



NQ Verification 2014–15 Key Messages Round 2

01

Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
Verification event/visiting information	Event
Date published:	June 2015

National Courses/Units verified:

H24N 74 ESOL Assignment (National 4) Added Value Unit

C727 75 ESOL Performance — Speaking and Listening (National 5) Internally Assessed Component of Course Assessment (IACCA)

C727 76 ESOL Performance — Speaking and Listening (Higher) Internally Assessed Component of Course Assessment (IACCA)

02

Section 2: Comments on assessment

Assessment approaches

National 4 Added Value Unit: ESOL Assignment

All centres had used the mandatory Added Value Unit assessment support pack for the ESOL Assignment.

There was good evidence of approaches to the assessment which encouraged personalisation and choice in the wide range of interesting topics covered in the ESOL Assignments submitted by centres. It is good practice to encourage candidates to select topics from their wider interests. Some centres also took a

cross-curricular approach and used topics and learning experiences from other subjects, eg work experience, Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

Where centres take a cross-curricular approach, assessors must ensure that all the Assessment Standards for the ESOL Assignment can be met in the topic selected. If there is any doubt about this, assessors should clearly identify where additional evidence may be required at the planning stage and support candidates to provide this.

It was clear that some candidates had had appropriate practice of giving presentations and being recorded on video during learning and teaching. These candidates were relaxed and confident in their approach to both the presentation and the question-and-answer section.

Documented evidence of appropriate support offered to candidates in the completion of the ESOL Assignment was helpful in the verification process.

Assessment Standard 1.1

Where centres included candidate notes and highlighted texts for Assessment Standard 1.1, this clearly demonstrated that candidates had selected relevant information to meet this Assessment Standard. Many candidates had also clearly linked the information selected with the content of the presentation.

Some candidates, who had produced good quality presentations, had not provided sufficient evidence of clear links between the sources used and the content of the presentations.

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, eg 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.

Evidence to be gathered for Assessment Standard 1.1 can include:

- ◆ written notes in English on information selected from the texts relevant to the topic
- ◆ oral summary of information selected from the texts (this should be recorded, eg on the assessment task sheet)
- ◆ detailed checklist of a candidate's responses to questions on texts used

Assessment Standard 1.2

Overall, candidates were well prepared for their presentations but in one or two cases they relied too heavily on their notes. Candidates can use notes as prompts (limited to 4–5 bullet points) for the presentation but they cannot have scripted presentations read out verbatim.

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.

Assessment Standard 1.3

Centres had taken a variety of approaches to the question-and-answer section of the assessment. There were some excellent examples of questions presented by peers which were appropriate and relevant to the candidate's presentation.

Assessors should make sure candidates have the opportunity to respond to questions which 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.

Assessment judgements

National 4 Added Value Unit: ESOL Assignment

Overall, centres had made judgements that were in line with national standards for each of the Assessment Standards.

There were good examples where centres had provided detailed commentary, using the assessment checklist, which was clearly matched against the Assessment Standards. This showed how assessment judgements had been made.

In a few cases centres had awarded a pass for the Unit where candidates had clearly met Assessment Standard 1.2 for the presentation, but there was no evidence of information having been selected from at least two sources for Assessment Standard 1.1 and/or insufficient evidence of answering relevant follow-up questions on the information gathered in Assessment Standard 1.3.

Assessment approaches

National 5 and Higher Internally Assessed Component of the Course Assessment (IACCA): ESOL Performance — Speaking and Listening

All centres verified had used a National 5 or Higher Speaking task from the Unit assessment support pack as an assessment brief for candidates. This ensured an appropriate level of challenge in the task. However, this is not a requirement and centres can produce their own assessment brief, with an appropriate level of challenge, to take account of personalisation and choice.

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).

