ESOL

Guidance on Higher ESOL Performance: Speaking and Listening for session 2020–21

October 2020

Following the public consultation on proposed modifications to National 5 to Advanced Higher course assessment for session 2020–21, no modifications were proposed for the Higher ESOL course assessment. This was a consequence of the need to maintain validity, credibility and standards of the courses, as well as their UK NARIC approval status and the benchmarked criteria of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) that they correspond to.

Due to the current situation with the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, we recognise that the learning, teaching and assessment environments are different for many. Teachers and lecturers are adapting to the current situation and may be working with candidates face-to-face, online or taking a blended approach.

To support teachers, lecturers and candidates this session, this document provides guidance on the volume and type of evidence required and approaches to gathering the evidence for the performance: speaking and listening. The evidence, a recorded discussion, can be produced in both face-to-face and remote learning situations.

The integrated nature of content across the four components, in the three contexts of everyday life, work and study, was a factor when deciding not to modify the course assessment. In the listening and reading question papers the three contexts of everyday life, work and study are addressed. In the writing question paper and in the performance: speaking and listening, candidates have a choice of contexts.

For the performance, teachers, lecturers and candidates cover all three contexts in learning and teaching. It may be helpful, during formative assessment, to focus on the development of the language and speaking and listening skills for one of the contexts at an early stage in the course. This provides opportunities for candidates to develop and receive feedback on their use of language in the context selected for their performance.

Higher ESOL Performance: Speaking and Listening

Volume of evidence

As stated in the course specification, there should be 15 minutes of preparation time and then a recorded discussion of 8–10 minutes with two participants. If there are three participants, the duration of the interaction should be slightly longer to ensure that each candidate can fully demonstrate their speaking and listening skills.

The duration of the discussion could vary slightly depending if the assessment is face-to-face (following current health guidelines) or online. The key to deciding whether you have sufficient evidence is whether you can apply the detailed marking instructions for each aspect of the discussion and arrive at a holistic mark for each candidate.

Type of evidence

As stated in the course specification, the evidence required for each candidate is an assessment brief, an audio or audio-visual recording, and a candidate assessment record with a separate mark for speaking and listening. Please note the following:

♦ Further comment on the candidate assessment record is only necessary to clarify the basis on which the marks were awarded.
♦ Centres should have evidence of internal verification.
♦ Audio or audio-visual recordings can be of a face-to-face interaction or a recording of a remote interaction.

Approach to gathering evidence

Teachers and lecturers can gather recorded evidence of a discussion from face-to-face or online assessments.

The performance: speaking and listening assessment already takes place online in some centres. This took place more extensively last session when many centres were gathering evidence from candidates online.

Centres use a variety of online learning platforms and/or apps to do the assessment, many involving candidates using mobile technology. Individual centres will provide details of the online learning platforms and apps that teachers, lecturers and candidates should use.

When gathering evidence for assessment online, teachers and lecturers should consider using online learning platforms and/or apps that are able to record candidates. Teacher and lecturers will need to consider how to provide training for candidates in the use of mobile technology and must get each candidate's permission to record the assessment.

Naturally occurring evidence

Teachers and lecturers may provide learning and teaching to candidates face-to-face (following current health guidelines), online, or using a blended approach. In all these situations, candidates will be practicing speaking and listening. When planning, teachers and lecturers should be aware of activities or tasks that provide opportunities for candidates to produce naturally occurring evidence for the performance.

The discussion can be with an individual candidate or for two or three candidates to do together. It could be a practice task for the performance that the teacher or lecturer produces, or an appropriate task from a coursebook or webpage. The assessment brief would be the task that teachers and lecturers give candidates to do.

When listening to the recording of a discussion, the teacher or lecturer may decide that a candidate or candidates have clearly demonstrated their speaking and listening skills to the best of their ability and apply the general and detailed marking instructions to award a mark for speaking and a mark for listening.

Setting up an assessment for the performance

There may be challenges in planning and arranging the performance this session whether in a face-to-face or online assessment situation. If not using naturally occurring evidence, the advice would be to conduct it with another candidate, or another suitable interlocutor, for example a learner who is not being assessed or the teacher or lecturer.

Alternatively, this can be done in a group of no more than three. This allows flexibility to suit the situation. If the discussion is with another candidate or learner, the teacher or lecturer must ensure that they are of a similar ability so as not to disadvantage any candidate. The interlocutor must ensure that it is a balanced discussion which provides the candidate(s) with an equal opportunity to initiate and control the interaction.

When using unit assessment support packs for practice or assessment, these cannot be sent to candidates electronically or on paper. They can only be used on a secure system.

When a centre does not have a secure system to share assessment briefs from SQA's secure site with candidates, teachers and lecturers should produce the assessment brief for the performance, or use an appropriate task from a coursebook or webpage.

Whether this is a face-to-face or online interaction, teachers and lecturers should still follow the guidance in the course specification and course assessment task.

The approach to marking the performance remains the same. Teachers and lecturers should apply the general and detailed marking instructions and complete the candidate assessment record, with a separate mark for speaking and for listening.