

# Higher ESOL

## Subject-specific guidance on gathering key evidence in session 2020–21



Please read this guidance alongside [National Courses: guidance on gathering evidence and producing estimates](#) and the SQA Academy resource, [Quality assurance of estimates for National Courses](#).

### Gathering key evidence for Higher ESOL

This document and *National Courses: guidance on gathering evidence and producing estimates* will give you additional support and guidance to support your decision making for session 2020–21. Evidence should be gathered later in the course, as a realistic reflection of a candidate's attainment. It is important to note that it is not the **quantity** of evidence, but the **quality** of evidence, in relation to its predictive value, that will support you during this process.

The following types of key evidence are likely to provide a good predictive value and may be helpful to you, although there may be other types of key evidence you would like to use.

#### Types of key evidence

You can generate the most valid evidence for question paper components using assessment instruments which replicate SQA question papers. However, candidates do not need to produce evidence for question paper components on a single occasion, but it is important that assessment instruments are unseen.

You should gather evidence where candidates have had opportunities to apply the skills, knowledge and understanding they have learned from the course in unseen situations.

For the performance: speaking and listening, evidence generated by an assessment which is similar to that of the usual performance: speaking and listening will have a stronger predictive value than evidence generated by an assessment that is considerably different.

The relative weightings of marks which contribute to the Higher ESOL course assessment are given below. You should take these into account when reviewing candidates' evidence across the four contributing components.

#### Question paper components

It would be best to use internally assessed question papers towards the end of the academic year when all or the majority of the course has been delivered. These assessments could be devised using:

- ◆ 2021 Higher question papers
- ◆ centre-devised transcripts, with recordings and questions for listening
- ◆ centre-devised texts and questions for reading

- ◆ centre-devised tasks for writing
- ◆ assessments selected from a range of SQA past papers
- ◆ assessments selected from SQA past papers which have been amended

### **Component 1: Listening**

This component has a relative weighting of 20% of the overall course assessment.

Candidates listen to three recordings: one monologue and two interactions, and respond to questions. The recordings address the three contexts of everyday life, work and study. Each recording is played twice, and candidates respond to the questions following each recording.

This assessment task should give candidates the opportunity to demonstrate the following skills, knowledge and understanding:

- ◆ understanding detailed and complex language spoken in English
- ◆ identifying and showing understanding of the overall purpose, main points and aspects of detail
- ◆ identifying and showing understanding of opinions and/or attitudes

Marks are awarded according to the accuracy and relevance of responses.

Replicating the requirements of the listening question paper is likely to provide evidence with good predictive value to contribute to the provisional result for each candidate. However, candidates could produce evidence in response to three recordings on separate occasions.

Refer to the [Higher ESOL Course Specification](#), page 8.

### **Component 2: Reading**

This component has a relative weighting of 25% of the overall course assessment.

Candidates read three texts and respond to questions after each text. The texts address the three contexts of everyday life, work and study.

This assessment task should give candidates the opportunity to demonstrate the following skills, knowledge and understanding:

- ◆ understanding detailed and complex language written in English
- ◆ identifying and showing understanding of the overall purpose, main points and aspects of detail
- ◆ identifying how detailed vocabulary, language features and text structures are used to convey meaning
- ◆ identifying and showing understanding of opinions and/or attitudes

Marks are awarded according to the accuracy and relevance of responses.

Replicating the requirements of the reading question paper is likely to provide evidence with good predictive value to contribute to the provisional result for each candidate. However, candidates could produce evidence in response to three texts on separate occasions.

Refer to the [Higher ESOL Course Specification](#), page 9.

### **Component 3: Writing**

This component has a relative weighting of 25% of the overall course assessment.

Candidates produce two written texts in response to tasks which have some limited support for guidance. They respond to one task from the context of everyday life and one from the contexts of either work or study. During the assessment candidates should not have access to texts and/or notes.

This assessment task should give candidates the opportunity to demonstrate the following skills, knowledge and understanding:

- ◆ producing written English using detailed and complex language to convey meaning
- ◆ using structures and vocabulary, as appropriate to task
- ◆ using appropriate features of grammar, spelling and punctuation
- ◆ using conventions of style and layout appropriate to task

Marks are awarded for content and organisation and using appropriate structures, vocabulary and language features to convey meaning.

Replicating the requirements of the writing question paper is likely to provide evidence with good predictive value to contribute to the provisional result for each candidate. However, candidates could produce evidence in response to two tasks on separate occasions.

Refer to the [Higher ESOL Course Specification](#), page 10, and the marking instructions.

### **Coursework component**

The assessment brief (the topic and supporting bullet points) for the ESOL Performance: Speaking and Listening could be produced using centre-devised, or SQA produced (SCQF level 6), assessment briefs for speaking and listening.

