL materials on its web pages especially created for the new National qualifications. Other websites such as the ESOL Nexus materials are labelled as National 3, 4 or 5, etc.

If a candidate fails to meet the standard required to pass a unit assessment, can the candidate be re-assessed?

SQA's guidance on re-assessment is that normally there should be one or, in exceptional circumstances, two re-assessment opportunities. However, depending on the circumstances, it is not always necessary to use a different instrument of assessment. For example, failure to address the overall purpose question may result in the candidate being re-assessed for that assessment standard only. An appropriate question(s) could be devised using the original assessment text to address that particular assessment standard.

How long should candidates be given to complete unit assessments?

Time restrictions are not normally a feature of unit assessment and centres need to determine this with reference to the specific situation of their candidates. However, assessors should exercise judgement. For example, for listening assessments it is unlikely that candidates would benefit from more than two playings of an audio text. In speaking

assessments the approximate timing guidelines are given to support the candidates so that they do not either exceed or fall short of the time limit. A conversation that is too long or too short does not automatically mean that the candidate does not achieve but it may mean that a candidate makes unnecessary errors or cannot fully achieve their potential. In writing assessments candidates should be allowed sufficient time to be able to redraft their work, if necessary. The redrafting process is important to develop writing skills and improve self-correction. Underlining of errors by assessors can be used effectively and candidates can also be given feedback relating to achievement of the assessment standards.

Section B: Approaches to Assessment

Do assessments need to be linked thematically?

Assessments do not need to be linked thematically. None of the assessments need to be combined and can all be done independently of each other. However, assessors may find it helpful to link assessments thematically and/or combine assessments, where possible.

Could all four skills be assessed within one context, eg technology?

Yes, and this is the model used in many of the Unit Assessment Support Packs (UASPs).

Can I mix and match the assessment tasks from different Unit Assessment Support Packs?

As long as the assessment standards are applied and met there is no issue with using assessments from different packages. You are able to use UASPs in their entirety or mix and match, eg using speaking from one, writing from another. The important thing is that all of the assessment standards are matched with appropriate evidence.

What does combined assessment mean?

A combined assessment is where assessment tasks are integrated with the aim of reducing time spent on assessment. Four approaches to combined assessment are exemplified in the SQA UASPs:

The first approach combines assessment across outcomes within a unit and can be found in some unit-by-unit approach to packs. Examples of this are where there is one assessment task for both speaking and listening. The listening is assessed as part of the interaction along with the speaking. An example of this can be found in the following UASP:

- ◆ National 5 ESOL for Everyday Life – Listening and Speaking Package 1 Unit-by-Unit approach, August 2015 (theme – impact of technology)

The second approach is exemplified at National 2 where two units, ie a reading and writing unit and a speaking and listening unit are combined into one Unit Assessment Support pack for all four skills on the basis of a theme/topic, for example:

- ◆ ESOL for Everyday Life combined approach, June 2015 (theme – celebrations) and ESOL in Context combined approach, June 2015 (theme – a class trip)

In the third approach the UASP contains assessment of one outcome from ESOL for Everyday Life and one outcome from ESOL in Context. There is a separate assessment for each outcome, but on the same theme or topic. Using this approach, the other three outcomes in both units must still be assessed. Examples of this can be found in the following UASPs:

- ◆ National 3 ESOL Listening and Speaking Package 2 combined approach, August 2015 (theme – customer complaint call centre) ESOL Reading and Writing Package 2 combined approach, August 2015 (theme – employment with the royal mail)
- ◆ National 4 ESOL Listening and Writing Package 2 combined approach, August 2015 (theme – customer complaint travel agent)
- ◆ ESOL Reading and Speaking Package 2 combined approach, August 2015 (theme – a memorable trip)

The fourth approach combines assessment across units, removing the need to assess each unit individually. One reading task could provide sufficient evidence for achieving outcome 1 in both units. This approach is only exemplified at National 5 and Higher in the following:

- ◆ UASPs: National 5 ESOL Package 3 combined approach, August 2015 (theme – workplace technology and the Internet)
- ◆ Higher ESOL for Everyday Life and Work-related Contexts Package 2 combined approach, August 2015 (theme – procrastination)
- ◆ ESOL for Everyday Life and Study-related Contexts Package 2 combined approach, August 2015 (theme – procrastination)

An appropriate candidate assessment record or similar document should always be used to clearly indicate the assessment judgements against the unit, outcomes and assessment standards. When using a combined approach to assessment across the units, as with the fourth approach, centres should use a candidate assessment record or similar document that reflects this approach to clarify the unit, outcomes and assessment standards met for each unit. Examples of appropriate recording documents can be found in the UASPs above. It is important for centres to check the page, 'What this pack covers', before they use the assessment tasks so that they are clear about what outcomes are covered and for what units.

