



Internal Assessment Report 2010: ESOL (17)

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in National Qualifications in this subject.

National Courses

Titles/levels of National Courses verified

C222 12: Higher ESOL: Speaking Component of Everyday Communication Unit
DV34 12

C222 11: Intermediate 2 ESOL: Speaking Component of Everyday
Communication Unit DV34 11

General comments

Central verification found that for most of the candidates sampled, standards were appropriate and the centre's judgement of performance in speaking was accepted. In a few cases centres' judgements were not in line with National Standards and those centres undertook an assessment review.

In a few of these cases, assessors were marking higher than the standards, but there were also examples of candidates not being fully credited for their performance. Assessors should make use of the full range of marks available to candidates.

Many candidates demonstrated excellent skills and use of strategies to maintain and develop the conversations, but in a few cases not enough attention had been paid at Higher or Intermediate 2 to the following in the Description of Performance:

'...initiate...show sensitivity to the norms of turn taking...maintain/support the development of the interaction.'

'Contributes effectively and relevantly throughout the interaction.'

'...achieves the task...'

Assessors and internal verifiers should refer to the Description of Performance and note that if candidates are unable to meet these points in the descriptions, the highest mark that can be awarded is 12/25.

Clear labelling of candidate evidence greatly facilitated the verification process, but, in a few cases, the speaking assessment, when on tape, was difficult to access. It is also important for candidates' full names to be stated clearly at the beginning of the recording. Tapes, CDs and DVDs were submitted, with many centres now using MP3 recorders and transferring the recordings to CDs.

Centres should read and apply the *Guidance on Assessment of Speaking* documents. These may be fine-tuned each year and may contain changes from the previous year. It is therefore extremely important that the assessors are familiar with the new documents when they become available in the autumn.

A few centres sent candidate evidence for other skills along with the speaking evidence. It should be noted that listening, reading and writing are externally assessed in the examination, and it is not necessary to send Unit evidence for central verification of Speaking.

The Verification Sample form should assign the candidate a speaking mark out of 25.

There was evidence of thorough and rigorous internal verification having taken place in the majority of centres, but in others the internal verification system required further development, particularly in relation to sampling.

Centres had made use of the instruments of assessment in the NAB packs for DV34 11 and DV34 12.

In a few cases, out of date National Assessment tasks from April 2006 were used. The NABs were revised in October 2008 in response to feedback from centres and are available on the SQA secure website.

In a few cases, assessors and candidates were unaware of the importance of the timing of the two parts of the speaking assessment, as set out in the NABs, and either the first part exceeded the recommended time by a great deal or it was difficult to distinguish between the two parts.

Assessors should encourage candidates to observe the time limits for each part of the Speaking task, and internal verifiers should ask for candidates to be re-assessed when the first part is too long or it is difficult to distinguish between the first and second part of the task.

Some centres had also used an out-of-date *Assessment of Speaking: Descriptions of Performance* document to mark candidates' speaking. The Descriptions of Performance were revised in August 2008 and are available on the ESOL pages of the SQA website by selecting 'Higher or Intermediate 2' and then going to the document *Assessment of Speaking*, or by using the following link: http://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/ESOLAssessmentofSpeaking.pdf.

Centres should note that video exemplars of Speaking for all NQ ESOL Units are now available on the SQA secure website.

This year, the majority of centres demonstrated a clear understanding of the Evidence Requirements.

In a few cases, assessors and candidates were unaware of the importance of the timing of the two parts of the speaking assessment, as described in the Unit Evidence Requirements. Either the first part exceeded the recommended time by a great deal, or it was difficult to distinguish between the two parts.

Assessors should encourage candidates to observe the time limits for each part of the Speaking task. Internal verifiers should ask for candidates to be re-

assessed when the first part is too long or if it is difficult to distinguish between the first and second part of the task.

