



Centre guide to Quality Assurance

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

2025 to 2026

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1. Using this handbook

This resource is designed to help you with your English for Speakers of Other Languages, ESOL Skills for Life (QCF), delivery. We advise that all Examinations Officers, Programme Managers, Lead Internal Verifiers, Assessors, and Internal Verifiers in centres offering ESOL familiarise themselves with the contents of this handbook.

The focus of this handbook is to help centres set up effectively and understand the requirements to deliver and assess the components of ESOL to meet national standards of quality assurance. This document provides the key information required for your centre to meet the quality assurance requirements for 2025-26, providing information on the internal and external verification procedures for centres.

Centres must conduct all ESOL examinations for Reading and Writing components in line with the information in the [ESOL Instructions for the Conduct of Controlled Assessments \(ICCA\)](#) document available from our website.

Your Examinations Officer should also access the [UK Information Manual](#) and the Instructions for the Conduct of Controlled Examinations. These documents are available on our website and contain information about entries and certification.

For all instances referring to a contact in this document, please submit the query to us using the [Pearson Support Portal](#).

2. Team Roles and Responsibilities

Centres are responsible for identifying staff members to hold the roles of Assessor, Internal Verifier and Lead Internal Verifier.

The Quality Nominee

The role of a Quality Nominee is to act as Pearson's single point of contact for all Quality Assurance matters. This is a mandatory role that is required under the Terms and Conditions of being a Pearson Approved Centre for BTEC Vocational, Functional Skills and Work-Based Learning provision.

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.

The 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 verification takes place, inviting the Standards Verifier to a meeting on a suitable platform, e.g. Zoom, Teams or Skype
- providing evidence that explains the quality assurance processes for safe certification and the internal verification processes that are in place
- arranging the feedback to the teaching team following standards verification.

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

- copies of the Assessor Guidance document 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.

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.

The 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.

The Assessor

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.

The Internal Verifiers

Internal Verifiers are responsible for reviewing the assessment decisions of the Assessors to check for accuracy, fairness, and consistency of applying the correct standards across the programme. Anyone involved in the delivery and assessment of the programme can be an Internal Verifier, but you cannot internally verify your own assessments.

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

3. Centre implementation and administration of ESOL programmes

Centre and qualification approval

You must have centre and qualification approval from Pearson to deliver ESOL and in order to gain access to the assessments. If you do not already have approval, please refer to the website: <https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/centre-administration/qualification-approval.html>

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.

Centre contact details

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 [contacting our Examinations Officers Support team](#).

4. Introduction to ESOL Skills for Life (QCF)

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 of four levels, Entry Level 1, 2, 3 and Level 1, comprising of three units:

- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking and Listening

Pearson provides assessments for all units at all levels. To achieve a certificate the learner must achieve each of these units at the same level.

Each of the units can also be taken as a stand-alone award-sized qualification, in its own right, from Entry Level 1 up to Level 2. This means that learners who achieve a Reading, Writing, or Speaking and Listening unit can claim certification for an award qualification.

Please note if a learner achieves an Award qualification for all three units at the same level, this can be considered equivalent to a full certificate. However, Pearson will not issue a separate full certificate.



Top tip: The full list of ESOL qualifications, and their Credit values, can be found in the [ESOL FAQs](#) section on our website.

Spiky Profiles

Spiky profiles, i.e. using units achieved at various levels to claim a certificate at the lowest achieved level, are not permitted for the ESOL Skills for Life (QCF) certificate 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.

However, learners with spiky profiles can be supported through the Award qualifications.

Learners can take each unit (Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening) separately at different levels. A learner can take, for example, Speaking and Listening, and Reading at Level 1 and Writing at Entry 3 as part of the same programme. This approach is popular with both centres and learners as the learners are motivated by achieving the individual qualifications, which are a clear description of their achievements.

Registrations

Registrations are made using your centre number on [Edexcel Online](#). Please follow the [Individual registrations](#) / [Bulk registrations](#) videos for guidance.

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. Registrations are therefore required to be entered on Edexcel Online within **one month** of the learner's enrolment onto the qualification at your centre.

There is no set date or assessment window for ESOL Assessments. Learners should be assessed when the Assessor believes they are ready and able to attain the criteria of the assessment.

