



**National Qualifications 2011  
Internal Assessment Report  
ESOL**

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 (DV34 12)

C222 11 Intermediate 2 ESOL: Speaking component of Everyday Communication (DV34 11)

### General comments

The comments in these sections are based on the sample of centres selected for central verification of the Speaking component of Higher and Intermediate 2 Courses.

Central verification found that for many of the candidates sampled, standards were appropriate and the centre's judgement of performance in Speaking was Accepted. Many candidates demonstrated excellent skills and use of strategies to maintain and develop the conversations. Candidates who met the national standards and achieved good marks interacted well with each other in a natural way, listening and responding to their partner, showing interest, asking questions and initiating changes in the direction of the conversation.

This year saw a decline in the number of centres meeting the requirements of the national standards at central verification. There were more cases where the centres' judgements were not in line with national standards and therefore Not Accepted. Those centres undertook an assessment review, either accepting the Speaking marks awarded by External Verifiers or re-assessing candidates. The following are the main reasons for a Not Accepted result for a centre at central verification:

- ◆ Candidates met the national standards at a higher level than they had been awarded marks.
- ◆ Candidates did not meet the national standard and had been awarded marks that were too high.
- ◆ Interactions had been rehearsed and it was not possible to make an assessment judgement.
- ◆ Interactions were supported by prompting by a third person.
- ◆ Some interactions, which took place with an assessor, were dominated or led by the assessor and it was not possible to make an assessment judgement of the candidate's performance against some of the Descriptions of Performance.

In more of the centres sampled this year, 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.'

Communicate with 'coherence and organisation'.

'...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 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 the assessors are familiar with the new documents when they become available in the autumn.

In a few cases, centres had not sent marks or had completed the form with percentages. The Verification Sample Form should assign the candidate a Speaking mark out of 25.

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 'Support for Centres' and then going to the document 'Assessment of Speaking' or by using the following link [www.sqa.org.uk/files\\_ccc/ESOLAssessmentofSpeaking.pdf](http://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/ESOLAssessmentofSpeaking.pdf).

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 of candidate evidence and quality of recordings.

### **Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials**

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

In a few cases, out of date National Assessment tasks from April 2006 were used. Many of the NABs were revised in October 2008 and some minor revisions have taken place since then, the last being in June 2010. Please check the SQA secure website to ensure that you are using the most up-to-date version.

### **Preparation for assessment**

The instruments of assessment for Speaking (NABs) clearly state preparation time and the conduct of preparation, and these should be adhered to at all times.

There was evidence that, in many cases, candidates had prepared well for the assessment. They understood the two parts and how to move from one to the other, demonstrated a clear understanding of the topic of the interaction, and identified and made use of a good range of appropriate subject-specific vocabulary.

There were also many examples of candidates who did not have this understanding and had not made good use of preparation time,

### **Timing**

In some 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.

### **Exemplar video recordings and commentaries**

Exemplification of Speaking videos and commentaries for all NQ ESOL Units are available on the SQA secure website. The exemplification for Everyday Communication Units DV34 11 and DV43 12 include marks allocated for the Speaking component of the Course and

these should be used in standardisation meetings and when assessing and internally verifying the Speaking assessments submitted for central verification.

### **Evidence Requirements**

Please see comments above which also relate to Evidence Requirements.

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 these skills to the central verification of Speaking.

### **Administration of assessments**

- ◆ Use of the NABs and up-to-date Descriptions of Performance assists in ensuring that assessments are at an appropriate level. Most centres make accurate assessment judgements on the candidate recordings produced.
- ◆ A number of centres adjusted the level at which the candidate was entered to ensure that assessments were at an appropriate level. In one sample, candidates 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/areas for improvement**

#### **Pairing of candidates**

Candidate evidence sampled for many centres illustrated that candidates had been well-paired with both candidates demonstrating the requirement in the Description of Performance to 'to initiate and show... sensitivity to the norms of turn-taking'. These candidates clearly understood the importance of supporting the interaction and conducting a balanced and natural conversation.

The verification process was greatly facilitated when candidates were paired with a different language group or gender and referred to each other by name at the beginning of and during 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.

There were a few good examples of candidates being paired with the assessor or another interlocutor who effectively participated in the conversation/discussion without dominating or leading.

