Centre guidance for adaptations to delivery and assessment of ESOL Skills for Life qualifications 2021/2022

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gateway
qualifications

learning your way

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Contents

About this guide

This document is intended for tutors/assessors, internal quality assurers, centre quality managers and other staff within Gateway Qualifications recognised centres and/or prospective centres.

It provides guidance on the approach to adapting qualification delivery and assessment under the Vocational and Technical Qualifications Contingency Regulatory Framework (VCRF) for ESOL Skills for Life qualifications. It replaces all previous guidance.

The guidance should be read in conjunction with the following Gateway Qualifications' guidance:

Centre guidance for adaptations to qualification delivery and assessment 2021-2022

The guidance should be read in conjunction with the following Ofqual publications:

Vocational and technical qualifications contingency regulatory framework, COVID-19 Conditions and Requirements (August 2021)

Vocational and technical qualifications contingency regulatory framework, COVID-19 Guidance (August 2021)

Support and guidance

For further support and guidance please contact:

Email: Enquiries@gatewayqualifications.org.uk

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Introduction

As circumstances surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic continue to impact all areas of life, it is recognised that provision for delivery, assessment and awarding arrangements is required for the academic year 2021/22

Ofqual implemented the Vocational and Technical qualifications contingency regulatory framework (VCRF) to enable awarding organisations to make adaptations to delivery and assessment arrangements and the requirements for their qualifications and, for some qualifications, permit the issue of results based on alternative evidence including Teacher Assessed Grades. Following a joint consultation of the Department for Education and Ofqual it has been confirmed that assessments should go ahead in 2021/2022. As a result Ofqual will withdraw the Category B classification in the VCRF so that all qualifications are awarded based on evidence from examinations and other assessments. Results for examinations and other assessments taken after 1 September 2021 will not be based on Teacher assessed grades (TAGs) for qualifications which previously fell into Category B. Awarding organisations will however be permitted to make adaptations to their assessments and qualifications to account for any further pandemic related disruption and to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on learning.

In 2021/2022 all qualifications should be awarded in line with the principles that already exist for Category A qualifications. These principles are provided in Appendix 1.

Purpose of this guide

This guide is intended to support centres to make decisions about how to adapt qualification and assessment delivery arrangements of ESOL Skills for Life qualifications to accommodate their local circumstances. It provides explanations of the adaptation parameters and examples of how adaptations may be made within the scope of the qualifications as they are currently designed.

Decisions on whether to apply any of the adaptations rest with the centre. If you wish to talk through a particular approach and its application to a qualification, please contact Enquiries@gatewayqualifications.org.uk

The guide may be reviewed and updated as required to reflect the latest government and regulatory advice.

Qualifications

Which qualifications are covered by this guide?

This guide covers all ESOL Skills for Life Qualifications from E1 to L2 as listed below.

Qualification Number	Qualification Title
601/5413/5	Gateway Qualifications Entry Level Award In ESOL Skills for Life (Reading) (Entry 1)
601/5416/0	Gateway Qualifications Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life (Reading) (Entry 2)
601/5422/6	Gateway Qualifications Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life (Reading) (Entry 3)
601/5424/X	Gateway Qualifications Level 1 Award ESOL Skills for Life (Reading)
601/5425/1	Gateway Qualifications Level 1 Award In ESOL Skills for Life (Writing)
601/5426/3	Gateway Qualifications Level 2 Award In ESOL Skills for Life (Reading)
601/5427/5	Gateway Qualifications Level 2 Award In ESOL Skills for Life (Writing)
601/5423/8	Gateway Qualifications Entry Level Award In ESOL Skills for Life (Writing) (Entry 3)
601/5417/2	Gateway Qualifications Entry Level Award In ESOL Skills for Life (Writing) (Entry 2)
601/5415/9	Gateway Qualifications Entry Level Award In ESOL Skills for Life (Writing) (Entry 1)
601/5414/7	Gateway Qualifications Entry Level Award In ESOL Skills for Life (Speaking and Listening) (Entry 1)
601/5418/4	Gateway Qualifications Entry Level Award In ESOL Skills for Life (Speaking and Listening) (Entry 2)
601/5419/6	Gateway Qualifications Entry Level Award In ESOL Skills for Life (Speaking and Listening) (Entry 3)
601/5420/2	Gateway Qualifications Level 1 Award In ESOL Skills for Life (Speaking and Listening)
601/5421/4	Gateway Qualifications Level 2 Award In ESOL Skills for Life (Speaking and Listening)
601/5352/0	Gateway Qualifications Entry Level Certificate In ESOL Skills for Life (Entry 1)
601/5353/2	Gateway Qualifications Entry Level Certificate In ESOL Skills for Life (Entry 2)
601/5354/4	Gateway Qualifications Entry Level Certificate In ESOL Skills for Life (Entry 3)
601/5355/6	Gateway Qualifications Level 1 Certificate In ESOL Skills for Life
601/5356/8	Gateway Qualifications Level 2 Certificate In ESOL Skills for Life

Learner

Which learners are covered by these arrangements?

