



# **Internal Assessment Report: English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)**

Assessment Panel: English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Assessment Panel

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

# National Units

## Titles/levels of National Units verified

F1AF 08 ESOL: An Introduction to Beginner English Literacies 1	Access 2	visiting verification
F1AG 08 ESOL: An Introduction to Beginner English Literacies 1	Access 2	visiting verification
DV34 08 ESOL: Everyday Communication	Access 2	visiting verification
F1AD 08 ESOL: Transactional Contexts	Access 2	visiting verification
F1AE 08 ESOL: Work and Study-related Contexts	Access 2	visiting verification
DV34 09 ESOL: Everyday Communication	Access 3	visiting verification
F1AD 09 ESOL: Transactional Contexts	Access 3	visiting verification
F1AE 09 ESOL: Work and Study-related Contexts	Access 3	visiting verification
DV34 10 ESOL: Everyday Communication	Intermediate 1	visiting verification
F1AD 10 ESOL: Transactional Contexts	Intermediate 1	visiting verification
F1AE 10 ESOL: Work and Study-related Contexts	Intermediate 1	visiting verification
DV34 11 ESOL: Everyday Communication	Intermediate 2	visiting and central verification
DV35 11 ESOL: Work-related contexts	Intermediate 2	visiting verification
DV36 11 ESOL: Study-related contexts	Intermediate 2	visiting verification
DV34 12 ESOL: Everyday Communication	Higher	visiting and central verification
DV36 12 ESOL: Study-related contexts	Higher	visiting verification

# Feedback to centres

## General comments

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

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

The table below shows the rapid increase in the number of Unit entries received by SQA for NQ ESOL Units. Development work by the External Verifiers and the ESOL Development Manager has continued to support the introduction of internal assessment of ESOL.

## Unit entries by level

	2006	2007	2008	2009
Access 2	411	61	1852	3566
Access 3	1246	2336	3069	3628
Intermediate 1	1046	2401	2389	3293
Intermediate 2	712	1310	2058	1966
Higher	144	415	778	1134
Total	3559	6923	10146	13587

The majority of centres have used the NAB materials for assessment. Amendments were made to the NABs after feedback from centres. Centres should note that the amended materials are now on SQA's 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, only the amended pages.

It has not been possible to respond to requests for more assessment material to be available — eg assessments targeted at younger learners, specific vocational areas, and academic subjects. 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.

Training on Contextualisation of ESOL Assessment was provided to support centres in developing assessments.

It has been evident during visits to new and some more experienced centres that there is a lack of awareness of 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 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 SQA's website.

The NABs for each Unit not only contain the assessment material but also marking instructions, tapescripts and information sheets for assessors and candidates. They are available on SQA's secure website. CDs of the Listening assessments can be requested by the same route. Your SQA Co-ordinator has access to this site.

Exemplar materials for assisting with standardisation of Writing and Speaking are also available on the SQA secure website, and sound files can be downloaded for Access 2, 3 and Intermediate 1 Speaking. CDs for Intermediate 2 and Higher Speaking can also be requested. Centres should ensure that they have these materials to assist with assessment of Speaking and Writing.

Learning support materials and any e-learning materials for each Unit are now available on SQA's main website at [www.sqa.org.uk/esol](http://www.sqa.org.uk/esol). There is also an online order form to request the Listening materials CD.

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

- ◆ SQA will not be making any further revisions to these materials or the accompanying CDs but 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 they seem relevant to particular contexts.
- ◆ The learning support materials are intended to supplement other materials that centres use for learning, teaching and internal assessment of ESOL. Each pack states clearly at the front that it is not intended to be 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 is a useful quick reference document for Unit titles and codes.

In 2008–09 many new centres including colleges, schools, community learning, and training providers carried out internal assessment of ESOL, and candidates gained recognition of their English language skills.

## **Advice on good practice and areas for further development**

The following aspects of good practice assisted the external verification process in some centres:

- ◆ clear organisation and labelling of candidate evidence, including recordings of oral assessments
- ◆ thorough and supportive internal verification procedures and documentation
- ◆ clear identification of the internal verification sample

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.

### **Speaking**

Many candidates were well prepared for Speaking assessments allowing them to speak confidently and naturally at their level 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 roleplays 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. However, there were also some cases where this area could be further developed. The use of video to record during formative assessments and the feedback to candidates that followed from this were particularly useful.

