



**National Qualifications 2013  
Internal Assessment Report  
English for Speakers of Other  
Languages**

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

The information and comments in this section of the report are based on the sample of centres selected for central verification of the Speaking component of Higher and Intermediate 2 Courses in May 2013. The assessment for the Speaking component of the external examination is the marked version of the Everyday Communication Unit NAB. Descriptions of performance were revised in August 2008 and are available in the document *Assessment of Speaking* at [http://www.sqa.org.uk/files\\_ccc/ESOLAssessmentofSpeaking.pdf](http://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/ESOLAssessmentofSpeaking.pdf).

Central verification found that for most of the candidates sampled, marks awarded were appropriate and the centre's judgement of performance in Speaking was in line with national standards. Many candidates demonstrated excellent skills and the use of strategies to maintain and develop the conversations. Candidates who met the national standards and achieved good marks:

- ◆ interacted well with each other, listening to and responding well to their partner
- ◆ engaged in the conversation in a natural way
- ◆ showed interest in the ideas and opinions expressed by their partner and asked follow-up questions
- ◆ initiated changes well in the direction of the conversation

This year saw a slight decrease in the number of centres meeting the requirements of the national standards at central verification. There were some 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' outcome for a centre at central verification:

- ◆ Candidates met the national standards at a higher level than they had been awarded marks. A few centres showed a reluctance to award marks in the top of band 22 to 25 where candidate performance fully met all the descriptions of performance in this band.

- ◆ Candidates did not meet the national standard and had been awarded marks that were too high. In cases where candidates did not meet all the descriptions of performance, insufficient attention had been paid to descriptions pertaining to:
  - limited hesitation
  - contributing effectively to maintain or develop the interaction
  - fully achieving task
  - the ability to initiate and take turns to maintain the interaction
  - the ability to use a range of structures
  
- ◆ Interactions had been rehearsed, memorised, read or relied heavily on written notes. In these cases, due to the nature of the interaction, it was not possible to award a mark above 12 as candidates' Speaking only met the following standards in band 9 to 12:
  - *'Communication lacks coherence and organisation and hesitation may interfere with the interaction.'*
  - *'(The candidate) Does not contribute effectively in order to maintain the interaction.'*
  - *'Production of English pronunciation features is evident and partially effective.'*
  
- ◆ Interactions were supported by prompting by a third person or interrupted by stopping the recording or whispering in the background. All these detracted from the candidate interaction.

There was evidence of thorough and rigorous internal verification having taken place in some centres ensuring that standards were met. These centres had included documented evidence of Internal Verifier sampling with comments and in some cases marks for candidates had been adjusted appropriately.

In other centres, the internal verification system required further development particularly in relation to consistency of assessment decisions, sampling of candidate evidence and the quality of the recordings submitted. Cross-marking and sampling activities are essential to ensure national standards are met.

In a few cases, there was no evidence of internal verification having taken place. This was evident by centres submitting samples containing the following:

- ◆ inconsistent marking of candidates
- ◆ use of out-of-date NABs, *Assessment of Speaking* and descriptions of performance
- ◆ faulty recordings
- ◆ incorrect timings of Part 1 and 2
- ◆ conversations which were too short or too long
- ◆ conversations which did not achieve the task

Centres can refer to *Internal Verification: A Guide for Centres* (February 2011) for further information at

[http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files\\_ccc/InternalVerificationGuideforSQAcentres.pdf](http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/InternalVerificationGuideforSQAcentres.pdf).

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

Most of the material sampled indicated that centres are familiar with the Course Arrangements documents. In a very few cases centres had submitted a pass/fail judgement and not a mark out of 25. This showed a lack of understanding of how the Speaking component of the Course assessment contributed to the final mark.

Course Arrangements documents for Higher and Intermediate 2 can be found on the [ESOL page of SQA's website](#).

### **Evidence Requirements**

The majority of centres met the Evidence Requirements. Centres using the current NABs supported this.