The arrangements apply to all learners who are taking qualifications and assessments from 1st August 2021 until such time we give notice.

Principles and approach

Our approach

Gateway Qualifications' approach to adaptation is based on the principles set out by Ofqual Vocational and technical qualifications contingency regulatory framework, COVID-19 Conditions and Requirements and builds on the flexibility already embedded within our ESOL Skills for Life qualifications which allows centres to plan and deliver assessments to reflect the needs of different learner groups.

Adaptations to assessment may be made where normal practices are no longer possible, for example, in-person observation of practical activities. Part or all of a unit's assessment approach may be adapted. The form(s) of adaptation chosen should be appropriate to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Adaptations may be made to one or more element(s) of the assessment tasks, the method and form of evidence, the assessment location and the conditions.

In all situations the health and safety of learners must be considered. Centres must follow public health guidance including measures for social distancing and wearing of face coverings.

Centres are not permitted to make any further adaptations to the assessments beyond what is set out in this document.

General guidance on planning assessments

When planning assessments you may wish to consider:

- planning the delivery of assessment as part of a blended learning programme
- staggering assessments or parts of assessments when learners are ready rather than all at the end of the programme
- learners' access to and familiarity with any technology required
- making use of the bank of sample assessments[1] throughout the programme of learning to ensure familiarity with the procedures as well as for assessment practice.

Speaking and Listening all levels

Speaking and Listening assessments are normally conducted face to face in small groups during scheduled class time. Where face to face delivery is not possible centres may, where appropriate, conduct the three components of this assessment remotely using applications such as Face Time, Teams, Skype, Zoom. Where online delivery is not possible assessments can be conducted on a one to one basis if social distancing does not allow for group assessments.

Task 1 Listening

At all levels, centres may conduct listening tasks face to face using staff other than the ESOL tutor provided that they are made aware of the supervision requirements and requirements for the conduct of the listening assessment.

At all levels, listening tasks can also be carried out remotely on a one-to-one basis. In this case, the recording can be played through the web-conferencing software the centre is using. The questions can also be displayed before playing the recording as well as or instead of reading them out.

Once the listening recording has been played the questions can be asked orally and learners may respond orally, with the assessor noting down the answers. The assessor will need to ensure that the candidate response sheet includes the candidate name, candidate id and date of birth. The assessor can record this rather than the learner.

Tasks 2 and 3 Speaking

At all levels, centres may conduct Tasks 2 and 3 remotely in small groups using the assessment tasks provided. These assessments should take place under supervised conditions and must be presented to the learners unseen without prior knowledge of the assessment topic. For Task 3, the discussion, where the tutor allocates different aspects to different learners, this should be done as usual, prior to the preparation period.

Learners should be given preparation time as indicated in the assessment pack.

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[1] Sample assessments are available within the Prism online system.

Learners are permitted to make notes during the preparation period. Tutors should inform them that before the assessment takes place that they will be required to hold up the notes they are going to use briefly so the tutor can see that they are in the form of short bullets.

Where a learner is not able to join an online meeting in exceptional circumstances it may be possible to carry out the assessment over a phone. However, the tutor must authenticate the identity of the learner and ensure that the work is their own unaided work, including any notes made.

Reading and Writing Assessments

Reading and writing assessments are paper based and the nature of the reading assessment means that it is difficult for them to be taken remotely. However, centres should be reminded that it is permitted to allow assessments for these skills to be carried out in different locations for example in the library of a college, in a cell where there is single occupancy. This would still comply with the requirements for the assessment room, laid out in the qualification specification:

Any room in which an assessment is held must provide learners with appropriate conditions for taking the assessment.

To release tutors from the supervision of the assessment taking at Entry level and level 1 Reading and Writing assessments, the role can be carried out by other suitable staff members thus freeing up time for teaching and learning.

Writing assessments (all tasks at Entry and Level 1) may be delivered online via web conferencing software. Candidates must have their cameras on at all times and be in sight of the supervisor throughout the assessment. This adaptation is permitted for Entry 1 – Level 1 assessments only. It is recommended that each task is taken separately. For Task 1 the supervisor can display the form and candidates can then write responses on a blank sheet. Candidates' work can be submitted as a photograph/screen shot. Tutors should check the quality of the submission to ensure candidate responses are clear.

In addition, as required by the specification they would need to ensure verification of the Learner's identity.

Where an assessment is being undertaken within an offender learning environment assessments can be taken in a different location providing supervision requirements are met. or if there is single cell prison occupancy, where the security is such that the requirements would be fulfilled without somebody physically in the cell with the learner.

All assessments

For all assessments, whether internally or externally assessed tutors should note that they:

- are summative and must take place under supervised conditions
- are time-bound
- must be presented to learners unseen, without prior knowledge of the assessment topic
- must be entirely the learners' own unaided work.

