Common questions about National 2, National 3, National 4, National 5 and Higher ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)

Contents

Responses to questions in this section also apply to freestanding units at SCQF levels 5 and 6.

Approaches to unit assessment

Can I mix and match the assessment tasks from different unit assessment support packs (UASPs)?

As long as the assessment standards are applied there is no issue with using assessments from different packages. You are able to use UASPs in their entirety or mix and match assessments, for example using speaking from one, writing from another. However, assessors may find it helpful to link assessments thematically, as shown in some of the UASPs where all four skills are assessed on a topic, for example technology.

What does combined assessment mean?

A combined assessment is where assessment tasks are integrated with the aim of reducing time spent on assessment. There are a number of different approaches to combined assessment exemplified in the UASPs.

One approach combines assessment across outcomes within a unit, and can be found in UASPs with a unit-by-unit approach. An example of this is where listening is assessed as part of the interaction along with the speaking.

Some UASPs contain assessment of one outcome from ESOL for Everyday Life and one outcome from ESOL in Context. There is a separate assessment for each outcome, but on the same theme or topic. If using this approach, the other three outcomes in both units must still be assessed.

At SCQF level 5 and 6, some UASPs combine assessment across everyday life and ESOL in context units, removing the need to assess each unit individually. For example, a reading task could provide sufficient evidence for achieving outcome 1 (reading) in both units because the language in the text is applicable to everyday life and work or study.

At National 2, two units (a reading and writing unit and a speaking and listening unit) are combined into one UASP to assess all four skills in one topic area.

The assessor should always complete a candidate assessment record, or similar document, which clearly indicates the unit, outcome, assessment standards and assessment judgements.

When can a combined assessment allow for one piece of evidence for one outcome to show achievement across both units?

It may be possible for particularly strong candidates to do this. For example, a candidate who can complete a detailed reading comprehension, which uses general and specialised vocabulary, in an everyday context as well as in an ESOL for work or study context, may be able to show achievement of both units by completing one reading assessment. This is exemplified in one of the UASPs at SCQF level 5 and 6. The page 'What this Pack Covers' in the UASPs details whether an assessment task can cover both units or not.

Can candidates use dictionaries for reading and writing in unit assessments?

Yes, candidates can use dictionaries for all reading and writing unit assessments.

Can candidates give an oral rather than a written response to the unit reading and listening assessments?

Yes, but for evidence purposes the assessor must keep a written record or checklist to indicate that the candidate has completed the task and met, or not met, the assessment standards.

How should candidates use the preparation time for speaking assessments?

You should ensure candidates know the most effective ways to use the allocated preparation time to consider their ideas for each of the bullet points and possible relevant specialised vocabulary. Candidates should apply note-taking skills, and be discouraged from writing a lengthy text on the topic as a way of preparing. They must use this time to prepare on their own and should not, at this stage, discuss the task with anyone.

Can candidates be assessed in small groups for speaking?

Yes, providing each candidate is assessed individually and individual records are kept. If candidates are assessed in small groups, rather than a paired discussion, it is recommended that there are no more than three in a group. You should give candidates an appropriate amount of extra time to allow each candidate the opportunity to meet the assessment standards.

Using video evidence supports both the assessment, and internal and external verification. Where audio recordings are used, you must ensure that candidates can be clearly identified.

Can candidates be assessed with an interlocutor for speaking?

Yes, however the interlocutor should not lead the conversation or interview the candidate but take part as an equal partner. The candidate must have the opportunity to participate in the interaction as a fully equal partner and to contribute effectively and relevantly throughout.

Where assessors take on the role of interlocutor, 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.

How should candidates be given feedback on their written drafts?

For outcome 2 (produce written English), candidates may draft written work before producing a final version. The following process is recommended to ensure candidates receive sufficient but not excessive support between drafts. Errors and slips must only be identified on the writing by underlining. You should not indicate the type of error.

Candidates can produce a maximum of two drafts and a final version.