You need to ensure that you can conduct initial assessments to determine needs within this period so that registrations are not delayed.

No assessment activity can take place until learners are registered onto the qualification.



Top tip: Both ESOL Certificates and ESOL Unit Awards **must** be registered for as a **Full Award** on Edexcel Online.

5. Conducting ESOL Controlled Assessments

Assessment of ESOL is conducted through the use of LIVE controlled assessments set by Pearson. These must be accessed, stored securely, and used in line with the requirements published in the [Instructions for Conducting Controlled Assessments for ESOL \(QCF\)](#).

When a live set of assessments expire, they are uploaded as practice papers. They can be found on the [Sample assessment material](#) section of our website.

Live Assessments

The current valid sets of assessments are available via a [secure area](#) of our website. Please note that only designated Examinations Officers should have access to the live assessments using an Edexcel Online username and password.

Set 37 assessments will be available from **September 2025 to August 2026**

Set 38 assessments will be available from **October 2025 to September 2026**

Set 39 assessments will be available from **November 2025 to October 2026**

Please note that there will only be 3 sets live at any one time for the academic year.

Live assessments must be printed from the secure site no earlier than two working days before the test is scheduled to take place. This ensures the centre is using the latest version of the assessment material. Live assessment materials must not be printed by the centre and stored securely for later use.

If you are experiencing problems downloading the assessments from the secure website, the Exams Officer should **contact us** via the [Pearson Support Portal](#).

Please be sure to include the following details:

- Centre number and name
- Exams Officer's full name and email address
- qualification subject and level
- what papers you require (including set, level, and unit)
- reason for request
- when the assessment is scheduled.

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

Pearson Registration Numbers on Assessments

Please ensure that you include the correct Pearson registration numbers as shown on Edexcel Online on all live assessments. Centre reference numbers or student numbers should not be used.

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 activity; 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 record candidates' Speaking and Listening assessments for purposes of identification. Candidates should introduce themselves to camera using their full name and Pearson Registration number. For lower levels, Assessors can read this information out. They could also provide candidates with a card to hold up showing their details.

Special educational needs and requirements

Learners with additional requirements in relation to their mode of learning or assessment can have their usual support unless this compromises the outcome of the assessment. Please see our [Access Arrangements](#) webpage for more information.

If you have any specific queries about access requirements, please contact us using the [Pearson Support Portal](#).

Further guidance on the conduct of Assessments

Please familiarise yourself with this document and the [Instructions for Conducting Controlled Assessments for ESOL \(QCF\)](#) carefully, to ensure that you are fully aware of all the specific requirements related to conducting assessments and making reasonable adjustments for learners. If you are uncertain as to the requirements, please contact us via the [Pearson Support Portal](#).

Assessment of Speaking, Listening and Communication

Learners must be provided with a suitably quiet, undisturbed location. The learners can be assessed in their normal environment. The completion of the assessment must be under controlled conditions. During the assessment, the learner must always be in the direct sight of the Assessor.

Assessment can also be undertaken remotely by using a suitable online meeting platform. Remote assessments should be recorded and normal rules on group size and assessment lengths apply. Please see the [Guidance document](#) on the website for more details.

To record the attainment of criteria, Assessors must complete an Learning Outcome and Unit Achievement Record for each learner, these can be found within the live assessment materials on the [secure area](#) of the website.

The completed Learning Outcome and Unit Achievement Record for each learner should be retained by the centre at the end of the controlled assessment for Standards Verification purposes and kept securely for **three years** after certification.

Advice for recording assessments

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

The recording of Speaking and Listening assessments 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. The Speaking and Listening section of the Instructions for Conducting Controlled Assessments for ESOL (QCF) gives you specific information on how to take and store video evidence.



Top Tip: Please save your video recordings in MP4, AVI or MOV formats to ensure that your Standards Verifier can open the files.

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 to request an exemption.

For further information please refer to the Instructions for Conducting Controlled Assessments for ESOL (QCF) document.

Policy context

As part of feedback received, we are making this explicit to help you find the appropriate channels for resolving any questions and issues you may have.

- [JCQ Guidance on Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments](#)
- [Enquiry and Appeals Policy](#) for Vocational Qualifications.