Please also note that learners cannot be assessed through the same task more than once. If a learner is unsuccessful in an assessment they may be given another opportunity for assessment, but this must be through different tasks. It is a centre's responsibility to monitor the use of the assessments and their security which is overseen by Gateway Qualifications' external quality assurance process.

Please keep all attempts at live tasks so that they can be reviewed if necessary as part of our quality assurance process.

Assessment materials contain guide times for completing tasks. At Entry Level and for speaking and listening at all levels these times are approximate and are provided for the guidance of Tutors/Assessors in order to help them plan assessment sessions.

Learners entering for any of the Entry level units and speaking and listening at all levels may complete tasks that make up the assessments on different occasions. The assessment packs are designed so that each task can be separated.

Level 2 reading and writing assessments must each be taken in one sitting and be invigilated by someone other than the course tutor. Please refer to the specification for details of the invigilation requirements for level 2.

Centre practices

Centres may already have in place protocols and practices to support their approach to learning and assessment where social distancing and other public health requirements are in place, including the use of online or blended learning.

To support the external quality assurance of qualifications and to enable learner achievement Centres are encouraged to continue their good practices in relation to record keeping and authentication of learner work.

Record keeping

Centres will already have in place documentation used for assessment recording, IQA planning and recording; also approaches and systems for the collation and saving of learner portfolios and assessment evidence. As part of that record keeping please keep records of the adaptations you have applied, e.g. as an annotation on the attendance or assessment records

Wherever possible Centres are encouraged to save their records and learner work in their IT systems, which may require scanning and saving documents to file drives, or use of e-portfolios, or similar systems. Centres should ask their learners to upload work on an ongoing basis if they are working remotely in order that tutor/assessors can access the work and check progress. This also helps the process of authenticating learner work and facilitates remote quality assurance.

Centre practices, such as ensuring on-going assessment and IQA and its recording are also encouraged, to mitigate against the potential of not having access to learner evidence and assessment/IQA records to support EQA sampling activity and qualification claims.

Authenticating learner work

Learner work must be authenticated. This can easily be done by the learner signing a statement that lists their work and includes a declaration that the work belongs to them and is their own, original work:

Learner declaration: I confirm that I completed the work on my own and have not copied from anywhere else. I have not had any help other than help that my tutor has said is allowed for this qualification.

The tutor/assessor can then countersign the statement confirming this, based upon their knowledge of the learner and what the learner is capable of.

Centres may also allow learners to use electronic signatures to authentic work remotely where learners are aware that they may only do so when the work is their own, and centres are able to identify or detect any copied or plagiarised work.

During sampling, the EQA will look to ensure that learner work is authenticated.

IQA practices

Gateway Qualifications supports an on-going approach to IQA. This will support the validity of assessment evidence and qualification claims during EQA sampling activity.

Ensuring equalities for learners

When putting in place adaptations centres should consider the fairness of arrangements, to ensure that all learners have equal access to learning and assessment opportunities. In particular some learners may not have access to technology or may not have conducive conditions to work at home. Centres may need to consider alternative arrangements for those learners who cannot access the required technology.

Applying Special Considerations

Special considerations can be applied as per our Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy. With regards to the current pandemic, adaptations should always be explored before applying special considerations to mitigate the impact of public health arrangements for the current pandemic. Applications for special considerations should be applied for in the usual way, as specified in our Policy:

Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy

Gateway Qualifications Quality Assurance Process

It is important you retain information on how you have adapted assessments as this may be requested as part of our quality assurance process.

Our approach to EQA activity will be returning to on-site visit for compliance monitoring as well as remote visits and sampling activity. Arrangements will follow those in our document:

Getting Ready for Remote Sampling and Meetings – Centre Guidance March 2020

The guide includes advice on:
- preparing for remote sampling and visits

The requirements for remote sampling and any visits are the same as we would require when an EQA visits a Centre.

Other resources

On the Gateway Qualifications website there is a page dedicated to information about coronavirus arrangements and this is updated as and when circumstances change, or new information is made available.

Appendix 1

Ofqual Principles in relation to Category A qualifications which from 1 September 2021 apply to all qualifications.

An awarding organisation must take all reasonable steps to comply with the principles below when complying with Condition VCR2

Principle A1 – As far as possible and without prejudice to the other principles, an awarding organisation must seek to ensure that the Adaptations which it makes to a qualification assist with mitigating the impact on teaching, learning or assessments caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on Learners taking that qualification.

Principle A2 – An awarding organisation must seek to ensure that, where it makes any Adaptations to its qualifications in accordance with the VCR Conditions, the Validity and Reliability of those qualifications is maintained.

Principle A3 – An awarding organisation must seek to maintain standards, as far as possible, within the same qualification in line with previous years, and across similar qualifications made available by the awarding organisation and by other awarding organisations.

Principle A4 – An awarding organisation must seek to ensure, as far as possible, that the Adaptations which it makes to a qualification do not serve to advantage or disadvantage Learners taking that qualification against their peers taking similar VTQs or, where relevant, general qualifications not covered by the VCR Conditions.