1   Candidate produces a first draft of the writing task (or a piece of writing the candidate produces independently during the learning and teaching process).
2   If the writing meets all assessment standards at that level, you should not make corrections on the candidate's work, but clearly identify it as a pass on the work and on a candidate assessment record. You can then give feedback relating it to the assessment standards.
3   If the first draft of the writing has not met all assessment standards, you should only underline errors which candidates need to correct in order to meet the assessment standards at that level. You can also give feedback that relates to the assessment standards they have met and not met. You can record this at the end of the writing or on a candidate assessment record.
4   The candidate can then produce a second draft, taking account of your feedback on the assessment standards and the underlining to correct errors and slips. If needed, you can apply the process in points 2 and 3 to the second draft and the candidate can produce a final version.

For the purposes of external verification, centres must submit the final version and any drafts. These should clearly show a progression which is the candidate's own work.

If I didn't use a UASP exactly as published, should I be concerned about verification?

The UASPs provide examples of valid and reliable assessments which you can use as they are, or adapt to take account of local areas or to facilitate personalisation and choice. Centres can also produce their own assessments.

If you are in any doubt about the assessment that you adapt or produce, or if your approach is significantly different from the published UASP, SQA provides a free prior verification service that gives feedback on your assessment materials. You can find information on the [National Qualifications prior verification webpage](#).

If we want to use a UASP but change the text would this have to go through prior verification?

If there were only minor changes to a text, for example changing the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh to the Lighthouse Museum in Fraserburgh, then you would not need prior verification. If you make more substantial changes to the text or questions, provided you keep the types of question and apply the same assessment standards, you do not need to request prior verification although SQA strongly recommend it. You should also update the judging evidence table to reflect any changes.

If I am choosing a text to assess reading, how do I know it is at the right level?

Remember the key language descriptors:

♦ National 2: basic
♦ National 3: simple
♦ National 4: straightforward
♦ SCQF level 5: detailed
♦ SCQF level 6: detailed and complex

The UASPs exemplify the appropriate levels of demand in terms of language, word count of texts, and question types.

You may find it helpful to refer to the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) as the SQA ESOL qualifications benchmark against this. You can find more information about this on the [ESOL subject page](#).

The illustrative language tables (ILTs) may be useful. You can find these in the National 3 and National 4 course and unit support notes, and in the National 5 and Higher course specifications.

How do I submit an assessment for prior verification?

You can find information and the prior verification request form on the [National Qualifications prior verification webpage](#).

How long should candidates be given to complete unit assessments?

Time restrictions are not a feature of ESOL unit assessments, and teachers and lecturers should use professional judgement to determine a reasonable amount of time to complete reading, writing and listening assessments. If a candidate is taking a very long time to complete an assessment, it could be that they have not been entered at the right level.

In speaking assessments, the approximate time guidelines are to support candidates so that they do not either exceed or fall short of the time limit. A conversation that is too long or too short does not automatically mean that the candidate will not achieve the outcome. However, it may mean that a candidate makes unnecessary errors if overly long, or cannot fully demonstrate their speaking skills if too short, and this may have an impact on achievement of the assessment standards.

In writing assessments, candidates should be allowed sufficient time to write and redraft their work, if necessary. The redrafting process, set out above, is important to develop writing skills and improve self-correction.

Are SQA learning and teaching support materials, which teachers have been using until now, still relevant?

Yes, you can find the paper-based materials, and the ESOL e-learning resources (practice assessments), on the [ESOL subject page](#) for each level under the 'Support materials' tab.

There are no plans to update these resources, but the paper-based materials are available in Word versions that you can adapt or update.

Additional ESOL online learning and revision materials are available on the main page of [SQA Academy](). No login is required to access these, and students can use these on phones, tablets and computers.

Materials are available at levels:

Higher (Advanced) CEFR C1
National 5 (Upper Intermediate) CEFR B2
National 4 (Intermediate) CEFR B1
National 3 (Elementary) CEFR A2
National 2 (Beginner) CEFR A1

Making unit assessment judgements
Are candidate exemplars available?

Understanding standards packs (candidate exemplars), are available on SQA's secure site.

Further information on understanding standards is available on this link:
www.sqa.org.uk/understandingstandards

Do candidates have to meet all assessment standards for each outcome in the unit assessments to achieve a unit?

