

From mountain to sea

English as an Additional Language

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Guidelines



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Context

In Aberdeenshire secondary schools there are many bilingual pupils for whom English is an additional language. All are at different stages of English acquisition.

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 emphasises the need for planned support to meet the needs of individual children and young people who experience barriers to learning.

The Equality Act (2010) places a general duty on public authorities to eliminate discrimination, to promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

What is SQA ESOL?

SQA English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is a qualification which is delivered in units that focus on the development of literacy and communication of the English language. Each unit focuses on the development of the skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing.

The SQA ESOL courses provide opportunities to develop language for everyday use and in work and study contexts. The courses focus primarily on accurate receptive and productive use of language and, whilst encouraging an understanding of genre, there is no requirement for direct study of English literature.

SQA ESOL Level	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Assessment	External Exam
National 2 Literacies	ESOL Preparation for Literacy	ESOL Introduction to Beginner English Literacies 1	ESOL Introduction to Beginner English Literacies 2	Internal (Units)	N/A
National 2	ESOL for Everyday Life 1	ESOL for Everyday Life 2	ESOL in Context (Study or Work)	Internal (Units)	N/A
National 3	ESOL for Everyday Life 1	ESOL for Everyday Life 2	ESOL in Context (Study or Work)	Internal (Units)	N/A
National 4	ESOL for Everyday Life 1	ESOL for Everyday Life 2	ESOL in Context (Study or Work)	Internal (Units + Added Value Unit¹)	N/A
National 5 30% Speaking/Listening 70% Exam	ESOL for Everyday Life	ESOL in Context (Study)	ESOL in Context (Work)	Internal (Speaking/Listening Task) + External	Yes
Higher 30% Speaking/Listening 70% Exam	ESOL for Everyday Life	ESOL in Context (Study)	ESOL in Context (Work)	Internal (Speaking/Listening Task) + External	Yes

¹ In the 2021-2022 diet the students have been exempted from completing the Added Value Unit as part of the Alternative Certification Model as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

SQA ESOL is a curricular subject course which should be treated in the same way as any other curricular subject e.g. delivery - as part of the curricular option choice, number of timetabled teaching periods and assessment rigour.

The National 2 Literacies, National 2, 3 and 4 levels are internally assessed (2 units) and verified and can be externally verified by the SQA. There is no exam and no grading — candidates either pass or fail. The National 4 has an Added Value Unit that is a project on a chosen topic. The unit assessments can be combined into one assessment only — the Combined Approach. All unit assessments are available on the SQA secure website.

The National 5 and Higher Courses are assessed through an exam (reading, listening and writing) in May/June. However, there is an internally assessed task — speaking and listening, which is 30% of the exam grade (25 marks for speaking and 5 marks for listening). The mark awarded has to be internally verified before being sent to the SQA. The exam grades range from A to D.

English subject or SQA ESOL?

Bilingual pupils should have every opportunity to develop the full range of English language skills, including the study of literature, in a context where they can interact with other young people who have English as a first language. This environment provides the language enrichment that they require in order to fully develop their English language skills.

For most bilingual pupils, who transfer from primary or enrol in a Scottish school for the first time at some point during their early secondary education, gaining a qualification in English will be the preferred option. Most newly arrived pupils will be involved in mainstream English classes after enrolment into secondary school.

There should be no discrete SQA ESOL classes in S1-S3. Bilingual pupils should be in mainstream classes, supported, where appropriate, by an EAL Teacher or school-based staff from the ASN department.

Teachers should take account of the young person's progress in English language. All bilingual pupils should have a ScotXed English language level recorded on SEEMIS Click and Go. Pupils who are working towards Fluent (Level 5) as their English language level should not be presented for SQA ESOL.

Who are the ESOL courses for?