6. Internal Verification

There are three strands to assessment and verification:

1. recording assessment activity
2. standardising marking
3. sampling Assessor marking.

Recording the delivery and marking of assessments

You must maintain accurate records of assessments undertaken, marks awarded, and the internal 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.

Internal standardisation of marked assessments

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. The 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 individually mark the candidate 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.

Once Assessment marking has been completed, internal verification should take place. 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. Candidates should not be notified of their marks until standards verification has taken place and the programmes have been released.

The Internal Verifier should provide effective feedback to Assessors and arrange appropriate development as necessary. Internal Verifiers must give actions on any improvements that can be made to the marking process. The Standards Verifier may want to view evidence of the internal verification process; therefore, centres must maintain records of this activity.

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 assessments being used are new to the Assessor.

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

Achieving best practice in assessment

Internal verification and quality assurance can be undertaken in several 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 continuous staff development
- there are quality assurance processes in place to ensure a robust internal verification process that 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 verifier role
- the Programme Manager effectively manages the process and provides support
- there is recognition of the time required for effective assessment and internal verification.

7. The Standards Verification Process

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

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

As part of the quality assurance process, all centres will be required to undergo external verification of their internal assessment decisions. For the 2025/26 academic year, most Standards Verification activity will be completed remotely. Centres may be eligible for a face-to-face visit if they fulfil any of the exception criteria.

A Standards Verifier is allocated to each centre for the period of an academic year. For programmes starting in September, a Standards Verifier will be allocated to your centre between November and January. For programmes starting at other times during the academic year, an allocation will be made four to six weeks after learners are registered.

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 via the [Pearson Support Portal](#).

In order to complete the process, your Standards Verifier (SV) will review a pre-determined sample of learner work and supporting quality assurance documentation. To prepare for your SV visit, please see the centre visit checklist (Appendix B). A Standards Verifier will be allocated to your centre between November and January. **The deadline for sampling is 31 July 2026.**

Please note if there are extenuating circumstances that lead a centre to defer the SV activity, this can only be done ONCE. Further requests to defer, or failing to organise the Standards Verification activity when requested, will result in a block from certification.

Your 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.

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

When the Standards Verification Activity takes place

Once you have undertaken assessments, you should contact your allocated Standards Verifier and agree a date for standards verification to take place. It should take place when a range of levels and units are available to be sampled.

You should include the standards verification activity as part of your overall planning, considering the date of registration and the dates on which assessments are completed. Where possible, standards verification should be coordinated with an opportunity to see recordings of Speaking and Listening assessments. The SV and the centre need to communicate prior to the remote verification to arrange the best way of making recordings available to the SV.

For most centres, there will be one standards verification 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 verification during the year. During standards verification, your Standards Verifier will review your needs with you and advise on whether additional verification will be required.

Key documentation

In order to support effective remote verification, centres are asked to supply the Standards Verifier with key information in advance of the verification. The SV will send the centre two forms. These are the Centre Declaration Form (CDF) and the Sample Report Form (SRF). Both these forms should be completed by the Programme Manager as soon as possible in the academic year and returned to the SV.

The CDF provides the SV with much of the information that would have been collected during a visit to the centre. The centre should provide as much detail as possible in this form

relating to: admissions policy, delivery of qualifications, internal verification, resources and test security and administration.

The SRF lists all candidates that have been registered with Pearson. This form allows the SV to choose which papers to request for sampling.

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

What the Standards Verification Activity covers

There are two key purposes to the activity:

- 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 are 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 candidates' assessments
- view recordings of Speaking and Listening assessment delivery
- 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 ICCA for ESOL (QCF) document
- recommend a release of, or block to, certification.

Schedule for the verification activity

Before each standards verification activity, the Standards Verifier should agree a schedule with the Programme Manager, including:

- 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. The specific requirements for sampling are detailed in the Sampling section of this document below. However, your Standards Verifier reserves the right to request additional samples or increase the sample size at any time.

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 the quality assurance policies and are knowledgeable about the standards, candidates, and their own role in the quality assurance process. The Standards Verifier will also speak to the assessment and verification team, when possible, to discuss and advise on assessment issues and practices. A crucial part of the Standards Verifier's role is to advise and support the centre in relation to assessment and quality assurance issues.