When should a combined assessment allow for one piece of evidence for one outcome to show achievement across both units?

Although this would not necessarily be the norm it may be possible for particularly strong candidates. For example, a candidate who can complete a detailed reading comprehension, which uses straightforward and specialised vocabulary, in an everyday context as well as in an ESOL for work or study context, may be able to show achievement of both Units by completing one reading assessment. This, of course, could be true for the other skills also. The important thing is that evidence is retained for each unit which shows achievement of the Assessment Standards. In the UASPs, as mentioned above, this is only demonstrated at National 5 and Higher level. Again the page "What this Pack Covers" in the UASPs details whether an assessment task can cover both units or not.

Can candidates give an oral rather than a written response to the Unit reading and listening assessments?

Yes, but for evidence purposes the assessor is required to keep a written record or checklist to indicate that the candidate has completed the activity satisfactorily.

Can candidates use dictionaries for reading and writing in unit assessments?

Yes, candidates can use dictionaries for all reading and writing unit assessments.

How should the preparation time be used for speaking assessments?

Candidates should be trained in the most effective ways to use the allocated preparation time on their own to consider their ideas for each of the bullet points and possible relevant specialised vocabulary. They should apply note-taking skills and at all times be discouraged from writing a lengthy text on the topic as a way of preparing. This is not a time to rehearse the conversation with their partner but to prepare their thoughts on their own.

If candidates are doing a speaking and listening unit assessment task for their Internally Assessed Component of the Course Assessment (IACCA) they should be given the appropriate preparation time of 15 minutes. Also assessors should note that although notes are not advisable at National 5 level to be used during the recording of the performance it may be possible for the candidate to have sight of brief notes they have made on the task sheet. At Higher level the use of notes is not allowed during the recording of the performance.

Can candidates be assessed in small groups for speaking?

Yes, providing each candidate is assessed individually and individual records are kept. If candidates are assessed in small groups, rather than a paired discussion, they should be given an appropriate amount of extra time to allow each candidate the opportunity to meet the assessment standards.

The centre should ensure that candidate pairings or groups facilitate a balanced conversation with opportunities for equal participation, taking into consideration candidate strengths and personalities. If the assessor believes that a candidate has been disadvantaged by a pairing or group, that candidate can be assessed again in a different pairing or group.

Some assessments carried out in groups of three or four are not so successful and appear to disadvantage some candidates by not providing individuals with the opportunity to fully demonstrate their language skills. In addition, it can prove harder to award appropriate marks to each candidate in the group. If choosing to assess in groups, candidates should have had opportunities to practise these skills and the group dynamic should be carefully considered by the assessor.

Using video evidence for groups of three and more supports both the assessment, and internal and external verification. Where audio recordings are used for such groups, it is often difficult to identify candidates throughout the performance.

Can candidates be assessed with an interlocutor for speaking?

Yes, however the conversation should be conducted as a paired discussion not as an interview by the interlocutor. The candidate needs to have the opportunity to participate in the interaction as a fully equal partner and to contribute effectively and relevantly throughout.

Where assessors take on the role of interlocutor, to avoid disadvantaging candidates, it is important that participation in the conversation is balanced, especially with regards to turn-taking. Using peer interlocutors where possible is good practice.

Where candidates are paired with each other the assessor should not need to add to the conversation. If the assessor occasionally contributes to the conversation, this can impact on the candidates' initiation and turn-taking and detract from the interaction itself. It should be noted that with candidates at National 5 and Higher level it is not necessary for the assessor to take part in the interaction, and sometimes it can be detrimental to the interaction between candidates.

How should candidates be given feedback on their written drafts?

For Outcome 2, Produce written English, candidates may draft written work before producing a final version. The following process is recommended to ensure candidates receive sufficient but not excessive support between drafts.

