

# Quality Assurance Handbook for English Speakers of Other Languages

2018-2019

**ESOL Skills for Life (QCF)**

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## What is standards verification for ESOL?

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Standards verification is the way that we ensure that all centres are:

- operating effectively
- implementing assessments securely
- assessing to national standards correctly.

## Which qualifications does it cover?

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English for Speakers of Other Languages (QCF) at Entry Levels and Levels 1-2

## What other quality assurance guidance is available?

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**Instructions for Conducting Controlled Assessments for ESOL (QCF)** gives you specific information on the way in which assessments should be managed to include:

- downloading and storing of assessments
- assessment conditions
- invigilation and record keeping.

Standards verification will include checking that assessments have been delivered in line with the Instructions for Conducting Controlled Assessments for ESOL (QCF), which can be found here, under 'Quality Assurance Guidance': <http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-esol.html>

Your Examinations Officer should check the UK Information Manual to find out the arrangements for registering learners and claiming certification. <http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/centre-administration/information-manual.html>

## Changes to Citizenship Applications

In April 2015 the Home Office announced some changes to ESOL, confirming that it will no longer be accepted for citizenship purposes after November 2015. Pearson ESOL qualifications awarded **until** November 2015 will be accepted for citizenship applications. **For further information:** <https://www.gov.uk/english-language/approved-english-language-qualifications>

**For approved English Language tests:** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-applying-for-uk-visa-approved-english-language-tests>

### Learner assessments

Centres must now keep all learner assessments (including question papers) for **15 days** after their certificate has been received and checked.

Records of assessment and internal verification of assessments should be maintained for a minimum of three years.

## ESOL Skills for Life (QCF)

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ESOL qualifications are suitable for learners with a diverse range of needs, including those who:

- are learning English for the first time
- have previously studied English and want to measure their abilities against a commonly recognised framework
- need evidence of their competence or proof of language efficiency.

### Awards and Certificates

ESOL QCF qualifications offer a certificate-sized qualification at each level (entry level 1, 2, 3 and level 1 and 2) comprising of 3 units:

- Writing
- Reading
- Speaking and Listening

Each of the units can also be taken as a stand-alone award-sized qualification in its own right. This means that learners who achieve a writing, reading or speaking and listening unit can claim certification for an award qualification.

### Spiky Profile

Spiky profiles, i.e. using units achieved at various levels to claim a certificate at the lowest achieved level, are no longer permitted for the ESOL Skills for Life (QCF) qualifications. For the full ESOL Skills for Life (QCF) Certificate qualifications, learners must be registered on the Certificate at the level they wish to achieve. They must achieve all three units at the same level to achieve the full Certificate qualification.

### Sample Assessment Materials

When a live set of assessments expire they are uploaded as practice papers. They can be found here: <https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-esol.html>

### Live Assessments

Live assessments can be downloaded from the secure site (please, see link below) by the Examinations Officer using an Edexcel Online username and password.

<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/secure-tests/esol-qcf-tests.html>

Set 15 assessments will be available to **August 2019**

Set 16 assessments will be available in **September 2018**

Set 17 assessments will be available in **October 2018**

Set 18 assessments will be available in **November 2018**

### Quality Assurance Model

The quality assurance model remains the same. Each centre will have a Standards Verifier allocated and receive at least one standards verification visit during the academic year.

## New Centre

Once a centre gains approval to deliver ESOL. At the first standards verification visit your Standards Verifier will ask to look at your Pearson Approval Letter in order to provide the appropriate level of support during the visit and throughout the year.

## Standards Verification visits

Many centres deliver ESOL throughout the year to meet the needs of learners. While fully supporting this, we need to ensure that we carry out quality assurance at an appropriate point in the cycle. You should register learners within one month after they commence the programme. You need to ensure that you can conduct initial assessment to determine needs within this period so that registrations are not delayed.

After registering your learners, your centre will be allocated a Standards Verifier. Once you have undertaken assessments, you should contact your allocated Standards Verifier and agree a visit date.

