

Standards Verification Handbook 2011-12

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

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What is standards verification for ESOL?

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

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

Which qualifications does it cover?

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) at Entry Levels and Levels 1-2 including ESOL for Work.

What other quality assurance guidance is there?

The Guidance and Instructions for Conducting ESOL and ESOL for Work tests 2011-12 gives you specific information on the way in which tests should be managed to include:

- downloading and storing tests
- examination conditions
- invigilation and record keeping.

Standards verification will include checking that tests have been delivered in line with this guidance, which can be found here:

www.edexcel.com/quals/esol/esol-life/Pages/key-docs.aspx.

The Examinations Officer should check the UK Information Manual to find out the arrangements for registering learners and claiming certification. The Information Manual can be found here:

www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/info-manual.aspx

What is new for 2011-12?

Separation from ELFS/ALAN

We have reviewed our approach to the Skills for Life suite in the light of the considerable growth of Functional Skills and the different delivery patterns of each of the qualifications. We will now be using Standards Verifiers separately for ESOL and for Entry Level Functional Skills and Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ELFS/ALAN).

If your centre is running both types of programme then there will be two Standards Verifiers. Standards Verification for ELFS/ALAN will be through postal sampling. Please see the relevant sections on our website for these qualifications.

Role of Quality Nominees

Centres are required to have a Quality Nominee for BTEC programmes, but this has not formally included ESOL. The assessment method for ESOL is not the same as for most BTEC programmes and we do not **require** BTEC Quality Nominees to supervise the quality assurance for ESOL. However, we know that in some centres the BTEC Quality Nominee also deals generally with vocational qualifications. We will keep BTEC Quality Nominees informed about standards verification for ESOL so they can support standards verification where it is within their role in the centre and so that they can support communications between us and the Programme Manager. We do not require Quality Nominees to take a more active role in ESOL.

Number and timing of visits

Many centres deliver ESOL throughout the year to meet the needs of learners. We want to support this but also to ensure that we can carry out quality assurance at an appropriate point in the cycle. Centres should register learners shortly after they commence the programme. Centres need to ensure that they can conduct initial assessment to determine needs within this period so that registrations are not delayed.

If you have made registrations by February 28th 2012 then you should agree a visit date with your Standards Verifier to take place by April 30th 2012. If you are starting programmes and making registrations after this point, then visits may be later but must be completed by July 31st. If there is no sampling by this point then certification will not be released and a Standards Verifier will be allocated in October 2012.

For most centres there will be one visit during the year. However, we recognise that centres have varying needs in relation to ensuring that quality is maintained within their programmes. If you anticipate having 700 or more learners, are relatively new to ESOL or have had negative report during 2010/11, then you should expect to have two or more visits during the year.

As part of the visit your Standards Verifier will review your needs with you and advise on how many visits will be required. Normally a further visit will take place within three months. In exceptional cases two further visits will be arranged.

Learner identity

We are reminding centres of the need to be confident of the identity of their learners at recruitment. You should take retain on file a photographic record of the learner and a copy of relevant information to confirm identity. The invigilator for tests should check the identity of the learner when completing the test attendance register.

Part of the assessment process will require centres to video learners' Speaking and Listening tests for purposes of identification.

Evidence for Speaking and Listening

We want the evidence for Speaking and Listening to be as clear and easy to verify as possible. We are asking you to produce videos showing the learner and the way in which the assessment is conducted. The Guidance and Instructions for Conducting ESOL and ESOL for Work tests 2011-12 gives you specific information on how to take and store video evidence.

If there are specific reasons (e.g. Child Protection) why a learner should not be identified within a video recording, please contact the Quality Standards team at qualitystandards@edexcel.com,

Policy context

These qualifications have not been identified as being addressed through policies related to General or Vocational qualifications. However, you should be aware that ESOL is now being treated as in scope to:

- JCQ Guidance on Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration
- Enquiry and Appeals Policy for Vocational Qualifications.

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

Guidance on the conduct of tests

Please consult this document and the Guidance and Instructions for Conducting ESOL and ESOL for Work tests 2011-12 carefully in order to ensure that you are fully aware of all the specific requirements related to conducting tests and making reasonable adjustments for learners.

If you are uncertain as to the requirements please contact btecdelivery@edexcel.com

Roles and responsibilities

Edexcel

Standards Verifier

The key tasks of the Standards Verifier are to:

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

Regional Quality Manager

We appoint a dedicated Regional Quality Manager for each centre. Your Regional Quality Manager is available to advise on quality assurance, including internal and standards verification.

Regional Quality Managers may make visits to centres to check on the secure delivery of tests and operation of quality assurance. They will be directly involved where a Standards Verifier

finds that a centre is not assessing to national standards and this cannot be resolved through further remedial sampling.