Candidates can produce a maximum of two drafts and a final version. The process should follow the guidelines below:

1. Candidate produces 1st draft of writing task (or a piece of writing produced independently by the candidate during the learning and teaching process).
2. If the writing is deemed to have met all assessment standards at that level, the assessor should not make corrections on the candidate's work but clearly identify it as a pass, either on the work or on a candidate assessment record. Candidates should be given feedback that relates to the assessment standards.
3. If the 1st draft of the writing is not deemed to have met all assessment standards **at that level**, the assessor should **underline only** errors which require to be corrected in order for the candidate to meet the assessment standards at that level. Candidates should be given feedback that relates to the assessment standards they have met and not met. This can be recorded at the end of the writing or on a candidate assessment record.
4. The candidate then produces a second draft, taking account of the feedback on the assessment standards and, where possible, identifying and correcting errors based on **underlining only**. The process above in 2 and 3 is then applied to this piece of writing.
5. The final version, whether this is 1st, 2nd or final attempt can then be word processed by the candidate showing no further changes.

For the purposes of external verification, **the final version and any drafts**, must be submitted. These should clearly show a progression which is the candidate's own work.

If I didn't use Unit Assessment Support Packs exactly as published, should I be concerned about verification?

When submitting evidence for external verification, make sure that you annotate clearly where and why you have made your assessment judgements. Verifiers will not be expecting the exclusive use of published UASPs. The main thing for verifiers is that you are applying the assessment standards correctly. Sound internal verification procedures (perhaps using your local nominees), will help to ensure that everyone has the confidence to make appropriate assessment judgements. For example assessors should be aware that providing candidates with only a topic as a brief for a speaking assessment, with no scaffolding such as suggested bullet points, could disadvantage them in terms of the range and depth of the discussion. Models for appropriately challenging briefs can be found in the speaking tasks in the UASPs. The assessment brief should be included in the material submitted.

If you are in any doubt about the assessment that you have devised, or if your approach is significantly different from the published Unit Assessment Support packs, SQA provides a free prior verification service that will give feedback on your assessment materials.

If we want to use a Unit Assessment Support pack but change the text would this have to go through prior verification?

If there were just minor changes to a text, for example changing the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh to the Lighthouse Museum in Fraserburgh, then prior verification would not be needed. If you make bigger changes to the text or questions, provided you keep the types of question and apply the same assessment standards, prior verification does not have to be sought although it is strongly recommended.

If I am choosing a text to assess reading, how do I know it is at the right level?

Remember the key language descriptors: National 2 – basic, National 3 — simple, National 4 — straightforward, National 5 — detailed, Higher — detailed and complex. The standards have not changed from the previous SQA qualifications in ESOL. The UASPs exemplify the appropriate levels of demand. Again, sending centre-devised assessment tasks in for prior verification is strongly recommended.

Section C: Making Assessment Judgements

Do candidates have to meet all assessment standards for each outcome in the unit assessments to achieve a unit award?

Yes. Candidates need to meet all the assessment standards to achieve each outcome. Passing all outcomes for a unit means that the candidate has been successful in achieving the unit. This applies to all units at all SCQF levels.

What is holistic assessment?

Practitioners should apply a threshold judgement within and across assessment standards. If a candidate broadly meets the requirements of the assessment standards then there is no need for re-assessment.

Centres are encouraged to use the candidate assessment record or similar document to record assessment. Centres are free to adapt this in whatever way suits their candidates and the centre and reduce wherever possible duplication of recording ie 4 signatures where one will suffice in relation to an outcome.

How do I know that my assessment judgements are valid and reliable?

We make assessment judgements all the time in teaching. We know that we are on the right lines by comparing our standards to published assessment exemplars (Understanding Standards packs available on the SQA secure site), conducting group verification, and from an accumulation of teaching, learning and assessment experience. There is also a key role for nominees: if you are unsure about a standard, contact your local authority, school or college nominee for advice.

How are Unit assessments checked for achievement?

When using UASPs, the information in the judging evidence tables must be used to assess candidates. Candidates should, for instance, identify the overall purpose of the reading or listening text and be able to extract the main points.

If the centre has adapted an assessment, the information in column 4 of the judging evidence table should be adjusted accordingly.

If the centre has produced an assessment, they must also produce information on judging evidence to support the assessment process. There is no requirement to produce this in the same format but it should include the information from the first 3 columns of the judging evidence table and also contain information specific to the produced assessment as in column 4 of the judging evidence table.

Assessors should exercise their professional judgement in determining whether a candidate has provided enough detail to satisfy the requirements of each assessment standard. In listening and reading assessments candidate responses should be accepted as long as the correct answer is comprehensible or has been checked orally. Errors in spelling, grammar or punctuation should not be taken into account.