For most centres, there will be one visit during the academic year. However, we recognise that different centres have varying needs to ensure that quality is maintained within their programmes. Therefore, if applicable, you may receive additional visits during the year.

At the visit, your Standards Verifier will review your needs with you and advise on how many visits will be required.

## Registration Numbers on Assessments

Please ensure that you use Pearson registration numbers on all live assessments. During the Standards Verification Visit the Standards Verifiers must see the Pearson registration number on the assessments otherwise they will not be able to verify or sample the learner. Centre reference numbers or student numbers should not be used.

## Limited Release

Following your Standards Verification Visit, the Standards Verifier will award your centre with a full release, block or limited release. If you are awarded a Limited Release this means that you can only claim certification for the learners that have been sampled at the visit and appear on the Standards Verifiers Report Form. If you require any further guidance please discuss this with your Standards Verifier at the visit. In order to achieve a full release you will need to arrange another Standards Verification Visit.

## Learner Identity

Please remember that you need to be confident of the identity of your learners at recruitment and throughout their time at your centre. You must retain a photographic record on file of each learner and a copy of relevant information to confirm identity. The photographic evidence must be either a copy of their passport or identity card. The invigilator must check the identity of the learner when completing the attendance register. The Standards Verifier may also request to see learner records during the standards verification visit, therefore, you need to ensure that the records can be made available if required.

As part of the assessment process you are required to video learners' Speaking and Listening assessments for purposes of identification.

## Evidence for Speaking and Listening

The assessment of Speaking and Listening unit must be either audio or video recorded according to the profile of the learner e.g. if the learner younger than 18 they must be audio recorded and do not need to be video recorded. For exemptions from this rule, please refer to the information further down.

The recording of Speaking and Listening assessment must be clear and easy to verify. Therefore, the recordings you produce must clearly show the learner and the way in which the assessment is conducted. Section 9 of the **Instructions for Conducting Controlled Assessments for ESOL (QCF)** gives you specific information on how to take and store video evidence.

## Video recording exemptions

If there are specific reasons why a learner should not be identified within a video recording, please contact the Quality Standards team at [vocationalqualitystandards@pearson.com](mailto:vocationalqualitystandards@pearson.com)

For further information please refer to the **Instructions for Conducting Controlled Assessments for ESOL (QCF)** document, under 'Quality Assurance Guidance'

<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-esol.html>

## Policy context

- JCQ Guidance on Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration  
<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration>
- Enquiry and Appeals Policy for Vocational Qualifications  
<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/understanding-our-qualifications/policies-for-centres-learners-and-employees.html>

We are making this explicit to help you find appropriate channels for resolving problems with us more easily.

## Guidance on the conduct of assessments

Please familiarise yourself with this document and the **Instructions for Conducting Controlled Assessments for ESOL (QCF)** carefully in order to ensure that you are fully aware of all the specific requirements related to conducting assessments and making reasonable adjustments for learners.

<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-esol.html>

If you are uncertain as to the requirements please contact [fsassessment@pearson.com](mailto:fsassessment@pearson.com)

# Roles and responsibilities

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## Pearson

### Standards Verifier

The key tasks of the Standards Verifier are to:

- verify marking practice and procedures, including assessment delivery to ensure that national standards are applied consistently
- take action to deal with identified problems within centres
- provide information, advice and support to centres
- maintain accurate records and provide feedback to Pearson
- promote and improve the quality of qualification assessment within centres.

## Centres

### Quality Nominee

We will send the information on allocations and any specific quality assurance-related communications to the centre Quality Nominee. The Quality Nominee has no formal responsibility for ESOL, but may wish to support internal communication and preparation for standards verification where appropriate.

### Examination Officer

We will send the Examination Officer details about the appointment of a Standards Verifier. We ask Examinations Officers to promptly pass information on to the Programme Manager so that effective arrangements are made for standards verification.

### Programme Manager

The Programme Manager is responsible for:

- the management of the qualification
- ensuring that all tutors/assessors are familiar with the appropriate guidance documentation and assessment information
- liaising with the Standards Verifier
- preparing all relevant assessments and, where a visit takes place, arranging for a suitable room for the Standards Verifier to use
- arranging the feedback to the teaching team following standards verification
- providing evidence that explains the quality assurance processes for safe certification and the internal verification processes that are in place.