A UK Map with Regional Quality Manager contact details can be found here:
www.edexcel.com/quals/BTEC/support

Centres

Quality Nominee

For centres that have a BTEC Quality Nominee we will send them information on allocations and any specific quality assurance-related communications. 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 pass information on promptly to the Programme Manager so that effective arrangements can be made for standards verification.

Programme Manager

The Programme Manager is responsible for:

- the management of the qualification
- ensuring that all tutors are familiar with the appropriate guidance documentation and assessment information
- the secure use of all tests including downloading, copying, storing and delivery to test rooms
- 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 sampling
- providing appropriate documentation and evidence that explains the quality standards 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:

- the full programme specification
- relevant information from this handbook, quality standards policies and centre procedures and other guides and policy documents issued by Edexcel.

Assessors

Assessors are responsible for:

- identifying when learners are ready to take tests and liaising with the Programme Manager to schedule the tests
- ensuring that appropriate invigilation arrangements are made
- implementing tests following the Guidance and instruction for conducting the tests
- ensuring that the correct mark schemes are used and applying them fairly and consistently
- maintaining accurate and verifiable learner test records
- ensuring the security of test materials at all stages.

Internal Verifiers

Internal Verifiers check validity and consistency of assessment decisions across assessors. Normally there will be more than one Internal Verifier as no person may verify their own marking. The main Internal Verifier may also be the Programme Manager. If not then the Internal Verifier must work closely with the Programme Manager to ensure that the assessment and testing processes are effective. 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 ensure that assessments consistently meet National Standards, thus Internal Verifiers must be competent in the assessment of the qualification.

Internal Verifiers are responsible for:

- establishing procedures to develop a common interpretation of the test requirements between assessors
- regularly sampling assessment decisions made by all assessors and on all tests 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.

Key dates and actions 2011-12

Time Period	Activity
September	For academic year programmes, recruit and induct learners making appropriate records
September – October	Update contact details on Edexcel Online Plan teaching, assessment and verification. Timetable team meetings, assessor development and standardisation activity
November	Make registrations for learners who commenced programmes in September
December and each month	Programme Manager to liaise with Exams Officer to ensure that any contact from the Standards Verifier is passed through Check that any learners who have started programmes within the last month are registered
January	Programme Manager should expect to have made arrangements for a Standards Verifier visit for learners registered in November. Standards Verifier visits start. You must arrange a visit before you want to claim certificates.
April	(Programmes with registrations by February 28 th) a Standards Verifier visit will take place by April 30 th
May	Second visits will commence for centres for whom there is an agreed need for additional sampling and review
June	Third visits commence for exceptional centres. Regional Quality Managers may review progress with centres and make visits as required
July	Learners for whom results are required in August should have certificate claims submitted by 5 th July July 31 st is the final date for visits for centres making registrations between March 1 st and May 31 st

Centre implementation and administration of ESOL programmes

Centre and qualification approval

You must have centre and qualification approval from Edexcel in order to deliver ESOL and in order to gain access to the tests. If you do not already have approval then please refer to the Skills for Life approval page on the Edexcel website here: www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/cqa-skills-for-life.aspx

As part of your approval you agree to:

- register all new learners with Edexcel 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 Edexcel of any changes to your centre structure. Where your centre operates from multiple sites, or is the member of an Edexcel 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 will want 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 to an appropriate programme and given appropriate support to reach the right level of attainment.

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 Customer Services team.

Conduct of tests

The assessment for ESOL is conducted through the use of tests set by Edexcel which must be accessed, stored and used in line with the requirements published in the Guidance and Instructions for Conducting ESOL and ESOL for Work tests 2011-12 here: www.edexcel.com/quals/esol/esol-life/Pages/key-docs.aspx

The current valid sets of test papers are available via a secure area of the Edexcel website. An Edexcel Online username and password are required in order to download the test papers. If you do not have an Edexcel Online account you need to contact Edexcel Online Centre Administrator at your centre or your Exams Officer.

If you are experiencing problems downloading test papers from the Edexcel website contact QPD@edexcel.com and the QPD team will arrange to send the requested test papers to your centre.

In order to meet our requirements you must have your own centre policies and procedures related to:

- administration of tests, including security, invigilation
- assessment malpractice
- reasonable adjustments for learners with disabilities.

The key requirements are that:

- rooms used for tests are set up appropriately
- there is a safe and robust process for drawing down tests
- there are secure storage facilities for tests
- learners are correctly registered with Edexcel prior to taking a test

- there is a process for accurately recording learner attendance during tests
- there is a compliant invigilation procedure
- there is a log for unusual incidents that may occur during tests
- there are arrangements for the implementation of actions related to malpractice during a test as necessary
- the specific requirements of learners with disabilities are dealt with appropriately.

The Programme Manager must ensure that all assessors can be provided with:

- copies of test papers, instructions and mark schemes
- the identified resources/equipment/facilities, as specified on the test papers
- a copy of the Guidance and instructions for conducting the tests
- 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 test activity.