I'm confused by the judging evidence tables. What is the best approach to work out which questions, and how many questions, a candidate has to answer correctly in order to achieve an outcome?

Again, the best approach here is to familiarise yourself thoroughly with the assessment standards, and look out for places where a candidate has achieved them. It is worth noting that some questions in, say, a listening assessment might not just be tied to one assessment

standard: a candidate might meet an assessment standard in an answer to a range of questions.

Perhaps it is helpful to highlight the importance of column three (making assessment judgements) in the judging evidence tables. This column provides concise advice on how the assessment standards should be achieved. Column four of each judging evidence table is essentially advisory: it is a suggested approach as to how the assessment standards might be met and supports reliability.

How should internal unit assessment evidence be recorded?

An audio/video recording of each candidate's performance of speaking (and listening) is not mandatory for the unit assessments, but it is recommended to retain audio / video evidence for verification purposes. Audio/video recordings will also assist centres with internal verification activities.

If an audio/video recording is not retained the centre must ensure that detailed observation notes are made and retained for the speaking (and listening) assessment. At National 5 and Higher recordings for the performance element (IACCA) must be available for verification purposes, see section F below.

Reading and listening scripts with the candidate's answers noted on them should also be retained for verification purposes. For writing, the original draft(s) plus the final copy should be retained.

Examples of possible record-keeping approaches - candidate assessment records - are provided with the published UASPs and can be adapted to suit the needs of centres.

What score does a candidate have to achieve in order to pass a reading or listening Unit assessment?

Assessors will base their decision on whether a candidate has given enough information to show understanding by referring to the judging evidence tables. In particular, the banner statement included in all judging evidence tables is particularly useful to consider:

Assessors should use professional judgement and a holistic approach in deciding whether candidates have achieved the assessment standards. Candidates do not have to answer every question correctly as they could demonstrate achievement of the assessment standards across questions.

The assessment standards could also be met by producing a summary of a text or by note taking rather than producing answers to specific questions.

What evidence needs to be submitted for external verification?

Centres should refer closely to guidance provided by SQA about the sample and evidence to be submitted. If the centre is selected for the AVU or a targeted Unit, only the evidence requested on the checklist for this is required. It is not necessary to send evidence for other units or ESOL Performance marks. Likewise, if a centre is selected for IACCA verification it is not necessary to submit evidence for units.

How do I submit an assessment for prior verification?

Centres may produce their own assessments which allow candidates to meet the assessment standards. If these differ significantly from the UASPs, centres are strongly advised to submit them for prior verification. The assessment, judging evidence table or similar document and records of internal verification must be submitted.

Prior verification should be requested and an 'Accepted' outcome received before assessments are used with candidates. If a centre has used a prior verified assessment, the verification certificate should be included with material submitted for external verification.

Further information and the prior verification request form can be found on the following link

<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/74666.6219.html>

What is the best way to approach internal verification?

SQA has produced guidance on internal verification which can be found at:

www.sqa.org.uk/IVtoolkit.

Section D: National 2 and Access 2 units

With the introduction of the ESOL: Preparation for Literacy unit in 2016, the ESOL SCQF Level 2 framework is as follows:

SCQF Level 2	
National 2	Access 2
ESOL: Preparation for Literacy	
	ESOL: An Introduction to Beginner English Literacies 1
	ESOL: An Introduction to Beginner English Literacies 2
ESOL for Everyday Life: Reading and Writing	
ESOL for Everyday Life: Listening and Speaking	
ESOL in Context: Reading and Writing	
ESOL in Context: Listening and Speaking	

Are the Access 2 Introduction to Beginner English Literacies Units 1 and 2 still valid?

Yes, as shown above they provide a progression route for candidates who want to develop their literacy skills in English.

Unit Specifications are available via the following link:

http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/controller?p_service=Front.searchNQ&q=0&pMenuID=133&t=nq_unit&q=beginner+literacies&r=

National Assessment Bank (NAB) Support materials can be found on the SQA Secure site:

https://secure.sqa.org.uk/secure/NQ/NQ_Subjects/ESOL/Access_2

Learning Support materials for the ESOL Literacies Units are available here:

<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/33697.html>

Section E: National 4 Added Value Unit

From session 2015-2016 it is no longer mandatory for centres to use the SQA-devised Unit Assessment Support Pack for the National 4 Added Value Unit. Centres can now devise their own assessments or adapt the SQA UASP to suit their needs. Sending centre-devised assessment tasks in to SQA for prior verification is strongly recommended.