The Programme Manager must ensure that all tutors, assessors and those undertaking internal verification have access to this handbook, quality standards policies, centre procedures and other guides and policy documents issued by Pearson.

## Internal Verifiers

Internal Verifiers check the validity and consistency of assessment decisions across assessors within the centre. Normally there will be more than one Internal Verifier as no person is allowed verify their own assessment decisions. The main Internal Verifier may also be the Programme Manager. If not, the Internal Verifier must work closely with the Programme Manager to ensure that the assessment and testing processes are effective. The Internal Verifier must have a good understanding and experience of ESOL assessments.

If there is a large programme team then the centre may wish to designate one person as a Lead Internal Verifier to take responsibility for sampling verifier decisions, agreeing verification schedules and maintaining central records.

Internal Verifiers are responsible for:

- ensuring that assessments consistently meet national standards (Internal Verifiers must be competent in the assessment of the qualification)
- establishing procedures to develop a common interpretation of the assessment requirements between assessors, i.e. internal standardisation
- regularly sampling assessment decisions made by all assessors and on all assessments in order to monitor and ensure consistency in the interpretation and application of standards
- maintaining up-to-date records of internal verification and sampling activity and ensuring that these are available for standards verification
- facilitating appropriate staff development and training for assessors.

## Assessors

Assessors are responsible for:

- identifying when learners are ready to be assessed and liaising with the Programme Manager to schedule the assessments
- ensuring that appropriate invigilation arrangements are made
- implementing assessments following the **Instructions for Conducting Controlled Assessments for ESOL (QCF)**
- ensuring that the correct mark schemes are used and applying them fairly and consistently
- maintaining accurate and verifiable learner assessment records
- ensuring the security of assessment materials at all stages.

## Key dates and actions

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Time Period	Activity
September to December	Recruit and induct learners making appropriate records
	Update contact details on Edexcel Online
	Plan teaching, assessment and verification. Timetable team meetings, assessor development and internal standardisation activity
	Register learners and check that any learners who have started programmes within the last month are registered.
	Learners that are ready to take assessments can do so from any of the live sets that are available.
December to April	Programme Manager to liaise with Examinations Officer to ensure that any contact from the Standards Verifier is passed through.
January to July	Programme Manager to ensure that arrangements for a Standards Verifier visit are in place
	Additional visits will commence for centres should there be an agreed need for additional sampling and review.
	<b>Note:</b> Should learners require their results in August 2019, their certificate claims should be submitted by <b>3 July 2019</b> .

# Centre implementation and administration of ESOL programmes

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## Centre and qualification approval

You must have centre and qualification approval from Pearson in order to deliver ESOL and in order to gain access to the assessments. If you do not already have approval, please refer to the website:

<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/centre-administration/qualification-approval.html#tab-Vocational>

As part of your approval you agree to:

- register all new learners with Pearson when they join the programme
- ensure all learners are assessed fairly and accurately in line with our requirements
- ensure all certification claims are valid and correct
- implement quality policies and procedures related to assessment and certification.

You must inform Pearson of any changes to your centre structure. Where your centre operates from multiple sites, or is the member of a Pearson collaborative partnership or consortium, this will affect your needs in terms of standards verification.

If you do use several sites, the Programme Manager is responsible for ensuring that the facilities at each site are appropriate and that there are appropriate resources and security arrangements. Assessment must be standardised and verified across sites.

## Learner recruitment

You need to ensure that there are valid approaches to recruiting learners with integrity onto ESOL programmes. You should make use of relevant initial assessment to measure the levels of prior attainment and aptitude of learners so they are registered on an appropriate programme and given appropriate support to reach the right level of achievement.