#### **Candidate preparation**

There was clear evidence that in some centres the preparation time was put to good use by candidates who were at ease with the format and had an obvious commitment to the effort required. They had a clear grasp of the discussion points in the task and made good use of the opportunity to develop points in the conversations/discussions achieving the task within the specified times.

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

## **Candidate evidence**

Some candidate evidence was submitted on DVD and this was very effective and supported the verification process.

Some centres 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.

Tapes, CDs and DVDs were submitted, with many centres now using MP3 recorders and transferring the recordings to CDs.

## **Internal verification**

Some centres submitted candidate evidence with internal verification records and there was evidence of standardisation discussions and sampling having taken place. Where necessary marks had been adjusted accordingly and appropriately.

## **Specific areas for improvement**

### **Candidate evidence**

Clear labelling of candidate evidence is essential for the verification process. In a few cases the Speaking assessment on tapes was difficult to access. It is also important for candidates' full names to be stated clearly at the beginning of the recording.

Centres should ensure that it is possible to distinguish candidates' names and identify candidates. This should be checked by the assessor and Internal Verifier before the candidate evidence is sent to SQA and 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 and during the interaction.

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
- ◆ Task:
- ◆ Candidates' names:

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.

Centres should ensure that recordings submitted on CDs are compatible with a standard PC or a standard CD player.

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

### **Candidate preparation**

Candidates should not have an opportunity to rehearse the conversation/discussion and must use the preparation time on their own.

Candidates must not be prompted during the assessment.

### **Descriptions of performance**

It is essential that only the most recent version of the document 'Descriptions of Performance' is used to assess candidates. It can be found on the SQA website and the descriptions are exemplified in the commentaries on the video exemplars for Intermediate 2 and Higher Everyday Communication.

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. For example, if a candidate does not 'contribute effectively and relevantly throughout the interaction', they cannot receive a mark in the band with that descriptor.

### **Pairing of candidates with assessor**

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.

### **Verification Sample Form**

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. The Verification Sample Form should show the candidate's mark out of 25 and only the Speaking task undertaken by the candidate for the Everyday Communication Unit should be submitted.

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.)

# National Qualifications (NQ) awards

## Titles/levels of NQ awards verified

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)  
DV36 11 ESOL: Study-related contexts (Intermediate 2)  
DV34 12 ESOL: Everyday Communication (Higher)  
DV36 12 ESOL: Study-related contexts (Higher)

## General comments

In 2010–11, many candidates from colleges, schools, community learning centres, voluntary organisations and training providers, were entered for the NQ ESOL qualifications and gained recognition of their English language skills.

Understanding of assessment requirements, processes and practices in centres was generally good and this was reflected in most centres in the quality of candidate evidence, assessor judgements and internal verification processes. However, there were still some centres where External Verifiers encountered similar issues to those in previous years and therefore some comments in this year's report are similar to those in last year's report.

Candidate evidence was sampled during visiting verification and found to be of an appropriate standard in the majority of centres. There are still a number of 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.

A few centres have produced their own assessment materials demonstrating a clear understanding of the standards. These assessments are generally contextualised for specific purposes to suit the candidates undertaking the Units or to update the current National Assessment Bank (NAB) materials. Development of assessments for Outcome 1, Speaking, and Outcome 2, Writing, for school candidates to link to other subjects has been undertaken. The development and use of e-assessment is also underway in some centres for Outcome 3, Listening, and Outcome 4, Reading. Centres have sent these assessments to SQA to take advantage of the opportunity for prior verification.

There were examples of positive and constructive feedback to candidates on their 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 and supports the maintenance of standards.

The new exemplars for Speaking and Writing make use of the formative assessment checklists to provide the commentaries. Assessors and Internal Verifiers referred to them but there are still a number of centres unaware of these standardisation materials. Access to these materials on the SQA secure website should be available to all assessors and Internal Verifiers through their SQA Co-ordinator.

## **Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials**

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 on the SQA secure website and these versions should replace those that centres downloaded previously.