A number of recordings either exceeded the time limit, were too short or attention had not been paid to the timing of Part 1 and Part 2. Centres should ensure that candidates are aware of the time limits and adhere to them as much as possible.

### **Administration of assessments**

There was evidence that, in many cases, candidates had made good use of the preparation time for the assessment by:

- ◆ showing a clear understanding of the topic of the interaction and paying attention to the bullet points
- ◆ understanding the two parts of the task and knowing how to move from Part 1 to Part 2
- ◆ identifying and making use of a good range of appropriate subject-specific vocabulary

There were also a number of examples of candidates who had not made good use of preparation time as required. See the instructions to candidates below from Higher Everyday Communication NAB, Outcome 1, Task A:

*'You will have 15 minutes on your own to prepare for this assessment. Before you start to prepare you should agree with your partner which topic, A, B or C you will discuss for Part 2 of the assessment. Consider the list of points listed below each topic. You should only agree the topic and not discuss it with your partner at this stage.*

*You must make reference to each of the points during your conversation. You cannot refer to notes during the conversation.'*

In recordings where candidates had not used the allocated preparation time effectively they were not able to fully demonstrate their skills in spoken English.

- ◆ In some cases, it was difficult to distinguish between the two parts of the task.
- ◆ There was little in-depth development of discussion relating to the bullet points.
- ◆ They showed a lack of subject-specific vocabulary and had not considered the topic in any depth.
- ◆ Part 1 was delivered as a monologue rather than a conversation.

Internal Verifiers should ask for candidates to be re-assessed when the first part is too long, conducted as two monologues or it is difficult to distinguish between the first and second part of the task.

Where the candidate's name, Unit and task were clearly stated at the beginning of the recording this greatly facilitated the verification process.

## **Areas of good practice**

### **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.

Some candidates had been very successfully paired with a peer who was not an ESOL learner. There were also 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.

Many centres had also considered how to facilitate distinguishing between candidates on recordings by:

- ◆ pairing with a different language group or gender
- ◆ stating their full name clearly before the interaction begins
- ◆ asking candidates to refer to each other by name at the beginning of and during the interaction
- ◆ providing a very helpful 'voice recognition' sheet highlighting different phrases used by candidates at the beginning of the conversation
- ◆ video-recording of conversations

### **Candidate preparation**

Some centres had fully supported candidates in both understanding the assessment type and process for Speaking and in training to assist them to use the allocated preparation time for the task well.

In some recordings it was clear that candidates had been well supported in understanding the approach to the assessment of Speaking throughout the Course. These candidates were:

- ◆ familiar with and comfortable being recorded
- ◆ had a good understanding of the task type and requirements
- ◆ appeared to be familiar with the descriptions of performance and demonstrated well the language skills required
- ◆ approached the task with confidence

It was also clear that some candidates had made very good use of the allocated preparation time for the task as described in Administration of Assessment above.

### **Candidate evidence**

Some centres submitted a detailed assessment checklist for each candidate. This was extremely helpful and enabled the verifiers to see comments on each of the Performance Criteria and how they related to the mark given from the description of performance.

A number of centres had submitted the candidate evidence on DVD rather than an audio recording and this supported the verification process.

### **Specific areas for improvement**

Candidates should sustain their engagement in a fully interactive conversation throughout both parts of the selected task.

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 use the allocated preparation time effectively and consider the task and, where appropriate, bullet points in some depth so that they fully meet the requirements of the task.

Centres should ensure that candidates are familiar with being recorded, the task type and descriptions of performance and have opportunities to address these throughout the Course.

Centres should ensure that their version of the *Guidance on Assessment of Speaking* document that is up to date and submit a copy of this with the candidate evidence for central verification.

Centres selected for central verification should follow the instructions in the ESOL *Central Verification of Internal Assessment of Speaking Information* when submitting Speaking marks and candidate evidence.