## Learner registration and administration

We need to have complete and accurate details so that we can contact you. Please help us by ensuring that you check and update your information. You can do this easily using Edexcel Online or contact our Examinations Officers Support team: [examsofficers@pearson.com](mailto:examsofficers@pearson.com)

## Conduct of assessments

ESOL is conducted through the use of assessments set by Pearson. These must be accessed, stored and used in line with the requirements published in the **Instructions for Conducting Controlled Assessments for ESOL (QCF)**

<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-esol.html>

The current valid sets of assessments are available via a secure area of the website. Please note that only designated Examinations Officers should have access to the live assessments.

If you are experiencing problems downloading the assessments from the secure website the Exams Officer should contact: [fsassessment@pearson.com](mailto:fsassessment@pearson.com) with the following details:

- Centre number and name
- Exams Officers full name and email address
- What papers you require (including set, level and unit)
- Reason for request

- When the assessment is scheduled.

Once details have been checked and the request authorised, the FS Assessment Team will arrange for the Question Paper Distribution Team to send the requested secure materials to your centre.

**Please note**, this is a contingency arrangement rather than regular practice and should be used as a last resort.

In order to meet our requirements for secure conduct of assessment, you must have your own centre policies and procedures related to:

- administration of assessment, including security and invigilation
- assessment malpractice
- reasonable adjustments for learners with disabilities. The key requirements are that:
- rooms used for assessments are set up appropriately
- there is a safe and robust process for downloading assessments
- there are secure storage facilities for assessments that have been printed out
- learners are correctly registered with Pearson prior to taking an assessment
- there is a process for accurately recording learner attendance during assessments
- there is a compliant invigilation procedure
- there is a log for unusual incidents that may occur during assessments
- there are arrangements for the implementation of actions related to malpractice during an assessment as necessary
- the specific requirements of learners with disabilities are dealt with appropriately.

The Programme Manager must ensure that all assessors are provided with:

- copies of the assessors instructions four days prior to the assessment
- copies of test papers and mark schemes two days prior to the assessment
- the identified resources/equipment/facilities, as specified on the test papers
- a copy of the **Instructions for Conducting Controlled Assessments for ESOL (QCF)**
- access to appropriate training and support.

## Assessment and verification

There are three strands to assessment and verification:

1. Standardising marking
2. Sampling assessor marking
3. Recording assessment activity.

### Standardising marking

Standardisation must take place when there is more than one assessor in a centre marking the same assessment. After the assessment has been taken and before any individual marking has taken place, the assessors involved should trial mark a sample of scripts. Any discrepancies between scripts should be discussed and agreement reached on how the mark scheme should be applied. Standards Verifier may want to view evidence of standardisation therefore centres must maintain records of this activity.

You may retain scripts securely for purposes of standardising new assessors being inducted into a team where standardisation has already taken place. Once agreement has been reached, the assessors then mark individually the learner work they are responsible for.

## Sampling assessor marking

The Internal Verifier should sample across assessors and levels of assessment to ensure that the assessor is continuing to apply the correct standards agreed during internal standardisation. If the assessor is not marking consistently, adjustment of marks will be necessary. This should be completed promptly.

Internal verification should be completed before learners are notified of their marks so the Internal Verifier must arrange to sample each Assessor as soon as possible after assessment decisions are made and identify clearly any remedial action required.

The Internal Verifier should provide effective feedback to assessors and arrange appropriate development as necessary. Rigorous Internal Verifiers will give actions on any improvements that can be made to the marking process.

There is no single correct level of verification. However, the process needs to take into account :

- the experience of the assessor
- the size of the group of learners
- the range of marks being awarded
- any issues identified in previous samples
- whether the assessment s being used are new to the assessor.

We recommend that a minimum of two learners per unit per level are sampled for each assessor.

## Recording the delivery and marking of assessments

You must maintain accurate records of assessments undertaken, marks awarded and the verification process followed to show that the correct procedures are adhered to. This is necessary to:

- ensure that marking of all assessors meets the national standards
- identify problems or areas where assessors require advice/development
- ensure that learners are aware of, and satisfied with, the marking process.

Internal Verifiers should maintain records of sampling assessors and evaluating all aspects of their performance when conducting marking and providing feedback.