Sampling

Sampling the completed candidate assessments 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 standards verification activity should take place when the range of units that you intend to use during the year is available for sampling.

You must make all completed assessments that have been assessed available for sampling. The number of scripts the Standards Verifier will sample per unit and level is linked to the number of candidates sitting each component.

This table outlines the minimum number of scripts to sample per component (Reading, Writing, Speaking & Listening) based on the programme level and the number of candidates sitting each component.

Programme Level	Number of candidates	Reading Scripts to be Sampled	Writing scripts to be sampled	Speaking & Listening scripts to be sampled
Entry Level (1 to 3)	1 to 100	6	6	6
Level 1 & 2	1 to 100	6	6	6
Entry Level (1 to 3)	101 or more	10	10	10
Level 1 & 2	101 or more	10	10	10

For centres teaching both Entry Levels 1 to 3 and Level 1 and 2, the minimum total sample required will be the number of Entry Level scripts required plus the number of Level 1 & 2 scripts required.

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 that have been internally verified 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. Your Standards Verifier reserves the right to request additional samples or increase the sample size at any time.

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) verification is required, then the Standards Verifier will recheck units/levels proportionate to the number of assessments taken since the previous verification.

SharePoint

SharePoint must be used to share documents for sampling as part of the Quality Assurance process. The portal is designed to make the exchange of work between centres and SVs simple, secure, and efficient, while ensuring candidate data privacy.

Each centre will have its own secure folder (requested by the SV). Centres can only access their own folder. When ready for external verification, documents should be uploaded directly to this folder for the SV to view or download.

Important:

- If you haven't received your SharePoint folder, please contact your SV.
- Assessment materials **must not** be emailed.

Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA)

Access to SharePoint requires MFA for security. You'll be prompted to set this up when your folder is shared with you. For step-by-step instructions, see [Accessing SharePoint Folders With Multi-Factor Authentication \(MFA\)](#). If you experience any issues, [please contact our Customer Services team](#).

Customer Service Number: 0345 630 8888

Determining additional verification

As part of the verification activity, 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 risk to 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 2025-26 will normally be reviewed at least twice per year
- centres with fewer learners, but other specific needs, may also be reviewed more than once.

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

Additional verification may focus on:

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

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

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

After your SV verification

The findings of the verification activity will be discussed with the Programme Manager or equivalent at the end of the verification. A specific time at the end of the day should be agreed on for this by both the Programme Manager and Standards Verifier. Actions for improvement will be identified through discussion before the end of the verification. 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.

If the verification activity reveals serious inaccuracies in assessment standards, marks submitted for learners will not be accepted and certificates will be withheld. The Standards Verifier will advise on appropriate actions and the timescale in which the agreed actions are to be taken to resolve this suspension.

The Standards Verifier will not complete the report fully on the day of the verification activity, but the main action points will be agreed during the verification. 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 verification outcome.

Please note: External Verification must take place before **31 July 2026**. The centre will not be able to claim certification for learners in this academic year if verification takes place after this date.

Standards Verification Outcomes

Following your Standards Verification Visit, the Standards Verifier will award your centre with a full release of certification, limited release, or block for each unit at each level sampled.

Outcome	Explanation	Future monitoring
Full release	<p>No further action is required, the centre will be released for certification, and you will be able to continue to assess and verify the assessments for your learners.</p> <p>If a further verification activity takes place and standards are not maintained, the release can be withdrawn, and certification blocked.</p>	<p>Future annual monitoring will usually be remote unless we have concerns about quality assurance standards.</p>
Full release with improvement points	<p>Minor follow-up action required, the centre will be released for certification, and you will be able to continue to assess and verify the assessments for your learners. If a further verification activity takes place and action points have not been addressed, the release can be withdrawn, and certification blocked.</p>	<p>Future annual monitoring will usually be remote unless we have concerns about quality assurance standards.</p>
Limited release (where the sample size does not meet minimum requirements for full release or there are action points that must be addressed to qualify for full release)	<p>Only candidates that have been sampled during the verification, have achieved a pass and appear on the Standards Verifier report form, will be released for certification. You will be able to continue to assess and verify the assessments for your learners but to achieve a full release, or claim certification for any other candidates, you must arrange a further Standards Verification activity.</p>	<p>Future annual monitoring will usually be remote unless we have concerns about quality assurance standards.</p>
Not approved – actions to complete	<p>Immediate action required and a Team Leader or the Senior Standards Verifier will be asked to confirm a block to centre certification. An action plan will be put in place and a further verification activity will be required before the centre can be released.</p>	<p>A face-to-face visit will take place next year.</p>
N/A	<p>No samples were seen for this unit / level.</p>	

