



**National Qualifications 2015  
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

C222 11 Intermediate 2 ESOL: Speaking component

## 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 final year of the existing Higher and Intermediate 2 Courses in May 2015.

The assessment for the Speaking component of the external examination is the marked version of the Everyday Communication Unit National Assessment Bank task. The task undertaken is selected by the centre, internally marked and externally verified using the revised descriptions of performance (August 2008).

In this final year of the qualifications there was again 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 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.

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

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.

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

As well as ensuring national standards are maintained, internal verification should ensure that assessors are fully supported throughout internal assessment. Internal verifiers and assessors may find the following link to the SQA Internal Verification Toolkit useful to ensure national standards are maintained for the new National Qualifications, assessors are supported and paperwork is not excessive. The Toolkit is a suggested approach and SQA recognises that many centres will already have well developed processes in place.

<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/71679.5825.html>

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

Most of the evidence 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.

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

## **Evidence Requirements**

The majority of centres met the Evidence Requirements and this was supported by centres using the current National Assessment Bank materials.

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. This does not automatically impact on the mark awarded. However, this could result in candidates not having sufficient time to fully demonstrate their skills if too short or the conversation/discussion lacking coherence if too long.

## **Administration of assessments**

Candidates could easily be identified where there was a clear introduction on the recording and candidates referred to each other by name at the beginning of the recording.

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 awarded.

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.

Many candidates achieved high marks due to their ability to initiate with ease and show sensitivity to the norms of turn-taking. This was in part achieved by good pairing of candidates and reflected good practice in learning and teaching, good use of preparation time, and familiarity with being recorded.

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**

As this section is not relevant for the 2015–16 session, please refer to the National 5 and Higher Course Reports for the new National Qualifications. These can be found on the ESOL pages of SQA's website once you have selected a level. The reports can be found under 'Verification and Course Reports'.

# National Qualifications (NQ) Awards

Titles/levels of NQ Awards verified:

National Certificate in ESOL for Employability at SCQF level 4 (GF70 44)

National Certificate in ESOL for Employability at SCQF level 5 (GF70 45)

Units verified:

H1XD 10 ESOL: Reading for Employability

H1XE 10 ESOL: Speaking for Employability

H1XF 10 ESOL: Writing for Employability

H1XG 10 ESOL: Listening for Employability

H1XH 10 ESOL: Living in Scotland

H1XD 11 ESOL: Reading for Employability

H1XE 11 ESOL: Speaking for Employability

H1XF 11 ESOL: Writing for Employability

H1XG 11 ESOL: Listening for Employability

H1XH 11 ESOL: Living in Scotland

## General comments

Verification of the above Units in centres throughout Scotland found significant strengths in the assessments produced by centres, assessment judgements and internal verification. Centres had a good understanding of national standards in ESOL from delivering other SQA ESOL qualifications and this fully supported the judgements made in the single skills Units and ESOL: Living in Scotland.

In some centres candidates were undertaking the Group Award and in other centres Units were being taken to complement other Units and Courses in ESOL and other subjects. ESOL: Living in Scotland was particularly appropriate for integration with other ESOL Units and feedback from candidates generally indicated that the learning and assessment were relevant.

Centres demonstrated that they had taken advantage of the opportunities for integration of skills and assessment across Units. Assessments from Outcomes in the single skills Units ESOL: Writing and ESOL: Speaking had in some cases been integrated with the ESOL: Living in Scotland Unit.

A number of centres have developed a range of assessments which have been submitted to SQA for prior verification. The guidance in the Unit specifications has been followed closely in the development of assessments.

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

Centres had clearly made good reference to the Course Arrangements and Unit specifications in developing valid, reliable, equitable and fair assessments and useful assessment checklists. Exemplification of ESOL NQ Units provides guidance on levels, and standardisation activities were undertaken in the centres delivering the Units.

This resulted in reliable assessment judgements in the single skills Units and ESOL: Living in Scotland.

### **Evidence Requirements**

The application of the Evidence Requirements for all the Units was clearly demonstrated in the assessments produced and the candidate evidence verified.