Yes, they must meet all the assessment standards to achieve an outcome and all outcomes to pass a unit. This applies to all units at all SCQF levels.

You should use the candidate assessment record or a similar document to record assessment. You are free to adapt the one in the UASPs in whatever way suits your candidates and your centre.

How do I know that my assessment judgements are valid and reliable?

Your internal verification processes should support you as an assessor to make valid and reliable judgements. Making use of the judging evidence tables in the UASPs and the understanding standards packs on SQA's secure site enables you to have a good understanding of national standards at each level.

As teachers and lecturers, we make assessment judgements all the time in teaching. When assessing units, we are applying our judgement to whether or not assessment standards have been met.

What is the best approach to work out which questions, and how many questions, a candidate has to answer correctly in order to achieve a reading or listening outcome?

Refer to the judging evidence table, specifically column 4, and also take account of the general guidance:

Assessors should use professional judgement and a holistic approach in deciding whether candidates have achieved the assessment standards. Candidates do not have to answer every question correctly as they could demonstrate achievement of the assessment standards across questions.

Candidates must show that they have provided sufficient evidence to meet each of the assessment standards. It is worth noting that some questions, for example a listening question, might not just be tied to one assessment standard: a candidate might meet an assessment standard in an answer to a range of questions. This is normally indicated in column four.

How should internal unit assessment evidence be recorded?

Examples of possible record-keeping approaches (candidate assessment records) are provided with the published UASPs, and can be adapted to suit your needs and any guidance provided by your centre. There should be a record of the outcome of assessment that covers all the assessment standards.

An audio and/or video recording of each candidate's speaking (and listening) assessment is not mandatory for the unit assessments, but it is recommended to retain audio and/or video evidence for verification purposes. If an audio and/or video recording is not retained you must ensure that detailed observation notes are made and retained for the speaking (and listening) assessment.

If a candidate fails to meet an assessment standard required to pass a unit assessment, can the candidate be re-assessed?

SQA's guidance on re-assessment is that normally there should be one or, in exceptional circumstances, two re-assessment opportunities. Centres will also have a policy on this and you should check your centre's policy.

For outcome 1 (reading) and outcome 3 (listening), it is not always necessary to use a different text and task. For example, failure to address the overall purpose question may result in the candidate being re-assessed for that assessment standard only. An appropriate question(s) could be devised using the original assessment text to address that particular assessment standard.

Do candidates have to work through all the units at National 2?

No, following initial assessment by the centre, candidates can be entered for the most appropriate unit.

National 2
ESOL: Preparation for Literacy HA1R 72
ESOL: An Introduction to Beginner English Literacies 1 HW55 72
ESOL: An Introduction to Beginner English Literacies 2 HW56 72
ESOL for Everyday Life: Reading and Writing H998 72
ESOL for Everyday Life: Listening and Speaking H997 72
ESOL in Context: Reading and Writing H99A 72
ESOL in Context: Listening and Speaking H999 72

National 4 ESOL assignment

How should assessment standard 1.1 'Selecting relevant information from straightforward texts in English' be assessed?

For assessment standard 1.1 to be met, the candidate should complete a task sheet (see UASP or it can be centre devised) stating why they have chosen the topic and acknowledging at least two sources. There should be evidence that candidates have extracted appropriate information from at least two sources for the presentation, for example the candidate has made notes. They should be able to show that they have selected appropriate straightforward information in order to prepare a basic informative talk on the chosen topic.

You have to provide evidence of candidates selecting relevant information from the texts in order to prepare their oral presentation. Notes and copies of flow charts and diagrams created by the candidates for assessment standard 1.1 could be included in the evidence submitted for verification.

How should assessment standard 1.2 'Presenting findings orally, in English' be assessed?

The candidate should make a short presentation, lasting 3–4 minutes. The presentation can be supported by brief headings or by visual aids. It can be delivered to the whole class or to groups of candidates within the class. In some situations, the candidate may have to do a one-to-one presentation to the assessor, although presenting to an audience is preferable.

