



**National Qualifications 2014
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 the Higher and Intermediate 2 Courses in May 2014.

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](#).

This year saw an increase in the number of centres awarding marks out of 25 that were in line with the 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

There were a few centres that awarded marks that were not in line with national standards and were Not Accepted at verification. Those centres undertook an assessment review, either accepting the Speaking marks awarded at verification or re-assessing candidates.

The following were the main reasons for a Not Accepted outcome for a centre at central verification:

- ◆ Candidates should have been awarded higher 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 should have been awarded lower marks. In these cases insufficient attention had been paid to descriptions pertaining to:
 - contributing effectively to maintain or develop the interaction
 - fully achieving task
 - the ability to initiate and take turns to maintain the interaction

- ◆ Candidates had been paired with an interlocutor/assessor and the interaction was conducted as an interview. This resulted in the candidate not having the opportunity to participate in the interaction as a fully equal partner or to contribute effectively and relevantly throughout.

There was evidence of thorough internal verification having taken place in some centres ensuring that candidates were awarded an appropriate mark. These centres had included documented evidence of internal verifier sampling and cross-marking 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
- ◆ faulty recordings
- ◆ 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 Offering SQA Qualifications](#) (February 2011).

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 or a percentage, 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 www.sqa.org.uk/esol.

All centres had used the Speaking tasks from the National Assessment Bank materials.

A few centres would benefit from making use of the Speaking exemplars available on SQA's secure site for standardisation activities as part of internal verification.

Evidence Requirements

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

A few 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

Where there was a clear introduction on the recording and candidates referred to each other by name at the beginning of the recording, this supported the verification process. For example:

Level: Higher or Intermediate 2

Unit: Everyday Communication

Task: Task A

Candidates' names:

The effective use of preparation time was evident in the candidate performance from many centres. However, recordings from some centres demonstrated that candidates had not been trained to make such effective use of this time. This impacted on their ability to fully demonstrate their skills in spoken English in the following ways:

- ◆ 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.

Areas of good practice

The inclusion of the extended assessment checklists with relevant and useful comments from assessors, and in some cases Internal Verifiers, supported the verification process and indicated that feedback to candidates was comprehensive.

The practice of highlighting or annotating the Descriptions of Performance for each candidate demonstrated clearly the basis on which marks had been allocated.

Some centres had provided video recordings of the candidate interactions. This is both useful for verification in the identification of candidates and supports the process of giving feedback to candidates in centres.

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.

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

Specific areas for improvement

The inclusion of the appropriate NAB task and Descriptions of Performance with the centre submission is required.

The notes to centres for the submission of evidence to SQA for the central verification of internal assessment of Speaking request clear labelling on each candidate's CD/DVD. It is recommended that this information is written in ink on the CD/DVD, and not paper labels which sometimes peel off or cause problems when playing.

All CDs/DVDs/cassettes should be checked before submission to ensure that they play and are audible.

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.

National Qualifications (NQ) Units

Titles/levels of NQ Units verified:

DV34 08 ESOL: Everyday Communication (Access 2)
DV34 09 ESOL: Everyday Communication (Access 3)
FD5N 10 ESOL: Speaking and Listening (Intermediate 1)
DV34 10 ESOL: Everyday Communication (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

Visiting verification was carried out and the majority of centres verified demonstrated a good understanding of the national standards for ESOL. 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.

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. However, 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 Offering SQA Qualifications](#) (February 2011).

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 can be obtained through the [NQ Unit Search page](#).

Instruments of assessment are contained within the National Assessment Bank (NABs) materials. 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.

Exemplification materials are now more widely used to support the assessment and internal verification processes in centres. These are available for each Unit from SQA's secure site for Speaking (Outcome 1) and Writing (Outcome 2). These materials are appropriate for standardisation activities as part of the internal verification process.

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 advantaged 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 centres 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 should always be fully aware of all the task requirements, stated on the assessment task in the NABs, before they start the assessment.

With reference to timing and word counts you should use your professional judgement to ensure the Performance Criteria are met.

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.

Areas of good practice

Speaking (Outcome 1)

The use of video recording during formative and summative assessments and the feedback to candidates that followed from this was particularly useful.

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.

There were some excellent examples of presentations where candidates had approached the assessment with great enthusiasm and had prepared well for the presentation.

Writing (Outcome 2)

In many centres, candidate evidence showed good use of the redrafting process to develop writing skills and improve self-correction.

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.

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.

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.

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.

It is strongly recommended that assessment tasks should be used at the correct level — NABs at Higher should not be used with candidates at Intermediate 2 level. The evidence produced by this practice reflected the disadvantages to candidates in terms of progression and development.

Speaking (Outcome 1)

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.

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 level, Unit, task and candidate's full name are clear.

Writing (Outcome 2)

Candidates must always complete the task as stated in the NAB or centre-devised assessment.

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. These should be retained for both internal and external verification and should indicate clearly 1st draft, 2nd draft (if necessary) and final version. The drafting process 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. 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 so that the number of words can be reduced or increased 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.