Records should also cover the administration to include the correct storage, transit and invigilation of assessments.

## Achieving best practice in assessment

Internal verification and quality assurance can be undertaken in a number of ways, but the following are examples of good practice:

- having a recognised team across the centre who meet regularly to ensure standardisation of procedures
- standardisation meetings are seen as pivotal to staff development
- there are quality assurance processes to make safe certification and an internal verification policy which promotes a rigorous commitment to quality improvement
- internal verification processes are agreed and published so that they are clearly understood by all members of the delivery team
- all assessors are involved in or, at least, understand the internal verification role
- the Programme Manager effectively manages the process and provides support
- there is recognition of the time required for effective assessment and verification.

# Quality assurance and standards verification

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## Allocation of a Standards Verifier

A Standards Verifier is allocated to each centre for the period of an academic year. An allocation will be made 4-6 weeks after registration. For programmes starting in September centres should be contacted by the Standards Verifier by November.

If you need standards verification urgently or you have not heard from your Standards Verifier two months after making registrations, you should contact our Vocational Deployment team at:  
[VQDeployment@pearson.com](mailto:VQDeployment@pearson.com).

The Standards Verifier will visit and report on the centre during the year and will also be able to provide advice on using assessment and quality assurance processes.

## When a visit takes place

The allocated Standards Verifier will make at least one visit to the centre during the year. The date of the visit should be agreed between the centre and the Standards Verifier. It should take place when a range of levels and units are available to be sampled.

You should plan for standards verification as part of your overall planning, considering the date of registration and the dates on which assessments are completed. Where possible, a visit should be coordinated with an opportunity to see a speaking and listening assessment being delivered.

## What the visit covers

There are two key purposes to the visit:

- to check that national standards are being correctly applied in the marking and internal verification of assessments
- to check that the administration of assessment and associated record keeping demonstrate that there is effective security and assessment procedures.

The Standards Verifier will:

- agree a schedule for the verification with the centre to allow key aspects to be covered
- review the accuracy of internal verification reports and records, invigilation records and assessment administration generally
- validate assessment judgements through sampling learners' assessments
- view assessment delivery where possible
- review the quality of internal verification including the level of sampling, timing and quality of feedback to assessors
- inform the Programme Manager or Internal Verifier promptly of any areas of weakness and agree an action plan for improvement
- provide positive feedback and encouragement when good practice is identified
- check that the internal quality assurance processes are sufficiently robust to ensure that future claims for certificates will be valid and that problems will be identified quickly and resolved
- review the centre's internal policies and processes for meeting the conditions in the **Instructions for Conducting Controlled Assessments for ESOL (QCF)** document
- recommend a release or block to certification.

## Schedule for the visit

Before each visit, the Standards Verifier should agree a schedule for the visit with the Programme Manager, including:

- a visit date to coincide with a speaking & listening assessment if possible
- levels and units to be sampled and the evidence of learner work expected
- assessment records to be made available on the day including evidence of internal verification
- quality assurance policies to be reviewed
- information on learner recruitment, induction and tracking
- review of testing facilities and assessment delivery
- time to feedback to the Programme Manager/Internal Verifier.

The timetable should allow for both discussions with key assessment/internal verification team members, review of facilities and sampling of marked assessments. For this, the Standards Verifier will require a quiet room. The specific requirements for sampling are detailed in the Sampling chapter if this document.

Normally, the Standards Verifier will start by looking at quality assurance records. If these are seen to be rigorous and robust, the Standards Verifier can have confidence in the assessment process and the decisions made. The Standards Verifier will want to be assured that all Internal Verifiers understand quality assurance policies and are knowledgeable about the standards, learners and their own role in quality assurance.

The Standards Verifier will also meet with the assessment and verification team when possible to discuss and advise on assessment issues and practices. A crucial part of the Standards Verifiers' role is to advise and support the centre in relation to assessment and quality assurance issues.

