

11 August 2011

To: SQA Co-ordinator

Action by Recipient	
	Response required
✓	Note and pass on
	None — update/information only

Contact: Alan Wilson at Glasgow
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Dear Colleague

Please pass this letter to the member of staff responsible for ESOL in your school or college

This update provides information on the use of SQA ESOL qualifications with respect to candidates who are applying to the Home Office for settlement (also known as indefinite leave to remain) and for overseas students and partners of UK citizens looking to enter the UK.

Settlement/indefinite leave to remain

Qualifying candidates with English skills below Intermediate 1 (SCQF level 4) must take an ESOL with citizenship course and obtain a relevant qualification from an approved awarding body and demonstrate that they have made “relevant progress”. In Scotland the only approved awarding body is SQA. In terms of “relevant progress” in Scotland this means candidates must have progressed at least one level on the SCQF from their level at initial assessment. Further details of using the citizenship materials with SQA ESOL qualifications can be found at:

<http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa//15427.html>

Please note you should also refer the website of the UK Border Agency (UKBA) for full details on the specific requirements for the initial assessment of students, qualifying centres and the process to confirm to the UK Border Agency that the relevant criteria have been met.

The following link provides further guidance:

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/settlement/knowledge-language-life/demonstrating/#>

Overseas students or partners seeking to enter the UK

As per the update in June, unfortunately SQA qualifications have not been included in the recently published UKBA list of secure English language test providers for use by prospective overseas students, employees and partners who need evidence of their language skills **before** being granted entry to the UK.

The reason why SQA is not on the list is that we do not meet all of the stated criteria, the main one being that we do not currently provide English Language tests in at least 40 countries.

Although this decision primarily affects students studying for English language qualifications in overseas centres and seeking to enter the UK, it does also mean that, at present, overseas students currently in Scotland, who for whatever reason, are looking to extend or change their visa and need to demonstrate a minimum level of English cannot use their SQA qualifications to evidence this with the UKBA. In addition, SQA ESOL Units cannot now be used to meet the new Partner/Spouse English language requirement.

SQA requested that the UKBA consider exceptionally allowing overseas students or partners currently residing in Scotland to be allowed to use SQA ESOL qualifications if required for visa change/extension purposes. Unfortunately at present the UKBA have not sanctioned this proposal. We will continue to discuss this issue with both the UKBA and the Scottish Government.

Within Scotland, we continue to see extensive use of our national framework of ESOL qualifications (both Units and the National Courses) across all SCQF levels and all sectors (schools, colleges and community learning). Centres are continuing to report positive progression statistics for their ESOL learners both in terms of further study and employment. In the recent National Examination diet we witnessed increasing numbers and strong performance in both Intermediate 2 and Higher ESOL with many learners using their English language skills to access and enhance their performance across all their subjects. In terms of the new generation of qualifications that are being developed to support Curriculum for Excellence, ESOL is now firmly embedded as a key subject within this development programme. Full National Course provision (as well as discrete Units) has been extended to include Access 3 (SCQF 3), National 4 (SCQF level 4), National 5 (SCQF level 5) and Higher (SCQF level 6). In addition we will continue to have extensive Unit provision at Access 2.

I hope this forthcoming academic year is a successful one for you and your students, if you have any queries or questions in relation to our framework of ESOL qualifications please do not hesitate to contact myself.

Yours faithfully



Alan R Wilson
Qualifications Manager
Humanities, Arts and Business