In one case, a candidate had been re-levelled from Higher to Intermediate 2 using the recording made for the Higher task, with a mark awarded using the Intermediate 2 Descriptions of Performance. This was an appropriate step, following the centre's internal verification decisions, and removed the need for the candidate to be recorded using an Intermediate 2 task.

Areas of good practice

In many of the recordings, candidate evidence illustrated that candidates had been well-paired, with both candidates demonstrating the requirement in the Description of Performance to 'initiate and show ... sensitivity to the norms of turn-taking.'

The candidates' interactions, in many of the recordings, suggest that they had made good use of the preparation time given for the task. They demonstrated their awareness of the demands of the task and performed to the extent of their language development.

The verification process was greatly facilitated when candidates were paired with a different language group of gender and referred to each other by name at the beginning of the interaction, as well as stating their full name before the interaction begins. In one case where it was difficult to identify candidates, the centre had provided a very helpful voice recognition sheet, highlighting different phrases used by candidates.

Many candidates were very comfortable with the process of being recorded and had clearly been familiarised with this before being assessed.

One centre submitted candidate evidence on DVD. This was very effective and supported the verification process.

One centre submitted a detailed assessment checklist for each candidate. This was extremely helpful and enabled the verifiers to see the assessor's comments on each of the Performance Criteria and how they related to the mark given from the Description of Performance and the candidate's performance. There was evidence of internal verification having taken place, and where necessary, marks having been adjusted accordingly and appropriately.

Areas for improvement

Centres should ensure that it is possible to distinguish candidates' names and identify candidates. This should be checked by the assessor/internal verifier before the candidate evidence is sent to SQA. If there is any doubt, additional information to assist identification should be provided. It is also helpful if candidates refer to each other by name at the beginning of the interaction (see above).

Assessors should always make use of the full range of marks available to them, as well as interacting with the detail in the Descriptions of Performance.

It is recommended that the assessor does not aid the candidates' transition from Part 1 to Part 2 of the conversation by indicating this on the recording. At both Intermediate 2 and Higher this should be a natural transition by the candidates.

Candidates should try to avoid ending the interaction abruptly and should aim to close the conversation in as natural a way as possible.

Candidates should sustain their engagement in a fully interactive conversation throughout both parts of the selected task. Where possible, the pairing of candidates with the assessor should be avoided, as this tends to inhibit the candidate from demonstrating the ability to initiate during the interaction. If the assessor has to take the partner role in the conversation, they should ensure that a balanced two-way conversation is conducted and not an interview.

Centres should ensure that recordings submitted on CDs are compatible with a standard PC or a standard CD player, and not just able to be played on one particular make and model of CD player.

Centres should not stick labels directly onto the CD, as removing them, on a number of occasions, destroyed the recording.

A number of centres had not completed the Verification Sample form correctly. Comprehensive *Instructions to Centres* for ESOL are issued each year to the SQA Co-ordinator of each centre forming part of the sample. ESOL staff should ensure that they receive these instructions and follow them carefully. Centres should include a paper copy of the NAB and a copy of the Assessment of Speaking Description of Performance used. (A number of centres had submitted out-of-date documentation.)

Some candidate evidence was not clearly introduced on the recording. Ensure that the following information is stated clearly at the beginning of the recording to help identify candidates:

Level: Higher or Intermediate 2
Unit title: Everyday Communication
Task:
Candidates' names:

Centres should note that video exemplars of Speaking for all NQ ESOL Units are now available on the SQA secure website.

