NQ Verification 2016–17 Key Messages Round 2

01 Section 1: Verification group information

Verification group name:	English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
Verification event/visiting information	AVU — Event IACCA — Event
Date published:	June 2017

National Courses/Units verified:

H24N 74	National 4	ESOL Assignment (Added Value Unit)
C727 75	National 5	ESOL Performance — Speaking and Listening Internally Assessed Component of Course Assessment (IACCA)
C727 76	Higher	ESOL Performance — Speaking and Listening Internally Assessed Component of Course Assessment (IACCA)

02 Section 2: Comments on assessment

National 4 ESOL Assignment (Added Value Unit)

Assessment approaches

Examples of good practice in approaches to assessment

Assessment standard 1.1

In line with Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) aims and principles of personalisation and choice, in most centres, candidates had been encouraged to choose topics that they were interested in and this was reflected in detailed and interesting presentations.

In one centre the candidate assignment task sheet had been adapted to show a clear link to other subjects that the candidates were interested in and provided

greater clarity to the candidates in terms of what needed to be completed at each stage in the assessment process.

There was evidence in most centres that candidates had been briefed well on the task and had demonstrated that they could identify and select information from different texts. One centre had supported candidates in the research stage with the aid of useful mind maps, which were included with the evidence submitted.

Guidance for centres on approaches to assessment

Assessment standard 1.1

To assist in the development of autonomous learning, candidates can be encouraged to use a dictionary to check understanding of new items in the research stage of the assignment.

Candidates could ask for feedback on progress at the end of this stage to ensure that they have *selected* relevant information from sources. Candidates should be encouraged to make the links between their research and their presentation explicit. In the unit assessment support pack (UASP) it states in the assessment overview section that candidates can ask for clarification on selecting relevant information from the texts and preparing for and making the presentation.

Assessment standard 1.2

The use of video recordings would help candidates focus more on presentation skills thereby maximising the skills developed while doing the assignment.

Use of prompt cards/PowerPoint slides may be supportive and these can be retained as evidence.

In one centre the assessor had noted where candidates had appeared to be memorising the presentation, were relying too heavily on their notes or had not presented their findings from the research they had carried out. If the assessor was aware of these issues at the beginning of the presentation, it would have been appropriate to have stopped the candidate and to have given them time and feedback in order to be re-assessed on just this assessment standard.

Assessment standard 1.3

Centres should encourage questions from the audience, not just the assessor. Questions should focus on the research carried out for assessment standard 1.1 and the findings the candidates have presented for assessment standard 1.2. Questions should be open-ended in order to prompt extended answers. Centres could refer to the 'ESOL Common questions' document where it states: 'The questions should always be relevant to the presentation and the candidate should be asked questions that allow them to show understanding of their chosen topic. Ideally peers will ask the candidate follow-up questions to their presentation but the assessor may want to have some ideas ready in case there isn't a sufficient range of questions asked.'

Assessment judgements

Overall, centres had made judgements that were in line with national standards for each of the assessment standards.

There were good examples where centres had provided detailed commentary, using the assessment checklist, which was clearly matched against the assessment standards. This showed how assessment judgements had been made.

ESOL Performance — Speaking and Listening National 5 and Higher IACCA

Assessment approaches

Centre approaches to the course assessment task for National 5 and Higher are varied, with most centres verified taking the opportunity to combine unit and course assessment, where practicable, and making good use of the general and detailed marking instructions.

When combining unit and course assessment the following should be noted:

♦ candidates should be assessed at an appropriate time in the year to maximise the opportunity of obtaining the best marks possible in the course assessment

♦ candidates can only do a particular speaking assessment task once, so if the centre is using a task for unit and course assessment, both assessments must be done at the same time and in one recording

♦ centres must ensure that the assessment conditions as stated in the course assessment task are fully implemented, including the preparation time of 15 minutes

♦ for course assessment, the general and detailed marking instructions in the course assessment task must be applied

♦ for course assessment, the recording document from the course assessment task must be used

♦ for unit assessment, only the assessment standards must be applied when making assessment judgements

To distinguish clearly between the course assessment task which is on the SQA secure site and the specific topic or aspects of a topic candidates discuss, eg a task from a unit assessment support pack or a centre-devised task, the latter will be referred to as an assessment brief.