It is good practice for personalisation and choice to be applied to the AVU. There is a wide range of interesting topics which could be covered in the ESOL Assignment, in line with CfE principles. Some candidates could use topics and learning experiences from other subjects, eg Travel and Tourism.

The AVU stages should be carefully prepared and supported by the assessor for the topics that the candidates have chosen. Assessors, during the learning and teaching process, should facilitate the development of all aspects of presentation skills. The candidates should be familiar with the use of prompts (cue-cards), structuring and delivering the presentation and expanding on the topic by providing appropriate answers to relevant questions. Documented evidence of appropriate support offered to candidates in the completion of the ESOL Assignment is helpful in the verification process.

How could assessment standard 1.1 (reading / research) be assessed for the Added Value Unit?

For assessment standard 1.1 to be met the candidate should complete an ESOL assessment task sheet (see UASP) stating why they have chosen the topic and acknowledging at least two sources. There should be evidence that appropriate information from the sources has been extracted for the presentation, for example the candidate has made notes from the sources. The candidate should be able to show that they have selected appropriate straightforward information in order to prepare a basic and informative talk on the chosen topic.

Candidate notes and copies of flow charts and diagrams created by the candidates for assessment standard 1.1 could be included in the evidence submitted for verification. These would clearly demonstrate that candidates had selected relevant information to meet this assessment standard. Candidates should clearly link the information selected with the content of the presentation. Centres are required to provide evidence of candidates selecting relevant information from the texts in order to prepare their oral presentation. Candidates can ask for clarification on selecting relevant information from the texts and preparing for and making the presentation. The selection of information should, however, be done independently by the candidate and should be recorded, eg by making notes. Notes for the presentation should be used as prompts, limited to 4–5 bullet points, and should not be read out verbatim.

How could assessment standard 1.2 (speaking) be assessed for the Added Value Unit?

The candidate should make a short presentation, lasting 3 – 4 minutes. The presentation can be supported by brief headings or by visual aids. The presentation can be delivered to the whole class or to groups of candidates within the class. In some situations the candidate may have to do a one-to-one presentation to the assessor although presenting to an audience is preferable. The candidate should present their findings in a well-prepared and researched presentation. It is recommended that candidates do not write out presentations word for word. Although they may not read from the 'scripted presentation' there is a tendency to memorise what has been written down and this may include sections taken from research sources. Candidates should only use cue cards and/or PowerPoint notes when delivering their presentation.

Candidates should not rely too heavily on their notes. Notes from the selected information should be handled appropriately for the candidates' level. Candidates should be able to demonstrate an ability to expand on notes and/or the content of their (PowerPoint) presentation so that main points are explained with reasonable precision.

How could assessment standard 1.3 (listening) be assessed for the Added Value Unit?

On completion of the presentation, the candidate should participate in a question and answer session, with a number of responses that provide evidence of listening for communication. This part of the assessment should last about 3-4 minutes. The candidate should answer a sufficient variety of questions appropriately for their audience.

Should the questions for assessment standard 1.3 (listening) of the Added Value Unit be prepared in advance?

The questions should always be relevant to the presentation and the candidate should be asked questions that allow them to show understanding of their chosen topic. Ideally peers will ask the candidate follow-up questions to their presentation but the assessor may want to have some ideas ready in case there isn't a sufficient range of questions asked.

A variety of approaches could be taken to the question and answer section of the assessment. Assessors should make sure candidates have the opportunity to respond to questions that are relevant to the topic, and that sufficient time is allowed for candidates to demonstrate understanding of a variety of questions. If questions from candidates' peers are unsuitable or inappropriate, assessors must provide relevant questions in order for candidates to show that they have achieved assessment standard 1.3.

How long do candidates have to complete the Added Value Unit?

There is no stipulated time limit for the completion of the Added Value Unit. The time limit is at the discretion of the centre. The Added Value Unit should be part of a series of lessons, and can be done at an appropriate point in the course. It should be part of the on-going classroom work and not be seen as a stand-alone test.

How much assistance should candidates be given in the preparation for the Added Value Unit?

Assessments should be completed in class time under some supervision and control but not necessarily in traditional "exam conditions". Candidates should be given reasonable assistance and support from the assessor to complete the Added Value Unit, but should be encouraged to work independently. The amount of support a candidate requires should be reflected in the assessor's overall assessment of the candidate and noted in the candidate assessment record.