The findings of the visit will be discussed with the Programme Manager or equivalent at the end of the visit. Sufficient time should be allowed for this by both the Programme Manager and Standards Verifier. Actions for improvement will be identified through discussion before the Standards Verifier leaves the centre. It is important that any actions and target dates agreed are clear and realistic. The Programme Manager should ensure that they understand any required action.

In some cases, it may not be practical for the Standards Verifier to complete the report fully whilst in your centre, but the main action points will be agreed during the visit. If the Standards Verifier has any concerns about standards or about validity of assessment administration in the centre, you may be advised that the Standards Verifier will consult with their Team Leader in order to confirm the visit outcome.

## Determining additional visits

As part of the visit, the Standards Verifier will review the centres level of need in relation to quality assurance. The key issues that the Standards Verifier will consider are:

- number of learners
- number of assessors
- number of sites
- ESOL experience.

The need to have effective quality assurance increases with the number of learners, assessors and sites. Inexperienced centres may be unfamiliar with marking schemes, assessment procedures, and administration. The Standards Verifier will want to discuss what your centre needs are and how effectively you are managing quality.

Therefore:

- centres that expect to have 1000 or more learners in 2018-19 will normally have at least two visits per year
- centres with fewer learners, but other specific needs, may also receive additional visits.

The Standards Verifier will advise you at the end of the visit when the next recommended visit should take place. Further visits will normally cover a similar range of activities to initial visits.

Additional visits may focus on:

- observation of assessments being delivered, if this was not possible during the initial visit
- levels and/or units that had not been sampled at the initial visit
- the most commonly taken assessments
- any weaknesses or action points identified at the initial visit.

In addition to visits by Standards Verifiers, a Team Leader or the Senior Standards Verifier may attend centres to:

- ensure that assessments are secure
- check that any action plans are being implemented by centres.

## Sampling

Sampling the learner assessment is central to the verification process as it is critical to enable a decision to be made on access to certification. The Standards Verifier will discuss the sampling requirements with you, but will expect to be able to make a final choice of scripts to be sampled and to access a wide enough range to draw a conclusion. Ideally the visit should take place when the range of units that you intend to use during the year is available for sampling.

You must make assessments that have been assessed available for sampling.

The Standards Verifier will sample scripts per unit and level which is linked to the number of registrations:

Number of learners registered	Number of scripts to be sampled per unit: Reading, Writing and Speaking & Listening	Total number of scripts if centre is delivering Entry Level and Level 1 or 2
<b>Entry Level (1-3)</b> 1 – 100	8 scripts per unit for Entry Level 1-3	<b>16 Scripts</b>
<b>Level 1 &amp; 2</b> 1 – 100	8 scripts per unit for Level 1 and Level 2	
<b>Entry Level (1-3)</b> 101+	15 scripts per unit for Entry Level 1-3	<b>30 Scripts</b>
<b>Level 1 &amp; 2</b> 101+	15 scripts per unit for Level 1 and Level 2	

The Standards Verifier will select their sample based on:

- the range of levels you deliver
- the number of assessors and sites
- assessment decisions that have been sampled by the Internal Verifier and those that have not (the Standards Verifier will select enough scripts with internal verification to enable judgment on the quality of internal verification).

It is the responsibility of the Programme Manager to ensure that the sample is representative and accurate.

The sampling will show whether you are assessing accurately to national standards and the Standards Verifier will specify this in their report.

If a second (or third) visit is required then the Standards Verifier will recheck units/levels proportionate to the number of assessments taken since the previous visit.

## Reporting

The Standards Verifier will complete the Standards Verifier Report within 10 working days of the visit. You can expect that the outcomes and actions to concur with the final discussion at the end of the visit.

After standards verification has taken place, if you have been given a release to certification, you will be able to continue to assess and verify the assessments for your learners. If a further visit takes place and standards are not maintained, the release can be withdrawn and certification blocked.

In the case that a Standards Verifier believes that you should not have certification released because standards are not being maintained, or assessment practices are not fully secure and effective, a Team Leader or the Senior Standards Verifier will be asked to confirm a block to certification. An action plan will be put in place and a further verification visit will be required before certification can be released.

## ESOL sampling process map