You will receive your Standards Verification Report via email within 10 working days of the conclusion of the sampling activity. You can expect the outcomes and actions to concur with the final discussion with the Standards Verifier at the end of the verification activity.

If there are no significant issues identified during the Standards Verification activity, the centre will retain their direct claim status for the remainder of the academic year (i.e. until 31 August 2026).

8. Claiming certificates

For all ESOL units, marks are to be submitted once Standards Verification is complete and the centre has been released for certification. If the external verification has not taken place, centre marks for learners will still be accepted by us, however, learners will not receive certificates until external verification has been completed.

For guidance on how to submit marks on Edexcel Online, please refer to this [guidance page](#) and [video](#).

9. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

General FAQs

FAQ number	Question and answer
1	<p>Question: Are the credit values for the awards all the same?</p> <p>Answer: The credit values differ between Speaking and Listening, Reading and Writing. Speaking and Listening at all levels is the largest qualification at 12 credits; Writing is 9 credits and Reading 6 credits. This then equates exactly to the GLH by a factor of 10 (so 120GLH, 90GLH and 60GLH respectively).</p>
2	<p>Question: Are Pearson's ESOL qualifications suitable for my learners who are seeking work?</p> <p>Answer: Yes, we identify developing English for work as being one of the main purposes of the ESOL Skills for Life qualifications. They are also designed to support learners in learning across the whole curriculum and skills for life.</p>

Conducting ESOL assessments FAQs

FAQ number	Question and answer
1	<p>Question: How are Pearson's ESOL qualifications assessed?</p> <p>Answer: Pearson's ESOL qualifications are externally set, internally assessed and externally moderated.</p>
2	<p>Question: When can I assess my learners?</p> <p>Answer: There are no assessment windows, the assessments are available on demand, so you are free to assess your learners when they are ready for assessment</p>
3	<p>Question: How many assessments are available for each unit?</p> <p>Answer: There are three assessments available for each unit at each level.</p>
4	<p>Question: Can my learners resit the assessments where they do not meet the standards?</p> <p>Answer: Yes, they can.</p>

FAQ number	Question and answer
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5 **Question:** Can my learners do partial resits on specific elements of the awards where they do not meet the standards?

Answer: No, partial resits are not currently supported for ESOL qualifications.

6 **Question:** Can I use Teams or other onscreen video communication tools for remote Speaking and Listening assessments?

Answer: Yes, you can. Please ensure that these calls are recorded. Please see this [guidance document](#) for further information on conducting remote assessments.

Internal Verification FAQs

FAQ number	Question and answer
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1 **Question:** The rules for the number of spelling mistakes learners can make in the Writing paper seem harsh. Please can you explain this approach?

Answer: The requirements for spelling, punctuation and grammar for ESOL are not set in isolation from other English Language qualifications. Pearson has ensured that the requirements are in line with other qualifications, including GCSE and believe that the approach is appropriate.

To achieve a learning outcome, learners must achieve a set number of marks, equal to or just above two-thirds. Therefore, there is significant opportunity for learners to compensate for one missed mark in this section by strong performance elsewhere.

2 **Question:** How strict is the grammar error requirement in the Writing paper?

Answer: The grammatical errors that need to be assessed refer to the assessment criterion referenced. So, for example in Entry Level 3, AC2.4 states 'use grammar in a variety of tenses to denote past/ present/ future as appropriate, subject-verb agreement, pronouns'. As a result, the mark scheme is allowing the learners to make one mistake in relation to the assessment criterion and the mark can still be awarded.

3 **Question:** In the Speaking and Listening paper, do all of the assessment criteria have to be met?

