



**National Units**

**Qualification Verification Summary Report 2019  
English for Speakers of Other  
Languages (ESOL)**

**Verification group: 17**

## Introduction

The ESOL for Employability units, including Living in Scotland, are mandatory units in the National Certificate (NC) ESOL for Employability at SCQF levels 4 and 5. These are also delivered in centres as freestanding units, frequently alongside other SQA units and courses, to prepare candidates for working in Scotland and across the UK. They develop the language skills candidates need for seeking work and being in employment.

The Speaking and Listening units were originally developed to support learners in applying for settlement and citizenship in the UK, but are no longer accepted as part of the application process. They are freestanding units that support the development of listening and speaking skills and are now being offered to candidates to recognise development of these skills alongside National Qualifications. They provide interim certification for learners whose reading and writing skills are not so developed or are taking longer to develop, making achievement of ESOL qualifications that assess all four skills more difficult.

All the units listed below were successfully verified in session 2018–19.

H1XE 11 ESOL: Speaking for Employability  
H1XH 11 ESOL: Living in Scotland

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

FD5N 08 ESOL: Speaking and Listening  
FD5N 09 ESOL: Speaking and Listening  
FD5N 11 ESOL: Speaking and Listening

## **Category 2: Resources**

**Criterion 2.1: Assessors and internal verifiers must be competent to assess and internally verify, in line with the requirements of the qualification.**

Not applicable to these qualifications.

**Criterion 2.4: There must be evidence of initial and ongoing reviews of assessment environments; equipment; and reference, learning and assessment materials.**

All centres were found to have effective and documented processes in place for initial and ongoing reviews.

Documented annual and regular reviews of assessment environments and equipment are part of wider centre policies and procedures. Initial and ongoing reviews take place through a variety of methods, for example: team meetings, course committee meetings, self-evaluation processes and internal verification procedures.

Internal verification processes and records of meetings, involving ESOL teams, provide evidence of regular review of reference, learning and assessment materials as well as taking account of assessment environments and equipment. Records of the meetings and communication, with actions identified, are available and confirm review is taking place throughout courses and in line with SQA's guidance on pre-delivery, during delivery and post-delivery review.

Student evaluations and feedback from class representatives feed into these review processes and are actioned, where appropriate.

## **Category 3: Candidate support**

### **Criterion 3.2: Candidates' development needs and prior achievements (where appropriate) must be matched against the requirements of the award.**

ESOL staff in all centres verified have a clear understanding of the importance of taking account of candidate prior achievement and experience, and the value of initial assessment processes for ESOL learners. Good account is taken of candidates' development needs to facilitate placement in courses and progression.

Approaches to initial assessment and the tools employed differ in centres, with some using a published placement test, some using centre-produced placement tools, and others using sections of the Scottish Government Initial Assessment Pack. ESOL staff report that their approach is effective and candidates are able to progress at a pace according to their profiles in the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Some centres are making good use of the SCQF levels to explain progression routes to candidates at an early stage.

### **Criterion 3.3: Candidates must have scheduled contact with their assessor to review their progress and to revise their assessment plans accordingly.**

All centres have procedures in place to provide regular scheduled contact with assessors. This is the case for full-time and part-time courses. Overall, induction materials for candidates provided good guidance on the centre approaches to planned contact with assessors.

Feedback and evaluations available for external verification show a high level of satisfaction with ESOL courses. In centres where candidates were interviewed, they stated that the support, guidance and feedback they received from assessors was of a very high standard.

All centres have re-assessment procedures in place and planned guidance sessions to review progress and monitor achievement. There is evidence of clear and detailed feedback to candidates on their progress in meeting outcomes and performance criteria.

## **Category 4: Internal assessment and verification**

### **Criterion 4.2: Internal assessment and verification procedures must be implemented to ensure standardisation of assessment.**

In all centres, assessment and internal verification procedures are effective, well-documented and implemented in line with the centre's and SQA's requirements.

There is clear evidence from the candidates sampled that internal assessment procedures are followed in line with the evidence requirements and performance criteria of the unit specifications. Assessment records demonstrate that procedures are being closely followed and that candidates receive meaningful feedback as part of the assessment process.

There is evidence that most assessors and internal verifiers work closely together and liaise on the assessment and verification schedule. Internal verification records are available, up-to-date and showed that the three stages of internal verification, pre-delivery, during delivery and post-delivery review, are taking place. There was good evidence that there is a variety of approaches to standardisation activities across centres. These are adapted to the size and needs of the centre to ensure standardisation of assessment judgements across all four skills. Almost all assessors are receiving supportive, clear and detailed feedback on their assessment judgements.

In a very few cases, feedback from the internal verifier or ESOL practitioner peers on assessment judgements could have provided more support to assessors.

### **Criterion 4.3: Assessment instruments and methods and their selection and use must be valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair.**

All centres are using approaches to assessment, including instruments of assessment at an appropriate SCQF level that ensure the validity, reliability, equitability and fairness of assessment.