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 not only contain the assessment material but also marking instructions, tapescripts and information sheets for assessors and candidates. They are available on the SQA secure website along with recordings of the Listening assessments. Your SQA Co-ordinator has access to this site.
- ◆ Video exemplar materials for assisting with standardisation of Speaking with written commentaries and Writing exemplars with written commentaries are available on the SQA secure website for all Units. Your SQA Co-ordinator has access to this site.
- ◆ Formative e-assessment materials are also available via the general ESOL web pages. You select the level of ESOL qualifications from the menu on the left. This will then display all the resources for the level. Select the Online Support materials tab to display.
- ◆ Learning support materials and e-learning materials for each Unit along with recordings of Listening material are available on the open SQA website. Select the learning support materials tab to display.
- ◆ See this link as an example for Intermediate 1: [www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/41715.html](http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/41715.html)

Please consider the following when using the learning support materials:

- ◆ The materials can be adapted by centres by re-recording Listening material to take account of local accents and downloading Word versions of the materials to 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' and ensure that candidates have a copy of 'Information for Candidates' before assessment takes place. These are available in the NAB packs.

Ensure that you are clear about preparation time for particular assessments as this varies according to the Unit. For example, researching and preparing a 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.

### **Evidence Requirements**

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

In a few cases, centres have not followed the detailed information in the NABs which relates to the Evidence Requirements. Candidates can be disadvantaged when this occurs so attention to this detail is necessary.

### **Administration of assessments**

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. Centres can now also make use of the formative e-assessment materials referred to above.

In most centres good use was made of the marking information for Listening and Reading and appropriate decisions made on synonyms or near synonyms when required.

Good use of video and audio recording during formative assessment has provided candidates with excellent feedback and supports candidates in meeting the standards.

Again this year, there is evidence that assessors recognise that candidates giving presentations may be very nervous. Where the candidate has achieved all of the PCs 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 was in their notes) because of nerves, they were immediately given the opportunity to repeat the presentation.

The redrafting process was being used very effectively in some centres to assist candidates in improving and correcting their writing.

Where detailed feedback from the Internal Verifier to the assessor was given the assessment process was supported and assessors felt confident about judgements. In centres where there was only one assessor, frequently good links have been made with assessors and Internal Verifiers in other centres to provide internal verification. There were also examples of very effective induction for new assessors who were often unfamiliar with internal assessment.

## **Areas of good practice/areas for improvement**

### **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 or discussions.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Contextualising Speaking assessments to relate to other subjects or courses undertaken by candidates ensures that assessment is relevant.

### **Outcome 2 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/or 'display copy' (word processed), candidates had a clear idea of where they were in the assessment process and both internal and external verification were much simpler.
- ◆ The underlining of errors had been used effectively and candidates had been given feedback relating to achievement of the PCs.
- ◆ In many centres, candidate evidence showed good use of the redrafting process to develop writing skills and improve self-correction.

### **Outcome 3 Listening and Outcome 4 Reading**

- ◆ The assessment of Listening and Reading is facilitated by the marking information and most centres had made full use of these to mark assessments.

## **Specific areas for improvement**

### **Outcome 1 Speaking assessments**

Pairing of candidates and use of interlocutors:

- ◆ Where possible the pairing of candidates with the assessor for conversations in the Everyday Communication Units should be avoided as this tends to inhibit the candidate 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.
- ◆ In the Transactional Contexts and Work and Study-related Contexts Units the assessor or another competent speaker of English should play the role of interlocutor, eg hotel receptionist, careers adviser etc.
- ◆ Assessment, internal and external verification is easier when candidates can be easily distinguished, eg male/female, different first language etc.

Candidate preparation:

- ◆ 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.
- ◆ It is important for assessors to allow candidates only the stated amount of preparation time for the assessments.
- ◆ Candidates must 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.

Candidate evidence:

- ◆ 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.
- ◆ 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.

Internal verification:

- ◆ The sample internally verified should be identified and recorded on centre documentation.

## **Outcome 2 Writing assessments**

Candidate preparation:

- ◆ Candidates should receive appropriate input to enable them to begin and conclude particular genres of writing, eg e-mails 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 should be aware of the need to complete the task as described and adhere as closely as possible to the suggested number of words.

Candidate evidence:

- ◆ 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 made by 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 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.

Internal verification:

- ◆ The internally verified sample should be identified and recorded on centre documentation.

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 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.