When giving the presentation, candidates should not rely too heavily on their notes. They should only use cue cards and/or PowerPoint notes when delivering their presentation. They should be able to demonstrate an ability to expand on notes and/or the content of their (PowerPoint) presentation so that they explain the main points with reasonable precision.

How should assessment standard 1.3 'Responding orally in English to oral questions relevant to the topic' be assessed?

On completion of the presentation, the candidate should participate in a question and answer session, providing a number of responses which show that they have listened and understood the questions. This part of the assessment should last about 3–4 minutes. They should answer a sufficient variety of questions appropriately for their audience.

Should the questions for assessment standard 1.3 be prepared in advance?

The questions must 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 you may want to have some ideas ready in case there isn't a sufficient range of questions asked. If questions from candidates' peers are unsuitable or inappropriate, you must provide relevant questions in order for them to show that they have achieved assessment standard 1.3.

How long do candidates have to complete the ESOL assignment?

There is no stipulated time limit for the completion of this unit. The time limit is at the discretion of the centre. It can be part of a series of lessons, and can be done at an appropriate point in the course following achievement of the other units. It should also be part of the ongoing classroom work and not be seen as a stand-alone test.

How much assistance should candidates be given in the preparation for the ESOL assignment?

Candidates should complete assessments in class time under some supervision and control. You should give candidates reasonable assistance and support to complete the ESOL assignment, but encourage candidates to work independently. The amount of support a candidate requires should be reflected in the assessor's overall judgement of the candidate and noted in the candidate assessment record.

What evidence is the assessor required to retain?

You should retain copies of candidates' notes from the sources selected. If the candidate has given only oral feedback on the texts, you should keep detailed notes.

For the presentation, and question and answer session, you should retain an audio and/or video recording or, if not possible, a written summary or detailed checklist of the presentation and a record of the questions asked and candidate responses.

What happens if a candidate does not pass the National 4 ESOL assignment?

The candidate should not initially be required to do the entire ESOL assignment again. They can be re-assessed in the section they did not pass.

To reduce the possibility of candidates attempting the presentation with insufficient research or notes, you should support candidates at each stage so that you can highlight any issues, for example with the sources selected, before the candidate prepares their presentation.

If candidates do not deliver their presentation well, perhaps because of nerves, you should give them the opportunity to present their topic again.

If the candidate passes the research and presentation stages but does not pass the question and answer session, they would only be required to do that part again, but you would need to ensure that they are asked a different set of questions from the first attempt.

If candidates don't show sufficient knowledge of their chosen topic, you should give one re-assessment opportunity (two in exceptional circumstances) on a different topic.

National 5 ESOL question papers

From session 2017–18, the ESOL for Everyday Life and ESOL in Context units are no longer a mandatory part of the National 5 course and the course assessment consists of a listening question paper, a reading question paper, a writing question paper, and a performance: speaking and listening. For detailed information, please access the National 5 course specification on the website and follow the link below to the audio presentation on the National 5 course: https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/74495.html

It is for centres to decide how candidates are entered for the National 5 course and/or units at SCQF level 5.

Are candidates allowed to use dictionaries?

No, dictionaries can't be used for any of the question papers. Please see the course specification and the specimen question papers.

Are candidates provided with a time to spend on the reading question paper?

Yes, the reading question paper has an allocated time of 1 hour and 10 minutes. Candidates need to allocate an appropriate amount of time to each of the three texts and sets of questions.

Are candidates provided with a time to spend on the writing question paper?

Yes, the writing question paper has an allocated time of 1 hour and 10 minutes. They are advised to spend about 30 minutes on the everyday life task and about 40 minutes on either the work or study context tasks.

Will there be penalties for going over the recommended word limit in the writing tasks?

No, long good answers will not automatically be penalised.

Can candidates use synonyms for reading questions which state 'no more than three words from the text'?

No, these questions are designed to test detailed reading. Therefore, synonyms are not acceptable. Please note that this is different from the listening paper, where synonyms are acceptable.

Which writing genres will be covered in the exam?

For National 5, candidates should be familiar with the following genres: formal and informal email for the everyday life task, a report for the work task, and an essay for the study task.