National Qualifications (NQ) Units

Titles/levels of NQ Units verified

DV34 08 ESOL: Everyday Communication (Access 2)
F1AD 08 ESOL: Transactional Contexts (Access 2)
F1AE 08 ESOL: Work and Study-related Contexts (Access 2)
DV34 09 ESOL: Everyday Communication (Access 3)
F1AD 09 ESOL: Transactional Contexts (Access 3)
F1AE 09 ESOL: Work and Study-related Contexts (Access 3)
DV34 10 ESOL: Everyday Communication (Intermediate 1)
F1AD 10 ESOL: Transactional Contexts (Intermediate 1)
F1AE 10 ESOL: Work and Study-related Contexts (Intermediate 1)
DV34 11 ESOL: Everyday Communication (Intermediate 2)
DV35 11 ESOL: Work-related Contexts (Intermediate 2)
DV36 11 ESOL: Study-related Contexts (Intermediate 2)
DV34 12 ESOL: Everyday Communication (Higher)
DV36 12 ESOL: Study-related Contexts (Higher)

General comments

This is the third year of delivery and verification of the Units at Access 2, Access 3 and Intermediate 1 contained within the revised ESOL Framework, and the fourth year of delivery and verification of Units at Intermediate 2 and Higher.

Understanding of assessment requirements, processes and practices has increased, and the quality of candidate evidence, assessor judgements and internal verification has improved. However, it is apparent that during visits to some centres, external verifiers encountered similar issues to those in previous years. Therefore, some of the comments in this year's report are similar to those in last year's report.

Visiting verification was carried out, and candidate evidence sampled has been of an appropriate standard in the majority of centres. There are still many new centres offering SQA NQ ESOL qualifications for the first time. The external verification process has been helpful in identifying both examples of good practice and areas where guidelines need to be more carefully followed for successful internal assessment and verification.

Some centres have produced their own assessment materials for these specific purposes and have sent them to SQA to take advantage of the opportunity for prior verification. The development and use of e-assessment is also underway in some centres for Listening and Reading.

In 2009–10 many new centres including colleges, schools, community learning and training providers have carried out internal assessment of ESOL, and candidates have gained recognition of their English language skills.

In some centres, clear organisation and labelling of candidate evidence, including recordings of oral assessments and thorough and supportive internal verification procedures and documentation, assisted the external verification process. Clear identification of the internal verification sample was helpful for external verifiers.

There were examples of positive and constructive feedback to candidates on performance in speaking and writing, but in some centres this process could be further developed. The constructive use of the formative checklists for Speaking and Writing has been evident in some centres. The new exemplars make use of these checklists to provide the commentaries.

The majority of centres have used the NAB materials for assessment. Feedback from centres on the NABs was received and amendments were made. Centres should note that the amended materials are now on the SQA secure website (amended pages are indicated) and these versions should replace those that centres downloaded previously. It is not necessary to download the entire NAB material but only the amended pages.

It has been evident during visits to new and some more experienced centres again this year that there is a lack of awareness of all of the available support, guidance and exemplar materials essential to delivering and assessing the Units successfully. Assessors and internal verifiers should have access to all the relevant materials to ensure that the assessment process is fully supported, and that they are interpreting Performance Criteria and Evidence Requirements accurately.

- ◆ Unit specifications contain both mandatory and guidance material on each Unit and can be obtained from the SQA website.
- ◆ The NABs for each Unit contain not only the assessment material but also marking instructions, tapescripts and information sheets for assessors and candidates. These are available on the SQA secure website along with audio for recordings of the listening assessments. Your SQA Co-ordinator has access to this site.
- ◆ New video exemplar materials for assisting with standardisation of Speaking with written commentaries and writing exemplars with written commentaries are now available on the SQA secure website for all Units.
- ◆ Learning support materials and e-learning materials for each Unit, along with audio recordings of listening material, are also available on the SQA website: www.sqa.org.uk/esol.

There are two points for centres to consider when using the learning support materials:

- ◆ Centres can re-record listening material to take account of local accents and can download Word versions of the materials and adapt and make changes as relevant to particular contexts.
- ◆ The materials are titled learning support materials because their purpose is to supplement other materials that centres use for learning, teaching and

formative assessment of ESOL. Each pack states clearly at the front that it is not intended as a complete learning and teaching pack for a Unit.