Centres should 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: eg Everyday Communication

Task: eg Task A

Candidates' names:

Ensure that it is possible to distinguish the identity of candidates in the recordings. The assessor and Internal Verifier should check this before the candidate evidence is sent to SQA and, if there is any doubt, additional information to assist identification should be provided.

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

## General comments

In 2012–13 candidates from centres including colleges, schools, community learning centres, voluntary organisations and training providers were entered for the NQ ESOL Units from Access 2 to Higher and gained recognition of their English language skills.

Visiting verification was carried out and the candidate evidence sampled has been of an appropriate standard in the majority of centres. Understanding of assessment requirements and processes in centres was generally good and this was reflected in most centres in the quality of candidate evidence and assessor judgements.

There are still a few new centres offering NQ ESOL Units 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.

Implementation of internal verification policies and procedures still varies across centres with some demonstrating a clear understanding of the importance of the process and others where there is less understanding of the role internal verification plays in internal assessment and the meeting of national standards. Centres can refer to *Internal Verification: A Guide for Centres* (February 2011) for further information at

[http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files\\_ccc/InternalVerificationGuideforSQAcentres.pdf](http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/InternalVerificationGuideforSQAcentres.pdf).

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

The majority of centres have accessed and made very good use of the full range of materials to support assessment and internal verification of the NQ ESOL Units. Some centres still lack an awareness of what is available and this can result in assessors and Internal Verifiers not being fully familiar with national standards.

Making full use of the available materials supports candidates in achieving and being able to fully demonstrate their English language skills during the assessment process.

**Unit specifications** contain both mandatory requirements (Outcomes, Performance Criteria and Evidence Requirements) and guidance material (Guidance on Content and Context, Guidance on Learning and Teaching Approaches and Guidance on Approaches to Assessment) for each Unit and can be obtained through the NQ Unit Search page at <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/551.html>.

**Instruments of assessment** are contained within the National Assessment Bank (NABs) materials. In addition to the assessment tasks, there are checklists and other useful information throughout the documents for assessors and Internal Verifiers. Please refer to '*Information for Assessors*' and ensure that candidates have a copy of '*Information for Candidates*' before assessment takes place. These are on the SQA secure site and can be accessed via your SQA Co-ordinator.

It is not mandatory to use the SQA NABs and some centres have developed their own assessments either using the NABs as a model or devising their own assessments for candidates in a particular context. Centres have sent these assessments to SQA to take advantage of the opportunity for prior verification which is strongly recommended in SQA guidelines. Follow this link for more information on prior verification <http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/38164.html>.

Exemplification materials are now more widely used to support the assessment and internal verification processes in centres. These are available for each Unit from the SQA secure site for Speaking (Outcome 1) and Writing (Outcome 2).

### **ESOL Speaking Exemplars (all levels) SQA secure website**

These documents can be downloaded and the accompanying video recordings can be viewed by selecting 'ESOL Speaking Exemplars' from the Related Information box of the ESOL page on the site. There is a PDF document with the commentaries and there are four video recordings for each Unit at each level showing examples of a pass, a good pass and a fail.

### **ESOL Writing Exemplars (all levels) SQA secure website**

These documents can be downloaded by selecting 'ESOL Writing Exemplars' in the Related Information box of the ESOL page on the site. There is a PDF

document with examples of candidate writing and commentaries for each Unit at each level showing examples of a pass, a good pass and a fail.

### **Evidence Requirements**

The majority of centres use the SQA NABs which helps to ensure that the Evidence Requirements are met. Where centres have developed assessments there has been particular attention to meeting the Evidence Requirements.

In a few cases, centres have not followed the detailed information in the Unit specifications and NABs relating to the Evidence Requirements. Candidates can be given an advantage or disadvantaged when this occurs so attention to this detail is necessary.

There has been an improvement overall in centres having a full understanding of the drafting and underlining process for Writing (Outcome 2).

Preparation time for particular assessments varies according to the Unit and you should always adhere to this. 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.

With reference to timing and word counts, you should use your professional judgement to ensure the Performance Criteria are met. Candidates should always be fully aware of all the task requirements, stated on the assessment task in the NABs, before they start the assessment.