Does spelling matter in answers to listening or reading questions?

Misspellings are not automatically penalised unless the mistake alters the sense of the word. However, spelling does matter in the writing paper.

National 5 ESOL performance: speaking and listening

Please see the 'Course assessment structure: performance: speaking and listening' section in the course specification, and the performance: speaking and listening assessment task on the [National 5 ESOL subject page](#), and understanding standards packs on SQA's secure site. Teachers and lecturers must give candidates an assessment brief and the conversation should take place in a group of no more than three.

Does the performance have to be a conversation rather than a presentation?

Yes. It is a conversation and not a presentation. The marking instructions for both speaking and listening are for a conversation where candidates must show ability to initiate and sensitivity to turn-taking throughout the interaction. The marks awarded for listening also take account of how well they listen and respond to what is said by their partner(s).

Does it have to be a paired conversation?

Ideally, do the assessment in pairs, but you can have up to three participants in the conversation. If choosing to assess in groups of three, candidates should have had opportunities to practise speaking tasks in groups and you should consider the group dynamic.

Does the conversation need to be recorded?

Yes, you must record the conversation, either a video or audio recording is acceptable. You should try to make sure the recording device is placed in a position where participants can be clearly heard and background noise is not intrusive.

Is task completion important in the performance?

Yes, as can be seen in the marking instructions, task completion is included in the aspect which addresses 'effectiveness and relevance of contribution'. Candidates must always attempt to complete the task, as stated in the assessment brief given to candidates.

You can find examples of assessment briefs with an appropriate level of challenge for National 5 in the SCQF level 5 UASPs. Centres can produce their own assessment brief, with an appropriate level of challenge, to take account of personalisation and choice. The assessment brief should be included in the material submitted for external verification.

You should ensure that the topics and contexts chosen are wide-ranging and bullet points specific enough in the assessment brief to allow candidates to fully demonstrate their language skills.

When can candidates know the topic of their conversation?

Prior to the assessment and during learning and teaching time, at a time of your choice, you can agree with the candidate a broad topic area for the conversation, for example technology, the environment, current affairs. The topic chosen should always be from a language area that you cover with candidates during the course.

You then prepare an assessment brief on the topic or an aspect of the topic which candidates must not have sight of until the time of the assessment.

As they do not know the aspect and detail of the topic that will be in the assessment brief, knowing the broad topic area at an appropriate point in the course will not give any unfair advantage. The candidate may do some additional reading and/or listening around the broad topic chosen, for example technology, which should not be discouraged. The marking instructions take into account how the task and bullet points are addressed and how candidates respond to their partner's questions and comments and interact with their ideas. If they attempt to produce memorised material on technology and don't interact well, they will achieve low marks.

What is the best way to mark the performance?

You should take a holistic approach to awarding marks, following the detailed marking instructions in the course specification to identify the band which best describes the candidate's performance. You then reach the mark within the band by identifying aspects of the performance which may fall above or below the band. This determines if the candidate is at the top, in the middle, or at the bottom of the band.

You could use an annotated or highlighted copy of the marking instructions to show how the marks were allocated to each candidate. This is in addition to the candidate assessment record. The combination of the two approaches to recording the marking process is excellent practice and informs both the internal and external verification processes.

You should ensure that listening is treated as an aspect of performance and that marks awarded for listening are independent of marks awarded for speaking. For high marks in listening there needs to be evidence from the performance that a candidate listens attentively to their partner(s) and responds with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that fully supports the conversation.

You could refer to the recordings and commentaries in the Understanding Standards packs on SQA's secure site to support your approach to the marking of speaking and listening.

Higher ESOL question papers

From session 2018/19 the units are no longer a mandatory part of the Higher course and the course assessment consists of a listening question paper, a reading question paper, a writing question paper and a performance: speaking and listening. For detailed information, please see the *Higher ESOL Course Specification* on the [Higher ESOL subject page](#) and follow this link to the audio presentation on the Higher course https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/74495.html

It is for centres to decide how candidates are entered for the Higher course and/or units at SCQF level 6.