Examples of good practice in approaches to assessment

Most centres verified had used a National 5 or Higher speaking task from a unit assessment support pack as an assessment brief for candidates. This ensured an appropriate level of challenge in the task. Some centres produced their own assessment brief, with an appropriate level of challenge, to take account of

personalisation and choice. Allowing candidates personalisation and choice when deciding upon task topics and contexts engages candidates and supports the principles of CfE assessment.

It was clear that some candidates had prepared very well for the task and this was evidenced particularly through their contribution to the topic, their competences in initiating and turn-taking, and in considering and responding to their partners' comments.

It was also clear that some candidates were comfortable and familiar with the audio/visual recording process required as evidence, and their performances benefitted from this. It is apparent that more candidates are having the opportunity to practise recorded conversations and discussions.

Some centres assessed candidates with additional support needs in carefully selected pairings or supportive groups in order to maximise opportunity for these candidates to produce higher quality language output.

Before being assessed, candidates from one centre introduced themselves, the assessment task and discussion topic chosen. This approach is supportive to candidates by allowing them the opportunity to engage with each other and ease into their performance, and it reduces the level of formality associated with assessment.

Most centres had provided recordings in which candidate identification was clear due to names being given or pairings of different genders or accents. In addition, most centres had provided clearly labelled recordings on CDs or USBs with clearly named audio files and supporting documentation.

Video-recorded evidence supported the identification of candidates. When candidates of the same first language group and gender are paired, it can be difficult to identify them on audio recordings. As this is sometimes unavoidable, it is helpful when candidates refer to each other by name in the initial stages of the conversation/discussion.

Guidance for centres on approaches to assessment

One centre provided a recording of a presentation as evidence for the IACCA. This approach is not suitable for IACCA because there is no turn-taking element. The maximum mark that could therefore be awarded was 12 out of 25 for speaking as the candidate does not contribute effectively in order to maintain the conversation and only partially achieves the task. Centres must use assessment briefs that permit turn-taking in the form of a discussion or conversation between two or more participants, whether between candidates or candidate-interlocutor.

Centres should be aware of appropriate pairings of candidates. To avoid disadvantaging candidates, it is important that participation in the conversation is balanced, especially with regards to turn-taking. Using peer interlocutors where possible is good practice but the centre needs to be aware when one candidate

dominates a conversation. In such a case, the candidate could be re-assessed immediately using the same task with a different partner.

If a candidate is paired with the assessor for the interaction the conversation must be balanced. The candidate needs to have the opportunity to participate and take the initiative in the interaction as a fully equal partner, contributing effectively and relevantly throughout.

Where audio recordings are used for groups of three or more, it is often difficult to identify candidates throughout the performance. Using video evidence for groups of three or more supports the assessment, and internal and external verification.

Some centres are recording candidate conversations or discussions at lengths significantly over the suggested timeframe. Please ensure that candidates are fully aware of the guidance on timing in the course assessment task for National 5, 5–6 minutes and Higher, 8–10 minutes.

It is appropriate to extend the timing of the speaking and listening performance for small groups beyond that recommended for pairs in order to provide sufficient time for each candidate to fully demonstrate their skills.

For external verification of the ESOL performance: speaking and listening, centres are not required to submit candidate evidence for National 5 or Higher units. Along with the audio/video recording, the documentation required for external verification is:

♦ the assessment brief given to candidates
♦ the recording documentation from the course assessment task, showing the marks awarded for speaking and listening, with any relevant comments
♦ the detailed marking instructions used to award the marks

Assessors should try to make sure the recording device/microphone is placed in a position where background noise is not intrusive and both candidates can be heard clearly. Assessors are encouraged to carry out a test recording prior to recording candidate conversation/discussion.