Marketing material and case studies can also be downloaded from the SQA ESOL page of the website for centres and candidates. Some centres have found the leaflet *Improve your English* extremely useful for candidates, and in the case of younger learners, their parents have welcomed the information provided. The *Information for Centres* leaflet provides an overview of the framework and a useful quick reference document for Unit titles and codes.

Refer to the *Information for Assessors* in the NAB packs for preparation time for presentations. Researching and preparing the presentation is part of the assessment process, and candidates should be allowed sufficient time for this. Candidates can receive the task a week in advance of doing the presentation. The notes that they can use during the presentations are specified on the NAB task sheet.

The majority of centres use the NABs which ensure that the Evidence Requirements are met. Where centres have developed assessment tasks, these have been modelled on the NABs and therefore meet the Evidence Requirements.

In some centres, candidates are given excellent preparatory work, and formative assessments have been developed so that candidates are familiar with the ways in which they will be assessed.

Good use of video and audio recording during formative assessment provides candidates with excellent feedback.

Many assessors recognise that candidates giving presentations may be very nervous. This is particularly the case with some younger learners. Where the candidate has achieved all of the Performance Criteria in terms of the language used, and structured the presentation appropriately but made a small error, eg missing a slide or omitting a point which is in their notes because of nerves, they are immediately given the opportunity to repeat the presentation.

The re-drafting process is being used very effectively in centres to help candidates improve and correct their writing.

Where detailed feedback from the internal verifier to the assessor is given, the assessment process is supported and assessors feel confident about judgements. In centres where there is only one assessor, good links have been made with assessors and internal verifiers in other centres to provide internal verification. There are also examples of very effective inductions for new assessors who are often unfamiliar with internal assessment.

Areas of good practice

Outcome 1: Speaking

Many candidates were well prepared for speaking assessments, allowing them to speak confidently and naturally at their level and develop and demonstrate skills of turn-taking, initiating and rephrasing, where necessary. There were many examples of thoughtful pairing of students for assessment which involved conversations.

The most successful and well managed role-plays in the Transactional Contexts and Work and Study-related Contexts Units were when the assessor or another competent speaker of English played the role of interlocutor, eg hotel receptionist.

There were some excellent examples of presentations where candidates had approached the assessment with great enthusiasm and had prepared well for the presentation. The use of video to record during formative assessments, and the feedback to candidates that followed from this, was particularly useful.

Outcome 2: Writing

Many candidates produced a high standard of writing and had considered the standard of presentation of the written evidence. When written assessments clearly indicated 'draft', 'final version' and 'display copy' (word processed), it made the job of verification much simpler.

In many centres, candidate evidence shows that the re-drafting process has been used well by candidates, and the development of their writing skills was demonstrated by the process.

In some centres, assessor comments on meeting the Performance Criteria show that the candidates were given excellent feedback within the requirements laid down by the NABs.

Outcome 3: Listening and Outcome 4: Reading

The assessment of listening and reading is facilitated by the marking keys, and centres had made full use of these to mark assessments.

Areas for improvement

Outcome 1: Speaking assessments

- ◆ Include a copy of the speaking task sheet with candidate evidence to assist the process of internal and external verification.
- ◆ Clear information should be given at the beginning of recordings of speaking so that the candidate's full name, the level and the Unit can be identified.
- ◆ Where the task is a conversation, candidates should interact as naturally as possible, with both initiating and taking an interest in what the other is saying. They should also begin and conclude the conversation with appropriate strategies.

- ◆ Candidates should be made aware that the more balanced the conversation is, the more likely it is to meet the time and Performance Criteria requirements.
- ◆ Oral assessment should be done in one continuous recording, unless there is an unavoidable reason why the recording must be interrupted, in which case the reason should be noted on the candidate record sheet.
- ◆ Candidates who do not pass the assessment on the first attempt should be given a new assessment task for the second attempt.
- ◆ It is important for assessors to allow candidates only the stated amount of preparation time for the assessments.
- ◆ It is important for candidates to understand that the required time should be adhered to for the speaking assessment. This should be discussed with candidates during formative assessment and during the assessment preparation stage.
- ◆ For all speaking assessments, except presentations, candidates can make notes during the preparation time, but these notes should not be used at the time of recording.