Are candidates allowed to use dictionaries?

No, candidates cannot use dictionaries for any of the question papers. Please see the course specification and the specimen question papers.

Are candidates provided with a time to spend on the reading question paper?

Yes, the reading question paper has an allocated time of 1 hour and 10 minutes. Candidates need to allocate an appropriate amount of time to each of the three texts and sets of questions.

Are candidates provided with a time to spend on the writing question paper?

Yes, the writing question paper has an allocated time of 1 hour and 40 minutes. They are advised to spend about 45 minutes on the everyday life task and about 55 minutes on either the work or study contexts tasks.

Will there be penalties for going over the recommended word limit in the writing tasks?

No, long good answers will not automatically be penalised.

Can candidates use synonyms for reading questions which state 'no more than three words from the text'?

No, these questions are designed to test detailed reading. Therefore, synonyms are not acceptable as responses to questions that state 'from the text'. Note: this is different from the listening paper, where synonyms are acceptable.

Which genres will be covered in the writing question paper?

Candidates should be familiar with the following genres:

♦ everyday life: emails, social media postings, blogs and articles
♦ work-related contexts: a report
♦ study-related contexts: an essay

Does spelling matter in answers to listening or reading questions?

Misspellings are not automatically penalised unless the mistake alters the sense of the word. However, spelling does matter in the writing paper.

Why is paragraph referencing not used consistently throughout the reading question paper?

Paragraph referencing is used but not for each question. However, questions follow the order of the text with the exception of the last question which addresses aspects of the text as a whole. In order to meet requirements for entry to university, the level of the Higher ESOL course assessment is set at C1 of the Common European Framework of Languages (CEFR) and to provide paragraph referencing for all questions would reduce the level of challenge of the question paper to below C1.

Higher ESOL performance: speaking and listening

Please see the 'Course assessment structure: performance: speaking and listening' section in the course specification, and the performance: speaking and listening assessment task on the [Higher ESOL subject page](#), and the understanding standards packs on SQA's secure site. You must give candidates an assessment brief, and ensure the discussion takes place in a group of no more than three.

Does the performance have to be a discussion rather than a presentation?

Yes. It is a discussion and not a presentation. The marking instructions for both speaking and listening are for a discussion where candidates must show ability to initiate and sensitivity to turn-taking throughout the interaction. The marks awarded for listening also take account of how well they listen and respond to what is said by their partner(s).

Does it have to be a paired discussion?

Ideally, candidates do the assessment in pairs, but you can have up to three participants in the discussion. If choosing to assess in groups of three, candidates should have had opportunities to practise speaking tasks in groups and you should carefully consider the group dynamic.

Does the discussion need to be recorded?

Yes, you must record the discussion, either a video or audio recording is acceptable. You should try to make sure the recording device is placed in a position where participants can be clearly heard and background noise is not intrusive.

Is task completion important in the performance?

Yes, as can be seen in the marking instructions, task completion is included in the aspect which addresses 'effectiveness and relevance of contribution'. Candidates must always attempt to complete the task, as stated in the assessment brief given to candidates.

You can find examples of assessment briefs with an appropriate level of challenge for Higher in the SCQF level 6 UASPs. You can produce your own assessment brief, with an appropriate level of challenge, to take account of personalisation and choice. The assessment brief should be included in the material submitted for external verification.

You should ensure that the topics and contexts chosen are wide-ranging and bullet points specific enough in the assessment brief to allow candidates to fully demonstrate their language skills.

When can the candidates know the topic of their discussion?

Prior to the assessment and during learning and teaching time, at a time of your choice, you can agree with the candidate a broad topic area for the discussion, for example technology, the environment, current affairs. The topic chosen should always be from a language area that you cover with candidates during the course.

You then prepare an assessment brief on the topic or an aspect of the topic which candidates will not to have sight of until the time of the assessment.

As they do not know the aspect and detail of the topic that will be in the assessment brief, knowing the broad topic area at an appropriate point in the course will not give any unfair advantage. The candidate may do some additional reading and listening around the broad topic chosen, for example technology, which should not be discouraged. The marking instructions take into account how the task and bullet points are addressed, and how candidates respond to their partner's questions and comments and interact with their ideas. If they attempt to produce memorised material on technology and don't interact well, they will achieve low marks.