Answer: Yes, the test is designed to give learners the opportunity to demonstrate their competence against all the assessment criteria. Learners must meet each assessment criterion once in each paper.

FAQ number	Question and answer
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- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 | <p>Question: Assessors are required to write notes for all criteria, for every task in the Speaking and Listening assessment. What should be included and how detailed should these notes be?</p> <p>Answer: The purpose is to show each criterion has been met, so specific information from the learner's response is required in the written evidence. This may be either one word or two sentences in different situations. Where the learner's response matches specific answers or example responses given in the mark scheme, the relevant response can simply be highlighted.</p> |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Standards verification FAQs

FAQ number	Question and answer
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- | | |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | <p>Question: If we have one student taking an assessment, does the Standards Verifier process still apply?</p> <p>Answer: Yes it does.</p> |
| 2 | <p>Question: When will my Standards Verifier be assigned to my centre?</p> <p>Answer: A Standards Verifier will usually be allocated to your centre before Christmas. They will usually contact you in the new year to arrange a remote visit.</p> |

10. Communicating with us

Pearson ESOL homepage

You can find all current information and documents on our [ESOL qualification page](#).

Our website pages are regularly updated with all the most current information and documents.

Edexcel Online

[Edexcel Online](#) is an invaluable service for administrators, providing support from approval through to registration and entry, reporting of achievement, and results and post-results services.

It also includes access to services for teaching staff, including online booking for training events and Pearson publications ordering.

Customer Services

We pledge to provide excellent service in all your dealings with us. Each centre will have a dedicated Accounts Specialist that will be their first point of contact for administration matters relating to learner registrations, exam entries, and claiming certification. **Customer Service Number:** 0345 630 8888

Curriculum Development Managers

Curriculum Development Managers are an important part of our Pearson UK FE and Schools teams. They provide a range of professional advisory support across all Pearson qualifications.

A key responsibility of Curriculum Development Managers is to build relationships with schools, colleges, and Local Authorities to raise achievement and promote our drive for excellence in education. Work Based Learning centres are supported by their Account Manager.

If you would like your Curriculum Development Manager or Account Manager to contact you, please get in touch with our Customer Services team and they will be able to guide you through this.

Functional Skills Content and Assessment Team

Our Functional Skills Content and Assessment team is responsible for the production of papers, the assessment of externally assessed units and the administration of internally assessed units and can be contacted via the [Pearson Support Portal](#).

Vocational Quality Assurance Managers

Your Vocational Quality Assurance Managers (VQAM) are available to support your Quality Nominee and their internal vocational team/s with Quality Assurance processes to ensure compliance with National Standards.

The VQAMs develop a wide range of resources to support your understanding of the quality assurance requirements for delivering and assessing Functional Skills English; you can find our support on [The Home of Quality Assurance](#) pages of the Pearson website. We can be contacted via Live Chat on that webpage or via the [Pearson Support Portal](#).

If you have a question, please contact **FS Assessment** or your **Vocational Quality Assurance Manager** via [The Pearson Support Portal](#).

In addition, you will find further information on our [Quality Assurance webpages](#).

11. Appendix

ESOL Standards Verification Checklist

All boxes must be ticked prior to a remote sample being sent to your standards verifier (SV).

Actions to complete prior to a remote sample taking place		Completed (please tick)
Internal standardisation of marked assessments		
IV sampling of Assessor marking		
Items to send to Standards Verifier prior to a remote sample		Sent (please tick)
Centre Declaration for ESOL Remote Sampling Form (CDF) (This must be returned as soon as possible)		
Sampling Report Form (SRF) (This must be returned as soon as possible)		
Items to send to Standards Verifier as part of a remote sample		Sent (please tick)
Level	Sample number required	n/a
Writing E1		
Writing E2		
Writing E3		
Writing L1		
Writing L2		
Reading E1		
Reading E2		
Reading E3		
Reading L1		
Reading L2		
Speaking and Listening E1		
Speaking and Listening E2		
Speaking and Listening E3		
Speaking and Listening L1		
Speaking and Listening L2		
Include assessment record sheets for each learner participating in Speaking and Listening (all learners should be clearly identifiable in the recordings)		

Please also tick here to confirm that you have notified your SV that you are sending the sample.

Form completed by (print name)	
Date Completed	