In some centres the use of checklists, which combined the Performance Criteria with the Evidence Requirements supported both assessors and candidates.

### **Administration of assessments**

Centres were administering the assessments appropriately and identifying if and when authentication was required and recording this.

Most centres had, where possible, integrated assessments to reduce overall the amount of assessment required. Some centres could further develop assessment checklists to better reflect the integration.

Guidance on judging evidence, checklists and marking schemes were available to ensure reliability.

Good use of initial assessment ensured that candidates were on the appropriate Course or undertaking the appropriate Units.

### **Areas of good practice**

Centres are to be commended for the time and commitment devoted to the development of assessment materials.

Good use had been made of checklists and coversheets where assessment had been combined across Units.

### **Reading for Employability SCQF levels 4 and 5 Listening for Employability SCQF levels 4 and 5**

- ◆ Appropriate, authentic texts and assessments had been produced at both levels for Reading and Listening which addressed personal and social interest and transactional and work-related contexts.

### **Speaking for Employability SCQF levels 4 and 5**

- ◆ In one centre, to reduce the amount of assessment, the three Speaking Outcomes were assessed in one longer performance with four distinct parts.
- ◆ There were examples of high quality presentations and interactions where personalisation and choice had been a motivating factor and engaged candidates in their chosen topic.
- ◆ When presentations had been given by candidates there were good examples of other candidates/peers being well prepared to ask relevant, interesting and meaningful questions.
- ◆ Centres had clearly recorded the assessment judgements for Speaking and some had used detailed checklists to demonstrate the basis on which the judgement was made.
- ◆ The quality of recordings was generally very good and use of video appropriate and helpful in providing feedback and supporting internal and external verification.

### **Writing for Employability SCQF levels 4 and 5**

- ◆ There were good examples of writing where candidates were clearly interested in the topic and encouraged to be creative in the presentation of the evidence they produced.
- ◆ In some centres good use had been made of checklists to provide feedback which related directly to the Performance Criteria as part of the drafting process.

### **ESOL: Living in Scotland SCQF levels 4 and 5**

- ◆ The Unit assessment had been integrated with other Units appropriately and in the best examples provided opportunities for personalisation and choice.
- ◆ Creative and topical themes had been chosen and candidates encouraged to select aspects of these to explore in the assessment.
- ◆ Evidence produced by candidates both orally and written was generally of a high standard demonstrating how appropriate this type of project work is for both learning and assessment in ESOL.

### **Specific areas for improvement**

#### **Reading for Employability SCQF levels 4 and 5**

#### **Listening for Employability SCQF levels 4 and 5**

- ◆ Ensure that Reading and Listening assessments are clearly marked, Performance Criteria taken account of and that there is a record of the overall judgement of pass/fail recorded.

#### **Speaking for Employability SCQF levels 4 and 5**

- ◆ Speaking tasks should be available along with other candidate evidence.
- ◆ It is recommended that the candidate takes the role of the customer/client for a transactional speaking assessment.

- ◆ It is recommended that candidates do not write out presentations word for word. Although they may not read from the 'scripted presentation' there is a tendency to memorise what has been written down and this may include sections taken from research sources. Candidates should only use cue cards or PowerPoint notes when delivering their presentation and should only take notes from their sources.
- ◆ Centres should ensure that presentations are followed by relevant and, where possible, interesting and meaningful questions.

### **Writing for Employability SCQF levels 4 and 5**

- ◆ Two drafts and a final version are not always required and if candidates pass on a first or second draft they should not have to produce a further draft/final version.
- ◆ Feedback which clearly relates to each of the Performance Criteria can be provided for each draft either at the bottom of the candidate evidence or on a checklist.

### **ESOL: Living in Scotland SCQF levels 4 and 5**

Areas of improvement for Speaking and Writing for Employability also apply to this Unit.