“These courses are for learners whose first language is not English, who have developed their English language skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking to an appropriate SCQF level and/or completed ESOL qualifications at a lower SCQF level.” SQA Course Specification

It is designed for bilingual pupils who require a qualification in English but who are not able to gain it in English subject at the necessary level to progress in Higher Education. A successful candidate at National 5 and Higher ESOL will be able to understand university lectures, take notes, access reading material, write essays and participate fully in oral work including assessments. Universities generally accept Higher ESOL for most courses except English.

SQA ESOL qualifications should be considered as an option for recently arrived bilingual pupils in S5/S6 where an ESOL qualification will better meet their needs or those pupils working towards ScotXed level 4 or below. It should also be considered for young people who arrive during S3/S4 and will not be able to achieve either National 4 or 5 in English subject.

SQA ESOL may be appropriate for young people who have had only a short period of secondary education in the UK. Some of them may have had extensive education in their home country and some may have had no previous education or interrupted education. Some may have been educated through the English language.

SQA ESOL may be appropriate where a pupil is performing better in subjects that are not as heavily language dependent e.g. Mathematics and IT. Refer to EAL Service for assessment.

SQA ESOL may also be appropriate for a pupil who is under performing in any subject and this is due to her/him having had little prior education or being very new to learning English.

SQA ESOL may also be appropriate for a pupil who has not passed English National 4 the previous session.

Arrival	ScotXed (Working Towards)	English /ESOL
S3	Level 3 or below	ESOL
	Level 4	English
S4	Level 4 or below	ESOL
	Level 5	English
S5/S6	Unless level 5	ESOL

Who should NOT be entered for these examinations?

- Native speakers of English.
- Bilingual pupils who have progressed through all or most of their primary schooling in the UK.
- Bilingual pupils who are working towards or have attained ScotXed Level 5 - Fluent.
- Bilingual pupils who are being entered for National 4 English.

How SQA ESOL compares to other qualifications in English?

SQA ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) is a qualification that is regarded as an equivalent to SQA English. It is also regarded as a qualification equivalent to IELTS (International English Language Testing System) and Cambridge ESOL examinations.

SQA ESOL Level	SQA English equivalent level	Common European Framework (CEF)	IELTS equivalent bands	Cambridge ESOL
National 2	National 2	A1	1- 1.5 - 2	
National 3	National 3	A2	Approx. 3	KET
National 4	National 4	B1	3.5 – 4 – 4.5	PET
National 5	National 5	B2	5 – 5.5 - 6	FCE
Higher	Higher	C1	6.5 – 7	CAE

SQA ESOL Higher can be regarded by Scottish universities:

- As part of the general entrance requirements,
- As an equivalent qualification to Higher English or
- As an equivalent to IELTS.

NB: Each University Faculty /course should be contacted prior to a pupil's application to clarify the subject's qualification status.

What should schools do if they wish to offer SQA ESOL?

- Nominate a member of the teaching staff as ESOL coordinator.
- Be aware that ESOL is a curricular subject and has the same requirements.
- Timetable ESOL as a column choice for those eligible to sit it.
- Encourage teaching staff from all areas of the curriculum to take an interest in SQA ESOL.
- Assist the SQA ESOL coordinator to work closely with the SQA coordinator.
- Register pupils at the appropriate levels.
- Ensure that all staff involved with SQA ESOL are aware of SQA deadlines.
- Seek to arrange cover for classes/groups in case of school staff or EAL staff absence.

How can the EAL Service assist schools?

- Identify and assess potential SQA ESOL candidates.
- Provide teaching according to the EAL Teacher availability.
- Advise school staff on delivering the courses and assist in training them.
- Advise on resources.
- Act as internal verifiers where required.

Making the Decision for SQA ESOL

The decision about whether SQA ESOL would be an appropriate qualification for a bilingual pupil is a matter of professional judgement. This judgement should be made collaboratively by those with expertise in this area and who know the young person well. This would include EAL, English and Guidance staff and, if appropriate, Support for Learning staff.