### **Component 4: Performance: Speaking and Listening**

This performance has a total mark allocation of 30 marks: 25 marks are available for speaking and 5 marks for listening. No scaling is applied to this component. This is 30% of the overall marks for the course assessment.

As with the question paper components, evidence generated by an assessment which is similar to the course assessment will have a stronger predictive value than evidence generated by an assessment that is considerably different.

The speaking and listening assessment must be an audio or audio-visual recorded discussion of 8–10 minutes with two participants or a little longer if with three participants. The discussion will be on a topic chosen from one of the contexts of everyday life, work or study.

Candidates should be accustomed to conversations and discussions being recorded in either face-to-face (following current health guidelines) or online learning environments, and receiving feedback at an early stage in the course.

The marking instructions for the performance: speaking and listening, in the ESOL course specification, should be used to allocate a mark for speaking and a separate mark for listening. The key to deciding whether you have sufficient evidence, is whether you can apply the detailed marking instructions to the discussion and arrive at a holistic mark for speaking and a holistic mark for listening to contribute to the provisional result for each candidate.

Refer to the Higher ESOL Course Specification, pages 11–19, and to the course assessment task in the 'Coursework' tab on the [Higher ESOL web page](#).

Depending on how you assess your candidates, either face-to-face (following current health guidelines) or online, the discussion could be slightly shorter or longer. If working online with candidates, a wide variety of learning platforms and apps have a facility to record conversations and discussions. Centres may stipulate which of these you can use, and you must make sure to get permission from each candidate to record them.

Assessment briefs can come from various sources, for example:

- ◆ SCQF level 6 unit assessment support pack tasks  
You can use or adapt assessment briefs from the speaking tasks in these packs. Unit assessment support pack tasks used for assessment cannot be sent to candidates electronically or on paper. You can use these with candidates in the usual secure way, in face-to-face learning environments (following current health guidelines) and online if your centre uses a digital platform that has a secure system.
- ◆ Centre-devised assessment briefs  
If devising an assessment brief, you must ensure you have an appropriate level of challenge for candidates to demonstrate their speaking and listening skills to the best of their ability.

### **Naturally occurring evidence**

You can consider using naturally occurring evidence when assessing face-to-face or online. As candidates use speaking and listening skills during the course, when you are planning learning there may be activities or tasks that provide opportunities for candidates to produce recorded evidence for speaking and listening.

## **Using additional assessment resources for session 2020–21: key information**

It is important that you use valid and reliable assessment when gathering evidence in session 2020–21.

In Higher ESOL, SQA will provide question papers for session 2020–21. Please note that the marking instructions have not been standardised based on candidate responses. You may therefore need to agree within your centre how to consistently mark an item if a candidate response is not covered by the marking instructions.

The Higher ESOL question papers will only be available on SQA's secure website — you must treat these confidentially, in the same way as other live assessment materials.

You have the option to use the question papers as internal assessments for gathering candidate evidence. Question papers can be split to support assessments you carry out during class time.

If you use a question paper in part or in its entirety, you should remind candidates that they must not discuss the content of the paper with anyone, including friends, family or on social media.

## **Understanding the national standard**

To produce assessments which are valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair, or to assess candidate evidence reliably and consistently, it is essential to have a clear understanding of national standards for Higher ESOL.

You should ensure that you have a good understanding of the level of texts and questions for listening and reading, and the marking instructions for writing and speaking and listening.

It is also essential for you to make use of the Understanding Standards materials available on [SQA Understanding Standards website](#) and on SQA's secure website, as well as using past and specimen question papers. The SQA Understanding Standards website includes exemplars of question paper writing, with commentaries to explain the marks awarded. SQA's secure site, under the 'Understanding Standards' tab, has exemplars of the ESOL Performance: Speaking and Listening, with commentaries to explain the marks awarded.

Past and specimen Higher question papers, along with their marking instructions, are available on the [Higher ESOL web page](#).

There is a Higher ESOL Understanding Standards webinar on Wednesday 20 January 2021. You can book your place on this from [SQA Understanding Standards web page](#). Following this, we will publish a recording of the webinar on SQA's [CPD Webinars and Materials web page](#).

It is good practice to build in collaborative approaches to marking and the moderation of marking, where possible. This can be done at a local level, but ideally on a wider scale. SQA Understanding Standards materials provide a useful starting point for this activity.

## Summary

A holistic review of a candidate's performance in Higher ESOL should have as its focus four key pieces of evidence:

- ◆ Listening: an assessment with responses to questions on three recordings
- ◆ Reading: an assessment with responses to questions on three texts
- ◆ Writing: an assessment with one response to an everyday life task **and** one response to a work **or** study task
- ◆ Speaking and listening: an audio or audio-video recording of a discussion

Supplementary, naturally occurring evidence can also contribute to a holistic judgement.