# National Qualifications (NQ) Units

Titles/levels of NQ Units verified:

F1AF 08 ESOL: Introduction to Beginner English Literacies 1 Access 2  
DV34 08 ESOL: Everyday Communication Access 2  
F1AD 08 ESOL Transactional Contexts Access 2  
F1AE 08 ESOL Work and Study-related Contexts Access 2  
DV34 09 ESOL: Everyday Communication Access 3  
F1AD 09 ESOL Transactional Contexts Access 3  
F1AE 09 ESOL Work and Study-related Contexts Access 3  
DV34 10 ESOL: Everyday Communication Intermediate 1  
F1AD 10 ESOL Transactional Contexts Intermediate 1  
F1AE 10 ESOL: Work and Study-related Contexts Intermediate 1  
DV34 11 ESOL: Everyday Communication Intermediate 2  
DV35 11 ESOL: Work-related Contexts Intermediate 2  
DV36 11 ESOL: Study-related Contexts Intermediate 2  
DV34 12 ESOL: Everyday Communication Higher  
DV35 12 ESOL: Work-related contexts Higher  
DV36 12 ESOL: Study-related contexts Higher  
FD5N 10 ESOL: Speaking and Listening Intermediate 1

## General comments

This session, visiting verification covered almost the full range of the existing NQ Units and the sample of centres selected for external verification included schools, colleges, community learning and training providers.

The majority of centres verified demonstrated a good understanding of the national standards for ESOL and an understanding of assessment requirements. The assessment and internal verification processes in centres were generally good and this was reflected, in most centres, in the quality of candidate evidence and assessment judgements which were in line with national standards.

Where issues with national standards or Evidence Requirements were identified, the external verification process was helpful in identifying areas where guidelines should have been more carefully followed for successful internal assessment and verification. With appropriate support from SQA External Verifiers, all issues were satisfactorily resolved either through recommendations being followed or required actions being completed by centres.

As well as ensuring national standards are maintained, internal verification should ensure that assessors are fully supported throughout internal assessment. Internal verifiers and assessors may find the following link to the SQA Internal Verification Toolkit useful to ensure national standards are maintained, assessors are supported and paperwork is not excessive for the new National Qualifications. The Toolkit is a suggested approach and SQA recognises that many centres will already have well developed processes in place.

<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/71679.5825.html>

Session 2015–16 will be the last session when entries can be made for the Units below. Please note that you cannot enter candidates for the associated Courses in 2015–16 but only for freestanding Units. Centres are strongly advised to enter candidates for the new National Courses and Units in session 2015–16.

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

SQA will continue to accept entries for the Units below until further notice.

F1AF 08 ESOL: Introduction to Beginner English Literacies 1 Access 2  
F1AG 08 ESOL: Introduction to Beginner English Literacies 2 Access 2  
FD5N 08 ESOL: Speaking and Listening Access 2  
FD5N 09 ESOL: Speaking and Listening Access 3  
FD5N 10 ESOL: Speaking and Listening Intermediate 1  
FD5N 11 ESOL: Speaking and Listening Intermediate 2  
FD5N 12 ESOL: Speaking and Listening Higher

The ESOL Literacies Units are recognised by both SQA and centres for their relevance to an increasing number of learners who require learning at this level before progressing to the new National Qualifications in ESOL.

### **ESOL Speaking and Listening Units (FD5N 10)**

The status of ESOL Speaking and Listening Units, particularly FD5N 10 (and above) for learners who wish to apply to the Home Office for settlement or citizenship is currently in question. SQA is awaiting the outcome of Scottish Government discussions with the Home Office on whether these will be accepted as approved qualifications at B1 level and above. These qualifications will be accepted up to November 2015 but centres should be cautious and ensure that any candidates undertaking the Unit(s) are able to receive their certificate and submit their application to the Home Office prior to the deadline.

SQA introduced requirements for photographic identification of candidates and evidence of residence in Scotland in January 2015 for FD5N 10 and levels above

this. Centres have implemented this fully and presented this evidence at external verification.

The ESOL Speaking and Listening Units can be used as bridging Units, for appropriate candidates, to the new NQ Units and Courses where the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing are assessed.