### **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 approach to assessment. Use of video and audio recording during formative assessment of Speaking (Outcome 1) has provided candidates with excellent feedback and supports candidates in meeting the standards.

In most centres good use was made of the marking information for Listening (Outcome 3) and Reading (Outcome 4) and appropriate decisions made on using the guidance and accepting candidate responses.

It is recognised 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, they were immediately given the opportunity to repeat the presentation.

## Areas of good practice

There have been many examples of effective internal verification taking place through links between centres; especially with new centres and centres with a low number of candidates.

Constructive and detailed feedback to candidates on their performance using checklists for the productive skills improved the candidate's ability to achieve the national standards. Where candidates were introduced to the checklists at an early stage in the Course and where they also made use of these to self-assess and give feedback to each other they were more able to improve their performance.

### Speaking (Outcome 1)

- ◆ Candidates in some centres used preparation time well 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.
- ◆ Considered pairing of students for assessment of Speaking in conversations or discussions provided candidates with an opportunity to fully demonstrate their English skills. See *Guidelines on Assessment of Speaking* for more information on pairing.
- ◆ Successful and well managed role-plays in the Transactional Contexts and Work and Study-related Contexts Units were apparent 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.

### Writing (Outcome 2)

- ◆ Written assessments which clearly indicated 'draft', 'final version' and/or 'display copy' (word processed), gave candidates 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 Performance Criteria.
- ◆ In many centres, candidate evidence showed good use of the redrafting process to develop writing skills and improve self-correction.

### Listening (Outcome 3) and Reading (Outcome 4)

- ◆ The assessment of listening and reading is facilitated by the marking information and most centres had made good use of these to mark assessments.

- ◆ Where centres had adapted or produced assessments to relate to specific contexts, candidates engaged well with the assessment process.

### **Specific areas for improvement**

A key area for improvement in a few centres is to develop or further develop internal verification processes to ensure that you are supported and national standards are met.

### **Speaking (Outcome 1)**

- ◆ It is important for you to allow candidates only the stated amount of preparation time for the assessments and to meet the requirement that they prepare on their own.
- ◆ It is important for candidates to understand that the required time should be adhered to for the assessment. This should be discussed with candidates during formative assessment and during the assessment preparation stage.
- ◆ Assessment should be done in one continuous recording unless there is an unavoidable reason why the recording must be interrupted and the reason should then be noted on the candidate record sheet.
- ◆ Clear information should be given at the beginning of recordings of Speaking so that the candidate's full name, level, Unit and task can be identified.
- ◆ Where the task is a conversation, candidates should interact as naturally as possible with both candidates initiating and taking an interest in what the other is saying.
- ◆ Candidates should be made aware that the more balanced the conversation is the more likely it is to meet the Performance Criteria.
- ◆ Candidates who do not pass the assessment on the first attempt should be given a new assessment task for the second attempt.

### **Writing (Outcome 2)**

- ◆ Candidates must always complete the task as stated in the NAB or centre-devised assessment.
- ◆ Assessments should always be written in pen and the final piece can be word processed.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Drafts of writing must be kept along with the final version. Drafts of written assessments should be retained for both internal and external verification and should indicate clearly first draft, second draft (if necessary) and final version.
- ◆ 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.

- ◆ You 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. There should be no underlining on the final version.
- ◆ Learning and teaching should enable candidates 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 so that they do not greatly exceed or fall short of this. This can be picked up prior to the first draft being marked by asking them to check this before handing it in and reduce/increase the number of words appropriately.

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

- ◆ You should mark and date all answer sheets to enable Internal and External Verifiers to confirm the marks for each assessment.
- ◆ You should train candidates to stay within the allotted word limits for particular answers. It is particularly important at Intermediate 2 and Higher as they will lose marks in the external assessment if they do not adhere to the number of words required in a response.
- ◆ If a candidate is asked to clarify an answer because it cannot be read or understood, 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.