

Criteria for English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) Qualifications



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The criteria

Introduction

1. The following criteria will be used as the basis for the development and accreditation of all English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) qualifications.
2. ESOL Skills for Life qualification criteria were previously published within *The Statutory Regulation of External Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (2004). ESOL International qualification criteria and ESOL for Work qualification criteria were previously published as stand-alone criteria documents in 2008.

ESOL Skills for Life qualifications

Content

3. Qualifications at Entry level 1, Entry level 2, Entry level 3, and at levels 1 and 2, should meet the requirements of the National Standards for Adult Literacy and demonstrate a clear relationship to the adult ESOL core curriculum.

Titling

4. ESOL Skills for Life qualifications must be titled:
 - ESOL Skills for Life.

ESOL International qualifications

5. These qualifications are specifically targeted at groups of candidates whose needs are not served by the ESOL Skills for Life qualifications. Submissions for accreditation and awarding organisation qualification specifications should make this clear by including the following text:
 - ESOL International qualifications are designed for candidates who are not native speakers of English and who wish to achieve a high quality, internationally recognised qualification in English that is available and recognised worldwide and at the highest level (NQF level 3 / CEF C2). They are suitable for candidates who are preparing for entry to higher education or professional employment in the UK or elsewhere. ESOL International qualifications are designed to reference the descriptions of language proficiency in the Common European Framework Reference for Languages (CEF). The levels in the CEF have been mapped to the levels

in the National Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (see *Pathways to Proficiency: the alignment of language proficiency scales for assessing competence in English Language* DFES / QCA, 2003).

Titling

6. ESOL International qualification titles must use the following titling format:

- Awarding organisation, (NQF) level, certificate in ESOL International.

For Entry-level qualifications, the sub-level achieved (i.e. Entry 1, 2, 3) should be bracketed following the main title.

Awarding organisation qualification brand names can be used in the title together with the above form of words. References to CEF level(s) can be added in brackets at the end of any brand name used. Where CEF levels are given, these must align with the qualification's NQF level as shown in *Pathways to Proficiency: The Alignment of Language Proficiency Scales for Assessing Competence in English Language*.

Levels

7. Qualifications can be submitted from NQF Entry 1 to level 3.

The qualifications should be referenced to the six levels of the CEF with the NQF level identified. This mapping should correspond to the equivalences identified between the CEF levels and the NQF levels identified in *Pathways to Proficiency: The Alignment of Language Proficiency Scales for Assessing Competence in English Language*.

Content

8. The ESOL International qualifications are primarily intended for adults. Qualification content should reflect the interests and needs of adult learners at all levels. Qualifications designed specifically for use pre-16 cannot be accredited.

Parts of whole qualifications cannot be accredited as separate qualifications. Where the awarding organisation wishes to allow recognition and certification of parts of whole qualifications, the qualification can be unitised. Where qualifications are unitised, a unit must not be smaller than a single mode.

9. Awarding organisations must indicate the areas covered by the qualifications in respect of:
- the demand of the CEF common reference levels;
 - how contextualised activities, as appropriate to the candidate group, relate to the four CEF domains (public, personal, educational and occupational);
 - communicative and linguistic competences;
 - coverage of production and interaction (for speaking and writing modes).

Assessment

10. Assessment should normally be 100 per cent externally set and marked. If an awarding organisation wishes to include internal assessment, this should represent a maximum of 25 per cent of the overall mark allocation for the qualification. In such cases, the awarding organisation should give:
- a rationale for the inclusion of internal assessment, including its relevance to the needs of the target client group(s);
 - proposals for ensuring the security of work submitted;
 - proposals for ensuring that the work submitted is originated by the candidate being assessed;
 - proposals for ensuring the reliability of marking, given the qualifications' intended international use.

Awarding organisation submissions should explain the focus of assessment in relation to rationale and candidate group and should make clear which part(s) of the CEF is covered.

ESOL for Work qualifications

Titling

11. Qualifications that meet these criteria must use the following form of titling:
- Awarding organisation, followed by level followed by certificate in ESOL for Work.

Levels

12. Qualifications will be accredited at Entry level (Entry 3 only) and level 1 of the NQF. However, they should allow for writing to be assessed at one level lower than the other skill areas. For example:
 - at level 1 candidates should demonstrate skill levels at level 1 for speaking, listening and reading and may include skills at Entry 3 in writing;
 - at Entry 3 candidates should demonstrate skill levels at Entry 3 for speaking, listening and reading and may include Entry 2 in writing.

Awarding organisations submitting qualifications at Entry 3 will need to submit units to support writing at Entry 2.

Target group

13. These qualifications will be for learners from the age of 16 upwards only and must be specifically designed to address the needs of those in work or seeking work.

Content

14. Qualifications should cover both speaking and listening, and reading and writing.
15. Where there is common skills coverage, the requirements of the qualifications should correspond to those of the National Standards for Adult Literacy at the given level. There is no requirement for qualifications to cover the adult literacy standards in full.
16. Qualifications may be based on or adopt approaches developed for existing ESOL qualifications, providing that all other criteria are met. It is possible that an amended, streamlined adaptation of existing qualifications could provide an appropriate platform for the new qualifications.
17. Qualifications can be unitised. Units may be based on modes covering speaking and listening, reading and writing, or – if appropriate – modes can be grouped in different ways. In a work context, for example, it may be appropriate to group together the skill of reading with speaking and listening or to group together the skills of reading and writing. Skill modes may be weighted in terms of content to allow for the differential content.

Assessment

18. Assessment activities should be relevant to, and relate to, the needs and experiences of adults in employment.
19. In submissions, awarding organisations should show how they will work towards making assessment available flexibly to meet the needs of adults in employment on short ESOL programmes of study and the needs of their employers, colleges, training providers and teachers.

Awarding and reporting

20. Qualifications should be awarded on a pass/fail basis. However, a unit achievement will be recorded.

Guided learning hours

21. Qualifications should be designed to be delivered flexibly, according to individual learner and employer needs (the assumption is that, typically, these qualifications will take between 100 and 150 guided learning hours at each level).

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