The following points should assist assessors with 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 Speaking recordings 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. The reason should then 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.
- ◆ 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 one week in advance of doing the presentation. The notes that they can use during the presentations are specified on the NAB task sheet.

## Writing

Many candidates produced a high standard of writing and consideration had been given to 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 redrafting 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.

The following points should assist assessors with 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 1st draft, 2nd 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 redrafting process is intended to replicate good practice when writing, in terms of reviewing and presenting their work, and 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 e-mails and letters) and 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 in order that they do not greatly exceed or fall short of this. This should always be picked up in the first

draft and feedback given to them so that they can adjust the word count in their next draft/final version.

## **Listening and Reading**

The assessment of Listening and Reading is facilitated by the marking keys. Centres had made full use of these to mark assessments.

The following points should assist assessors with Listening and 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 which 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:

- ◆ Award the point if the answer is correct even though it may be wrong in terms of spelling or grammar.
- ◆ Use your discretion and accept synonyms and near synonyms.

# Component/coursework in National Courses

## Component/coursework verified

C222 12 Higher ESOL: Speaking component of Everyday Communication Unit DV34 12  
C222 12 Intermediate 2 ESOL: Speaking component of Everyday Communication Unit DV34 12

## Feedback to centres

### 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 some cases centres' judgements were not in line with National Standards and those centres undertook an assessment review.

In some of these cases, assessors were marking higher than the standards but also there were 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.

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

Clear labelling of candidate evidence greatly facilitated the verification process but in a few cases the Speaking assessment was difficult to access when on tape. It is also important for candidates' full names to be stated clearly at the beginning of the recording. Both tapes and

CDs 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 therefore may contain changes from the previous year. It is therefore extremely important that assessors are familiar with the new documents when they become available in the autumn. Centres should make use of the exemplar CDs of Speaking material in conjunction with the guidance material. These CDs can be requested on SQA's secure website.

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. The Verification Sample Form must assign candidates a Speaking mark out of 25. The task sheet should always be included in the material sent with the recording.

### **Advice on good practice and areas for further development**

Candidates interacted well and the conversations sounded natural. In order to achieve this, there was evidence that candidates had developed skills and strategies, received adequate training in the assessment task, and had made good use of the preparation time. Where appropriate training and good use of preparation time were made, candidates fulfilled the requirements of the task and clearly referred to each bullet point.

There were many examples of good pairing of candidates which resulted in excellent interactions.

Candidates should be paired supportively so that each has an opportunity to show their abilities. If the candidate has to be paired with an indigenous speaker of English or a teacher, the interlocutor should not feel that they have to take on a role. The conversation should sound as natural as possible. In some cases, when the candidate was paired with the assessor, this resulted in them being led towards particular vocabulary or discussion points. In others, the assessor dominated the interaction and candidates were not able to fully demonstrate their speaking skills. When there is only one candidate being entered the assessor can consider pairing the candidate with an indigenous learner if this supports the process of assessment.

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 assist with identification of candidates:

Level: Higher or Intermediate 2  
Unit Title: Everyday Communication  
Candidate's name:

In some cases it was difficult to identify which candidate was being verified. It is always helpful for assessment and verification purposes if the candidate is paired with a partner of a different language group or gender, where possible. It is also very helpful when candidates

refer to each other by name at the beginning of the assessment — in addition to their names being clearly stated before the assessment begins.

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

Some candidate evidence was barely audible so assessors and internal verifiers must ensure that the recordings they submit are of as high a standard as possible, and that they have been checked by the internal verifier before they are submitted.

There were many examples of candidates managing the transition from Part 1 of the assessment to Part 2 extremely well and in the process demonstrating the ability to initiate and develop the conversation. However, this was also an aspect of the assessment process that could be improved upon. Part 1 and Part 2 of the assessment task should be done as one conversation, with candidates signalling when they are moving on to Part 2. Part 1 should be as much an interaction between candidates as Part 2. In some cases each candidate delivered a monologue which sounded rather like a short presentation. Candidate preparation for the assessment should include an awareness of the importance of timing of the two parts of the assessment.

A number of centres had not completed the Verification Sample Form correctly and a few centres had not entered marks at all. 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.