Some centres assessed candidates in small groups rather than pairs and where this was successful each candidate had sufficient time and supportive group members to be able to fully demonstrate their English language skills. It is appropriate to extend the timing of the Speaking and Listening task for small groups, in order to allow each candidate to fully demonstrate their skills. Centres should also ensure that the discussion or conversation is well balanced so that there is sufficient evidence from each candidate.

It was clear that some candidates had prepared very well for the task and this was evidenced particularly through their contribution on the topic, their competences in initiating and turn-taking and in considering and responding to their partners' comments.

Video-recorded evidence supported the identification of candidates. When candidates of the same first language group and gender are paired it can be difficult to identify them on audio recordings. As this is sometimes unavoidable, it is helpful if candidates refer to each other by name in the initial stages of the conversation/discussion.

Centres should ensure that candidates are aware of the suggested timing before starting the ESOL Performance assessment task:

- ◆ National 5 — take part in a paired conversation/discussion for five to six minutes or a little longer if there are more than two people in the group.
- ◆ Higher — take part in the discussion for eight to ten minutes or a little longer if there are more than two people in the group.

There are clear benefits when candidates are paired with other candidates or peers rather than an assessor, but centres should ensure that candidates are fully aware that dominating the conversation will not result in them being awarded a higher mark.

Assessment judgements

National 5 and Higher Internally Assessed Component of the Course Assessment (IACCA): ESOL Performance — Speaking and Listening

Overall, the marks awarded for National 5 and Higher were in line with national standards and assessors had made good use of Detailed Marking Instructions for each of the aspects/characteristics of Performance to determine marks within the bands for both Speaking and Listening.

Most centres had taken 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.

In a few cases there was little differentiation of the marks in the top band, ie 25–22 for Speaking where candidates performed well. Marks at the top of this band can be allocated where candidate performance justifies this. This also applied to Listening where candidates had been awarded 4 when their performance justified a mark of 5.

A number of centres had used and included an annotated/highlighted copy of the Detailed Marking Instructions to show how the marks were allocated to each candidate. This was in addition to the candidate assessment record. The combination of the two approaches to recording the marking process proved excellent practice and provided verifiers with clear information.

In a few cases more detailed comments on the candidate assessment record would have shown more clearly the basis on which the marks had been awarded.

Understanding Standards packs are available on SQA's secure site for the IACCA at both National 5 and Higher. These provide detailed commentaries on audio/video recordings of candidate performances which show clearly the basis on which marks have been awarded.

03

Section 3: General comments

Internal verification

Evidence of internal verification must be submitted along with the candidate evidence for external verification of both Units and IACCA.

As well as ensuring national standards are maintained, internal verification should ensure that assessors are fully supported throughout internal assessment. Internal verifiers and assessors may find the [SQA Internal Verification Toolkit](#) useful to ensure national standards are maintained, assessors are supported and paperwork is not excessive.

The Toolkit is a suggested approach and SQA recognises that many centres will have well-developed processes in place.

One centre had submitted records of self- and peer-evaluation of candidate presentations. Including opportunities for self/peer evaluation for Assessment Standards 1.2 and 1.3 is good practice and has clear cross-curricular benefits.

Evidence 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 an IACCA, only the evidence requested for this on the checklist is required. It is not necessary to send evidence for Units.

If the centre is selected for the AVU, only the evidence requested on the checklist for this is required. It is not necessary to send evidence for other Units.

External verification reports aim to provide detailed feedback to centres on assessment approaches and judgements. This is facilitated when centres send candidate evidence for an IACCA which exemplifies the full range of marks used by the centre or, for Units, the range of performance, ie pass/fail.

Audio or video recordings should be clearly introduced by the assessor stating centre name, level, task and candidates' names.

Prior verification

In session 2015–16, centres may produce assessments for the National 4 Added Value Unit which allow candidates to meet the Assessment Standards.

Centres are strongly advised to submit centre-produced assessments for prior verification if these differ significantly from the Unit assessment support packs. This should be requested 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 can be found on our [Delivery Processes and Information for Centres web page](#).