The following criteria should be considered when making this decision:

- First language
- Age and Stage of English language acquisition (ScotXed)
- Date of Arrival /Length of time in the country
- Language Progress to date - and potential future progress in English, taking account of English language levels
- Prior educational experience
- Performance across the curriculum
- Aspirations/future plans of young person
- Views of parent/carer

It should be noted that these criteria are not rigid - they are deliberately flexible to allow staff to make a professional judgement, based on their knowledge of individual young people.

Criteria for SQA ESOL presentation

- **Age and Stage of English language acquisition** - SQA ESOL should be an option for newly arrived bilingual pupils in S5/S6. It should also be an option for those young people who arrive in school for the first time in S3-S4 and will be unable to achieve National 4 or 5 in English. It could be an option for native speakers who have lived long periods abroad and were educated in a language that was not English. For some young people who are working towards Competent (Level 4) as their ScotXed English language level, SQA ESOL may be appropriate. However, for those pupils who are on the cusp of moving to Fluent, ESOL would not be appropriate.
- **Length of time in the country** – SQA ESOL is most appropriate for young people who are recent arrivals in the UK and /or have arrived in the UK at some point during their secondary education.
- **Consider progress to date** and potential future progress in English, taking account of:
 - a) English language levels.

- b) Prior educational experience – pupils who had only a short period of secondary education in the UK.
- c) Performance across the curriculum – pupils who are performing better in subjects that are not as heavily language dependant like Maths and IT.
- d) First language – main home language has to be other than English.
- e) Future aspirations: Consideration should be given to the future aspirations and proposed career pathways of young people when recommending entry to an SQA ESOL course. In particular, the entry requirements for specific courses in further or higher education should be considered in determining if an SQA ESOL course would lead to the most appropriate qualification for the young person. It is important to seek clarifications from Guidance staff, Careers Advisers, the appropriate Depute Head Teacher or the Employability Officer who may wish to make direct contact with university/college admissions tutors before any final decisions are made.
- f) Views of the parent/carer: In deciding which qualification pupils should be put forward for, the views of parents and carers should be sought and given due consideration. The implications for both types of qualification should be explained, and the parent or carer's views on what is best for the learner should be discussed. Interpreters should be involved where appropriate to ensure parents/carers are fully involved in discussions.
- g) Views of the young person: Young people over the age of 16 have the right to make their own decisions. It is important that young people are fully involved in making any decisions about which option is most appropriate.

Be aware:

SQA ESOL is not appropriate for:

- Young people who have had a complete Scottish education.
- S1 to S3.
- Pupils whose level of language acquisition is working towards or have achieved ScotXed level - Fluent (5).
- Young people who have English as her/his first language.
- S5/S6 pupils to take both English and ESOL subjects.

There will be exceptions only with consultation with the EAL Service.

Delivery and Timetabling

SQA ESOL is equivalent to any other SQA course. Where possible on subject choice forms, SQA ESOL should sit in the same choice column as English. It is important that the equivalent timetabled time is set aside for SQA ESOL as SQA English in order to ensure all course requirements can be met.

Where numbers of pupils presenting for ESOL are consistently low for each level, the course should be taught collaboratively by the EAL Teacher and the ESOL school specialist. Where numbers of pupils presenting for ESOL are consistently high, ESOL should be delivered in house by the school, with consultation and advice from EAL.

When SQA ESOL is not a subject choice option, it should be delivered whenever possible within the English timetable. This could mean one or more English periods being dedicated to SQA ESOL, or it may mean a small group being withdrawn for SQA ESOL for all or part of the English time. ***The pupils would not sit a qualification in English.**

At all times, the focus should be on how best to meet the needs of recently arrived young people or where there is concern about a pupil's English language attainment for entry into Higher Education.

CLPL and other support

Staff involved in delivering SQA ESOL will be able to access CLPL. There are experienced SQA ESOL practitioners in Aberdeenshire who can contribute to this. There is also authority SQA ESOL Support. Staff should also work closely with the school's SQA Co-ordinator.

Internal Verification

SQA ESOL practitioners in schools will be supported in internal verification by EAL Teachers. They can support the school to meet the SQA's standards for the qualifications.

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2022	1.0	Guidelines	New draft

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