What is the best way to mark the performance?

You should take a holistic approach to awarding marks, following the detailed marking instructions in the course specification to identify the band which best describes the candidate's performance. You then reach the mark within the band by identifying aspects of the performance which may fall above or below the band. This determines if the candidate is at the top, in the middle, or at the bottom of the band.

You could use an annotated or highlighted copy of the marking instructions to show how the marks were allocated to each candidate. This is in addition to the candidate assessment record. The combination of the two approaches to recording the marking process is excellent practice and informs both the internal and external verification processes.

You should ensure that listening is treated as an aspect of performance and that marks awarded for listening are independent of marks awarded for speaking. For high marks in listening there needs to be evidence from the performance that a candidate listens attentively

to their partner(s) and responds with a high degree of fluency and with a level of spontaneity that effectively develops the discussion.

You could refer to the recordings and commentaries in the understanding standards packs on SQA's secure site to support your approach to the marking of speaking and listening.

Can a candidate be part of more than one discussion?

Yes, as long as you make it clear which candidate is being assessed in the recording and that their partner is not being assessed.

Note: a candidate cannot be assessed again using an assessment brief that they have already had a discussion on. If the candidate's partner has already been assessed using the same assessment brief, their original recording must be the one that marks are awarded for.

Internal verification
What is the best way to approach internal verification?

There is no set, or required, way to approach this. Some centres have a policy that all departments or faculties must follow, while others allow for a flexible approach. The main thing is that you arrange a situation in which other subject specialists are looking at, and reviewing, your assessment materials and judgements. In a subject department, this can be arranged in fairly straightforward and supportive ways. It might be possible, for example, to form 'assessment pairs', pairing up two teachers to discuss assessment approaches and to check achievement.

Internal verification is not just about sampling, but a process which should support assessors throughout internal assessment. Centres need to make sure that all assessors are applying the same standards and know the best way to approach assessments. In a departmental meeting situation, a good sense of an assessment standard can emerge from a group discussion of exemplars of candidates' writing, or watching video recordings of a conversation or discussion. Newly-devised assessments can be discussed and reviewed, for example, in terms of level of demand or course coverage. SQA has produced guidance on internal verification. This guidance suggests templates which you can download and use to support an effective internal verification process. You can find further information at www.sqa.org.uk/IVtoolkit.

I teach in a one-person department. How can I carry out internal verification?

A link with another centre or a local authority group would be invaluable, and would enable you to feel more comfortable about making assessment judgements. You could exchange assessment materials, recordings and candidates' scripts physically or electronically, and monitor standards in this way. Again, you can find further guidance at www.sqa.org.uk/IVtoolkit.

How do I make it clear that I have carried out internal verification?

As part of the external verification process, verifiers do not expect you to include a centre-devised policy on internal verification along with your sample. There is an expectation, however, that evidence of internal verification is visible. This could take the form of annotated 'double marking', or 'cross marking', where a second assessor notes and comments on marks awarded or where assessment standards have been achieved.

Comments, rather than just a series of ticks or dates, make it very clear that a second assessor has reviewed an assessment judgement. If you have had meetings where you have verified standards, it would be helpful to include a brief note of the meeting along with your sample for external verification.

What evidence needs to be submitted for external verification of National 5 and Higher ESOL performance: listening and speaking

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

The evidence that must be submitted for the National 5 and Higher ESOL performance: speaking and listening can be found on this link
https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/Evidence_For_NQ_External_Verification_Internally_Assessed_Components_Of_Coursework.pdf

What evidence needs to be submitted for external verification of units?

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

The evidence that must be submitted for units can be found on this link
https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/Evidence_required_for_verificationevents.pdf

When the centre is selected for unit verification, only the evidence requested on the checklist is required. It is not necessary to send evidence for other units or National 5 or Higher ESOL performance: speaking and listening.

General questions and answers regarding National Qualifications can be found in the
Frequently Asked Questions section of our website.