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

The majority of centres accessed and made very good use of the full range of materials to support assessment and internal verification of the NQ ESOL Units. A few centres still lacked an awareness of what was available and this resulted in assessors and internal verifiers not being fully familiar with national standards.

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

The majority of centres used the SQA National Assessment Bank (NAB) materials which helped to ensure that national standards were met. Where centres had developed assessments, in most cases, there has been particular attention paid to each Outcome that could be achieved.

### **ESOL Speaking and Listening Units (FD5N 10)**

Exemplification materials for Outcome 1, Speaking, for the Everyday Communication Units can also be used to identify national standards for the Speaking and Listening Units. These are available from the SQA secure site and are appropriate for standardisation activities as part of the internal verification process.

### **Evidence Requirements**

In a few cases, centres had 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 important.

There had 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 this should always be adhered to in order for candidates to receive appropriate support. For example, researching and preparing a presentation is part of the assessment process and candidates should be allowed sufficient time for this.

## **Administration of assessments**

In some centres candidates were given excellent preparatory work and formative assessments had been developed so that candidates were familiar with the approach to assessment. Use of audio and particularly video recording during formative assessment of Speaking (Outcome 1) provided candidates with excellent feedback and supported 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**

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)**

- ◆ The assessor had clearly chosen assessments which suited the candidate and which allowed them to demonstrate their skills in English.
- ◆ The use of video to record 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.
- ◆ There were some excellent examples of presentations where candidates had approached the assessment with great enthusiasm and had prepared well for the presentation.

### **ESOL Speaking and Listening Units (FD5N 10)**

There were significant strengths in the evidence verified and the majority of centres had a good understanding of national standards for Speaking. The use of video recording for Outcome 1, Speaking, further supported the identification process where this had been used by centres.

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

- ◆ Many centres made appropriate assessment judgements on first and second drafts of writing awarding a pass where the writing was at an appropriate level and not requesting further drafts.
- ◆ 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 more straightforward. Underlining of errors was used effectively and candidates had also been given feedback relating to achievement of the Performance Criteria.

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

- ◆ The assessment of Listening and reading was facilitated by the marking information and most centres had made good use of this to arrive at assessment judgements.

### **Specific areas for improvement**

It is strongly recommended that assessment tasks should be used at the correct level — assessments at SCQF level 6 should not be used with candidates at SCQF level 5 and 4. The evidence produced by this practice reflected the disadvantages to candidates in terms of progression and development.

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

- ◆ Clear information should be given at the beginning of audio and video recordings, ie the level, Unit, task and candidate's full name.
- ◆ 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. They should be made aware that the more balanced the conversation is the more likely they are to meet the Performance Criteria.
- ◆ 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.

### **ESOL Speaking and Listening Units (FD5N 10)**

Where there were issues with assessment judgements at this level (B1), the most predominant issue was with achievement of Performance Criteria (PC) (a) Range of structures and vocabulary used is appropriate to purpose and audience.

Centres should be aware that use of very basic structures, little appropriate use of tenses and frequent errors in conversations do not meet the requirements at this level. Candidates who only produce lists of vocabulary with no attempt to use straightforward linking devices will also not meet this PC.

There were also some issues with PC (c) Communication is sufficiently fluent and coherent to convey meaning. Frequent and inappropriate hesitation at this level, which impacts on the candidate's ability to convey meaning, must be taken into account when making a judgement.

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

- ◆ Candidates must always complete the task as stated in the NAB or centre-devised assessment. Centres should consider carefully whether the purpose

would be achieved. The assessor should ensure that there is attention to detail in making judgements, particularly in relation to PC (a) accuracy for 'effective' communication at Higher and PC (b) and (c) at Intermediate 2 in relation to appropriate levels of accuracy in a formal/official piece of writing.

- ◆ When assessing PC(d) in relation to coherence, particular attention should be paid to appropriate use of linking devices at each level.
- ◆ 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 judged 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**

- ◆ Assessors should mark and date all answer sheets to enable internal and external verifiers to confirm the marks for each assessment.
- ◆ 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.