What evidence is the assessor required to retain?

Assessors should retain copies of candidates' notes from the sources selected. If the candidate has given only oral feedback on the texts, detailed notes should be retained by the assessor.

For the presentation and question and answer session, assessors should retain an audio/video recording or, if not possible, a written summary or detailed checklist of responses. Pieces of evidence should be named and dated.

What happens if a candidate does not pass the Added Value Unit?

As candidates should be supported at each stage of the AVU, problems, for example with the sources selected, should be highlighted before the candidate prepares their presentation. Presentations should not be scripted but the candidate would be expected to have basic notes or PowerPoint headings to deliver their presentation. If a candidate does not deliver their presentation well, perhaps because of nerves, they should be given the opportunity to present their topic again. If candidates fail to show sufficient knowledge of their chosen topic they should be given one re-assessment opportunity (two in exceptional circumstances).

What if a candidate passes the research and presentation sections of the Added Value Unit, but not the question and answer part?

The candidate is not required to do the entire Added Value Unit again. The candidate should only be re-assessed in the section he/she did not pass. If the candidate did not secure a pass in the question and answer session, he/she would only be required to do that part again, but would need to be asked a different set of questions from the first attempt.

Section F

National 5 and Higher

What happens if a candidate is presented for National 5, but subsequently fails the final course assessment?

There will be no automatic fall-back position. Candidates will only gain an award at National 4 if the assessor has retained evidence gathered throughout the academic year, and the **candidate has completed the Added Value Unit**. SQA has published information on this (*Recognising Positive Achievement*) which can be downloaded at: www.sqa.org.uk/cfedelivery.

Can the traditional Higher units count towards achievement of the new Higher course?

The old Higher units were included in the equivalent new Higher course frameworks with a finish date of **31 July 2016**. This means that they can no longer be used.

Course Assessment Task: ESOL Performance

Can the conversation / discussion for the unit assessment be used for the course performance?

Yes. If this approach is adopted, it is a requirement to document how a candidate has met the assessment standards relating to speaking (and listening) in the Unit candidate assessment record as well as showing how the mark has been achieved using the detailed marking instructions for speaking (out of 25) and listening (out of 5).

The general approach to the Course Assessment Task can vary. If a unit-by-unit approach is taken, there are two speaking assessments required for the units, one for ESOL for Everyday Life and one for ESOL in Context. If a combined approach at National 5 or Higher were used, one assessment of speaking would meet the requirements of both units. Some centres reduce the amount of assessment overall for the course by combining a unit assessment with the Course Assessment Task and carrying out this assessment at an appropriate time of the year. This is an acceptable practice where candidates are undertaking the course. Centres adopting this practice should ensure that, for the unit assessment, only the assessment standards for speaking are applied when making assessment judgements. For the ESOL Performance, candidates should be assessed, and marks awarded, using the marking instructions in the Course Assessment Task. Candidates can only do a particular speaking assessment task once, so if the centre is using one task for a unit assessment and the course assessment, they should make sure that candidates have had the opportunity to develop their speaking and listening skills and are being assessed at an appropriate time in the year to maximise the opportunity of obtaining the best marks possible. When this practice is followed, centres should also ensure that the assessment conditions as stated in the Course Assessment Task are fully implemented.

If a centre chooses to do the course assessment (IACCA) at a later stage of the course from the unit assessment then a different speaking and listening task would have to be used. The assessment should always be a conversation/discussion for the course component and not a presentation.

Does the performance for the Internally Assessed Course Component Award (IACCA) have to be a conversation rather than a presentation?

Yes. Centres should note the instructions in the Course Assessment Task that the assessment is a conversation/discussion and not a presentation with a follow up question and answer section. The Detailed Marking Instructions for both speaking and listening are for a conversation/discussion where candidates must show ability to initiate and sensitivity to turn-taking. The marks awarded for listening also take account of how well they listen and respond to what is said by their partner(s).

Does the performance for the IACCA need to be recorded?

Yes. There must be a video or audio recording of the performance for verification purposes. An annotated/highlighted copy of the Detailed Marking Instructions to show how the marks

were allocated to each candidate is very helpful. The combination of the two approaches to recording the marking process is good practice and provides verifiers with clear information. Assessors should try to make sure the recording device/microphone is placed in a position where background noise is not intrusive. Assessors should refrain from adding comment during candidates' performances.