There is a mixture of approaches to the selection of instruments of assessment, both for the ESOL for Employability units and the ESOL: Speaking and Listening units. Some centres have produced assessments and had these prior verified. This approach takes good account of personalisation and choice in topics selected and provides a level of engagement with the assessment task for candidates. Some centres are using SQA assessment support materials available for the unit and others are making use of assessments produced for previous SQA ESOL qualifications at the appropriate SCQF level.

In almost all centres where other assessment tasks are being used, these had been adapted to show the unit being undertaken by candidates. However, in a few centres this was not the case. For the sake of clarity, it is necessary to head all assessments up for the units being undertaken and the source of the material can be noted in a footer. Instructions to candidates must clearly relate to the unit being undertaken. To ensure reliability, marking instructions should also clearly indicate which unit is being assessed and these should be easily accessible for assessors and internal verifiers.

In most centres, there is a very positive approach to integration of assessment with other ESOL units and other units being undertaken by candidates in other subject areas.

In most centres, candidates approached speaking assessments confidently and seemed at ease with being audio or video recorded.

**Criterion 4.4: Assessment evidence must be the candidate's own work, generated under SQA's required conditions.**

In all centres, assessment is conducted under appropriate supervised conditions. Candidates receive guidance on assessment conditions, including, malpractice, authentication of candidate evidence and plagiarism in induction material and before they are assessed. In almost all centres, candidates signed a centre agreement to confirm that they understood the conditions of assessment.

The ESOL Speaking and Listening assessments and the speaking assessments for the ESOL for Employability units are conducted and audio/video recorded by the assessor. In addition, for the Living in Scotland unit, the stages of the research, the recorded sources and drafting processes, and presentation notes provide useful evidence that the candidate's work is generated on their own under SQA's required conditions.

**Criterion 4.6: Evidence of candidates' work must be accurately and consistently judged by assessors against SQA's requirements.**

In all centres, there is clear evidence that candidates' work is being accurately and consistently judged by assessors against SQA's requirements for SCQF levels 2, 3, 4 and 5 for ESOL.

Samples, which included both pass and fail judgements, supported the external verification process.

Assessors and internal verifiers demonstrated that they had a good understanding of the national standards for speaking and listening in making assessment judgements for the ESOL: Speaking and Listening units at SCQF levels 2, 3 and 5.

Assessors and internal verifiers demonstrated that they have a good understanding of the national standards for reading, writing, listening and speaking at SCQF levels 4 and 5 for the ESOL for Employability units.

Marking guidelines are being appropriately applied by assessors.

Almost all centres provided assessment records where assessor comments serve a dual purpose. They make clear the basis on which the assessment judgements are made and provide supportive and useful feedback to candidates.

In almost all centres, the internal verification sampling process resulted in confirmation of assessment judgements or comments from the internal verifier that promoted professional

dialogue on the national standards. Where there were comments from the internal verifier, this resulted in clear and appropriate final judgements being made.

**Criterion 4.7: Candidate evidence must be retained in line with SQA requirements.**

All centres are aware of SQA's requirements for retaining candidate evidence and have access to this information in centre policy and procedure documents, or are aware of where to access this information on SQA's website.

**Criterion 4.9: Feedback from qualification verifiers must be disseminated to staff and used to inform assessment practice.**

All centres provided evidence that feedback from qualification verifiers is disseminated to staff involved in the assessment and internal verification of the SQA ESOL qualifications. How the feedback is disseminated differed in centres, as did the evidence provided. Internal and external verification policies and procedures outlined the process. Completed records of internal verification addressed the external verification report and the implementation of suggestions and recommendations in reports.

## **Areas of good practice reported by qualification verifiers**

The following good practice was reported during session 2018–19:

- ◆ Clear and detailed feedback to candidates on assessment.
- ◆ Clear and detailed feedback from internal verifiers to assessors on their assessment judgements.
- ◆ The integration of the ESOL unit assessments with the assessment of other units.
- ◆ Assessment instruments that allow greater personalisation and choice for candidates to increase relevance and engage them with the assessment process.
- ◆ Good use of the drafting process for writing assessments.
- ◆ Relaxed and confident speakers on audio and video recordings show that, in preparation for recording speaking assessments, candidates have had the opportunity to record their conversations or presentations throughout the course.
- ◆ Good use of SCQF levels with candidates, at an early stage in the development of their English language skills, to clarify progression routes.

## **Specific areas for development**

The following areas for development were reported during session 2018–19:

- ◆ Assessors should agree how research sources are acknowledged for the Living in Scotland units and support candidates to adopt a consistent approach.
- ◆ Assessors should ensure that all candidates have sufficient practice being recorded before they complete their speaking assessments.
- ◆ Assessors should be supported by a TESOL-qualified and experienced internal verifier.
- ◆ All assessment tasks should have a heading that indicates the unit or units being assessed.