Assessment judgements

Examples of good practice in assessment judgements

Most centres awarded marks for National 5 and Higher in line with national standards. Assessors had made good use of the detailed marking instructions for each of the aspects of performance to determine marks within the bands for both speaking and listening.

Some centres had used and included a highlighted copy of the detailed marking instructions for individual candidates to show how the band had been selected and where candidates had differed from that band in one or more aspects. In addition, some centres had included on the recording document examples of

language which supported the band selected and mark awarded. This offered a clearly identifiable way of understanding how marks were awarded by assessors.

Guidance for centres on assessment judgements

A few centres had been either lenient or severe in their marking of the ESOL performance. Where centres had been lenient, it was most notably in the aspect that addresses range and accuracy in the use of structure. Where centres had been severe, it was more generally in the application of the bands.

Some centres were reluctant to award the top mark in the top band for speaking. A number of centres awarded 24 out of 25 to candidates but none were awarded 25 out of 25. Where candidate performance is clearly at the top of the 25–22 band, 25 can be awarded.

Assessors can make use of the recordings and commentaries in the ESOL Performance Understanding Standards packs on the SQA secure site. These can be used for standardisation purposes prior to assessment and during internal verification. It is also good practice for centres to identify their own exemplars for standardisation purposes. To gain a further understanding of the range of structures appropriate at National 5 and Higher assessors could also refer to Appendix 1: Illustrative Language Tables (ILTS) in the National 5 and Higher course and unit support notes.

03 ▶ Section 3: General comments

Internal verification

There was evidence that the internal verification process adopted by some centres is thorough, detailed and highly effective. Documented, professional dialogue between the assessors and internal verifiers had resulted in a sample for verification that had a high level of consistency. Notes had been included supporting the assessors' and internal verifiers' decisions.

The majority of centres had submitted evidence of internal verification, and in most cases this had been effective in both supporting the assessor and in ensuring that approaches to assessment were valid and that assessment judgements were reliable and in line with national standards. Evidence of internal verification must be submitted along with the candidate evidence for external verification.

In one centre the internal verifier had given detailed useful advice to the assessor about how the assessment process could be improved the following year.

For quality assurance, it is considered good practice if centres' internal verification procedures are standardised across different assessors and sites.

Internal verifiers and assessors may find the following link to the SQA Internal Verification Toolkit useful in ensuring that national standards are maintained, assessors are supported, and paperwork is not excessive. The Toolkit is a

suggested approach and SQA recognises that many centres will have well-developed processes in place.
http://www.sqa.org.uk/ivtoolkit/

Evidence for external verification

Centres should refer closely to guidance provided by SQA about the sample and evidence to be submitted.

If the centre is selected for the AVU, only the evidence requested on the checklist for this is required. It is not necessary to send evidence for other units or ESOL performance marks. Likewise, if a centre is selected for IACCA ESOL performance verification, it is not necessary to submit evidence for units.

Centres should ensure that the candidates are clearly identified both on the Verification Sample Form and on the recordings for the ease of the verification process. Centres are also encouraged to provide a separate recording for each candidate.

Information about the materials that should be submitted for external verification can be found in the following documents:

♦ 'Evidence required for external verification of Units (including Added Value Units) at verification events', which can be accessed via the following link: http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/Evidence_required_for_verificationevents.pdf
♦ pages 12–14 in 'Evidence for external verification of National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher Internally Assessed Components of Course assessment', which can be accessed via the following link: http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/Evidence_For_NQ_External_Verification_Internally_Assessed_Components_Of_Coursework.pdf

Prior verification

In line with CfE principles, in particular providing the opportunity for personalisation and choice, centres are encouraged to produce their own assessments for the National 4 added value unit, as well as an assessment brief for the ESOL performance: speaking and listening. If these differ significantly from the examples in the UASPs, centres are strongly advised to submit them for the free prior verification service. This should be requested before assessments are used with candidates.

If a centre has used a prior verified assessment, the verification certificate should be included with material submitted for external verification.