Outcome 2: Writing assessments

- ◆ It is a requirement that drafts of writing be kept along with the final version. Drafts of written assessments must be retained for both internal and external verification and should indicate clearly first draft, second draft (if necessary) and final version.
- ◆ Assessors must **only** use underlining of words or spaces to indicate errors in drafts of written assessments, and can give feedback to candidates in relation to how well they have met or not met the Performance Criteria. Candidates can benefit from detailed feedback but under no circumstances should specific errors on the writing assessment be discussed.
- ◆ Candidates may complete the task and meet the Performance Criteria with a first draft and so pass the assessment. However, the re-drafting process is intended to replicate good practice when writing in terms of reviewing and presenting their work, so they will benefit from producing a final version.
- ◆ The final version of the written assessment should have **no** marks from the assessor.
- ◆ The drafting process is there to encourage candidates to seek and receive feedback on written work and is not associated with re-assessment. Re-assessment occurs when the candidate has failed that task and is given a new task.
- ◆ Assessments should always be written in pen.
- ◆ Candidates must always complete the task as stated in the NAB.
- ◆ Candidates should receive appropriate input to enable them to begin and conclude particular genres of writing, eg emails and letters. It should also be

highlighted to candidates that paragraphing appropriately is an important part of meeting the Performance Criteria in many tasks.

- ◆ Candidates must adhere to the suggested word limit for written tasks and not greatly exceed or fall short of this. This should always be picked up in the first draft, with feedback given to them so that they can adjust the word count in their next draft/final version.

Outcome 3: Listening and Outcome 4: Reading assessments

- ◆ Assessors should mark and date all answer sheets to enable internal and external verifiers to confirm the marks for each assessment.
- ◆ Candidates must be reminded to stay within the allotted word limits for particular answers. Where candidates have exceeded the number of words specified, they should be asked to delete the words that are not necessary.
- ◆ If a candidate is asked to clarify an answer because it cannot be read or understood by the assessor, this should be indicated next to the answer on the sheet and initialled by the assessor.
- ◆ Please refer to the marking information and note the following points:
 1. 'Award the point if the answer is correct even though it may be wrong in terms of spelling or grammar.'
 1. 'Use your discretion and accept synonyms and near synonyms.'

Entries for session August 2009 – July 2010

Unit	Level	Title	Entries
DV34	08	English for Speakers of Other Languages: Everyday Communication	1,176
F1AD	08	English for Speakers of Other Languages: Transactional Contexts	949
F1AE	08	English for Speakers of Other Languages: Work and Study-related Contexts	499
F1AF	08	English for Speakers of Other Languages: An Introduction to Beginner English Literacies 1	688
F1AG	08	English for Speakers of Other Languages: An Introduction to Beginner English Literacies 2	449
DV34	09	English for Speakers of Other Languages: Everyday Communication	1,340
F1AD	09	English for Speakers of Other Languages: Transactional Contexts	1,286
F1AE	09	English for Speakers of Other Languages: Work and Study-related Contexts	1,074
DV34	10	English for Speakers of Other Languages: Everyday Communication	1,422
F1AD	10	English for Speakers of Other Languages: Transactional Contexts	1,193
F1AE	10	English for Speakers of Other Languages: Work and Study-related Contexts	949
DV34	11	English for Speakers of Other Languages: Everyday Communication	1,211
DV35	11	English for Speakers of Other Languages: Work-Related Contexts	829
DV36	11	English for Speakers of Other Languages: Study-Related Contexts	690
DV34	12	English for Speakers of Other Languages: Everyday Communication	686
DV35	12	English for Speakers of Other Languages: Work-Related Contexts	265
DV36	12	English for Speakers of Other Languages: Study-Related Contexts	603
Total entries			15,309