Standardising test marking

Standardisation takes place when there is more than one assessor in a centre marking the same test or level of test. After the test 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.

Centres 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 can then mark individually the learner work they are responsible for.

Sampling assessor marking

After standardisation assessors will then mark tests. The internal verifier should sample across assessors and tests to ensure that the assessor is continuing to apply the correct standards. If the assessor is not marking consistently then adjustment of marks will be necessary. This should be completed promptly.

Normally internal verification should be completed before marks are notified to learners so the Internal Verifier must arrange to sample as soon as possible 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, as it needs to take account of:

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

It is recommended that a minimum of two learners per component per level for each assessor are sampled.

Recording the delivery and marking of tests

Centres must maintain accurate records of tests undertaken, marks awarded and the verification process to show that the correct processes are being followed. This is necessary to:

- ensure that marking meets the National Standards and are adhered to by all assessors
- identify problems or areas where assessors require advice/development
- ensure that learners are aware of, and satisfied with, the marking process.

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

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

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 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 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

Allocation of a Standards Verifier

A Standards Verifier is allocated to a 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 December.

If you need standards verification urgently or you have not heard from your Standards Verifier two months after making registrations then you should contact Edexcel through the Deployment team using VQdeployment@edexcel.com.

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

When visits will take 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 components are available to be sampled.

Centres should plan for standards verification as part of their overall planning considering the date of registration and the dates on which tests are completed. Where possible a visit should be coordinated with an opportunity to see a test being delivered.

Centres should be aware that assessments should be retained for all certificated learners until the end of the academic year in order as the Regional Quality Manager may want to visit to monitor the effective implementation of test processes.

What the visit will cover

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 tests and associated record keeping demonstrate that there is effective security and test 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, test and invigilation records and test administration generally
- validate assessment judgements through sampling learners' assessments
- where possible view test 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 centre's internal quality assurance systems 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 guidance and instructions for conducting tests document
- recommend release or blocks to certification.

The Standards Verifier will need to include all participating sites and you should provide access for this.

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 test if possible
- levels and components 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 test delivery
- time to feedback to the Programme Manager/Internal Verifier.

The timetable should allow for both discussions with key team members, review of facilities and sampling of marked tests. For this the Standards Verifier will require a quiet room. The specific requirements for sampling are detailed below.

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 policies and that they 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, and to check the learner suitability criteria. 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 test administration in the centre then you may be advised that the Standards Verifier will consult with the Regional Quality Manager in order to confirm the visit outcome.

Determining additional visits

As part of the visit the Standards Verifier will review the centre's level of need, or controlled risk, 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 discuss with the Programme Manager or Internal Verifier what the centres needs are and how effectively the centre is organising quality assurance.

Centres that expect to have 700 or more learners in 2011/12 will normally have at least two visits per year and those with over 1,500 learners will normally have three visits in the year. Centre with fewer learners but other specific needs may also receive additional visits.

The Standards Verifier will advise you at the end of the visit as to when the next recommended visit should take place and will agree a date if it is within the 2011/12 academic year. Further visits will normally cover a similar range of activities to initial visits. They may focus on:

- observation of tests being delivered if this was not possible on the first visit
- levels or components that had not been undertaken at the first visit
- the most commonly taken tests
- any weaknesses or action points identified through the first visit.

In addition to visits by Standards Verifiers the Regional Quality Managers will review approximately ten percent of centres per year to ensure that the assessments are secure and to check that any action plans are being implemented by centres.

Sampling

Sampling the assessment of learners' tests is the central to the verification process. It is critical to enable a decision to be made on access to certification. The Standards Verifier will discuss the sampling requirements with the centre but will expect to be able to make a final choice of learners and to access a wide enough sample to draw a conclusion. Ideally the centre visit should take place when the range of components that a centre intends to use during the year are available for sampling.

You must make assessed tests available for sampling. The Standards Verifier will sample:

Number of learners registered	Number of scripts sampled
1-14 learners	All scripts sampled
15 to 100 learners	up to 5 scripts per component/level and 15 scripts overall
101+ learners	up to 10 scripts per component/level and 30 scripts overall

The Standards Verifier will select their sample based on:

- the range of levels the centre are delivering
- the number of assessors and sites the centre are delivering over
- 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 judgement 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 the centre is 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 components/levels proportionate to the number of tests taken since the first (or second) visit.

Reporting

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

After standards verification has taken place, if the centre has been given a release to certification, the centre will be able to continue to assess and verify the assessments for your learners for the remainder of the 2011/12 year. If a further visit takes place and standards are not maintained then certificate clearance can be withdrawn.

In the case that a Standards Verifier believes that the centre should not have certification release because standards are not being maintained or test practices are not fully secure and effective, the Regional Quality Manager will be asked to confirm a block to certification. In that case an action plan will be put in place involving postal sampling, further verification visit or Regional Quality Manager visit.

ESOL sampling process map