Is task completion important in the IACCA performance?

Yes. In the Detailed Marking Instructions if a candidate does not achieve the task then their mark goes below the pass mark. Candidates must always complete the task as stated in the UASP or centre-devised assessment. Centres should consider carefully whether the purpose has been achieved. The assessor should ensure that there is attention to detail in making assessment judgements.

A National 5 or Higher speaking task from a Unit Assessment Support Pack can be used as an assessment brief for candidates. This ensures an appropriate level of challenge in the task. Centres can produce their own assessment brief, with an appropriate level of challenge, to take account of personalisation and choice. Allowing candidates personalisation and choice when deciding upon task topics and contexts engages candidates and supports the principles of CfE assessment. However, assessors should be aware that providing candidates with only a topic as a brief, with no scaffolding such as suggested bullet points, could disadvantage them in terms of the range and depth of the discussion. Models for appropriately challenging briefs can be found in the speaking tasks in the UASPs. The assessment brief should be included in the material submitted for external verification.

Centres should ensure that the topics and contexts chosen are wide-ranging and specific enough to allow candidates to fully demonstrate the skills, knowledge and understanding required to achieve a high mark for the main aspects assessed in the performance at National 5 and Higher level.

What is the best way to mark the IACCA performance?

Centres should take a holistic approach to the judgements, following the instructions in the Course Assessment Task to identify the band which best describes the candidate's performance. The mark awarded within the band is then reached by identifying aspects of the performance which may fall above or below the band. This will determine if the candidate is at the top, in the middle, or at the bottom of the band. Centres could use an annotated/highlighted copy of the Detailed Marking Instructions to show how the marks were allocated to each candidate. This is in addition to the candidate assessment record. The combination of the two approaches to recording the marking process is excellent practice and informs both the internal and external verification processes.

Centres can award the top mark in the top band for speaking. Where candidate performance is clearly at the top of the 25 – 22 band, 25 can be awarded.

Assessors should ensure that listening is treated as an aspect of performance and that marks awarded for listening are independent of assessment judgements made for candidates' speaking performance. Where candidates are awarded high marks for speaking, this does not imply that high marks should be awarded for listening. For high marks in listening there needs to be evidence from the performance that a candidate listens attentively

to their partner(s) and responds with a high degree of fluency and with a level of spontaneity that effectively develops the conversation.

Centres would benefit from referring to the recordings and commentaries in the Understanding Standards packs on the SQA Secure site. These can be used for standardisation purposes prior to assessment and during internal verification of the performance. It is also good practice for centres to identify their own exemplars for standardisation purposes.

Course Assessment — Question Paper

Are candidates provided with a suggested time to spend on the reading and writing papers?

Yes. A Question and Answer booklet for the Reading and Writing QP will be issued. It is important for candidates to note that the time stated on the front cover of the booklet relates to the entire duration of the Reading and Writing Paper. Students need to organise how much time they allocate to each of the two sections. The recommended time for National 5 Reading is about 35 minutes and for Writing, about 20 minutes on part one and about 40 minutes on part two. The recommended time for Higher Reading is about 40 minutes and for Writing, about 35 minutes on part one and about 55 minutes on part two.

Will there be penalties for going over the recommended word limit in the writing tasks for Everyday Life and In Context?

No, long good answers will not automatically be penalised.

Can candidates use synonyms for reading questions which state 'no more than 3 words from the text'?

No, these questions are designed to test detailed reading. Therefore synonyms are not acceptable. Please note that this is different from the listening paper, where synonyms are acceptable.

Which writing genres will be covered in the exam?

For Higher, candidates should be familiar with the following genres: formal email, formal letter, informal email, report, article, essay. For National 5, candidates should be familiar with the following genres: formal email, formal letter, informal email, report, essay.

Which kinds of letter in the Everyday Life task should I be revising for?

Candidates should be given practice with a variety of formal and informal letters.

Does spelling matter in answers to listening or reading questions in the exam?

Misspellings will not automatically be penalised unless the mistake alters the sense of the word. Spelling does matter in the writing paper, however.

Has there been a change to the recommended word count for the National 5 writing Everyday Life writing task?

Yes, the recommended word count for the Everyday Life writing section in the question paper has increased from 80-100 words to 90-120 words.

General questions and answers regarding National Qualifications can be found in the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) section of our website.