

IMPORTANT UPDATE: ESOL SKILLS FOR LIFE (3692)

DECEMBER 2013

This update contains information about:

- Revised approval conditions for ESOL Skills for Life qualifications (effective from December 2013)
- New interim assessment for ESOL Skills for Life Reading at levels 1 and 2
- ESOL qualifications on the Framework – update
- Changes to Knowledge of Language and Life (KoLL) requirement for Naturalisation/Settlement – reminder

This update follows the previous one relating to ESOL Skills for Life issued in September 2013.

Revised approval conditions for ESOL Skills for Life qualifications (effective from December 2013)

(3692 - all)

Applies to: England, Northern Ireland and Wales

You may recall that we introduced a number of additional qualification approval conditions and monitoring arrangements for our ESOL Skills for Life qualifications in October 2010. We would like to thank you for your co-operation with these measures over the past three years.

The 2010 changes were partly a response to concerns expressed at the time by Ofqual, the UK Border Agency and others about the risk of these qualifications being gained and used inappropriately by learners intending to apply for Settlement or Naturalisation. We had also identified a need to introduce more rigour into the assessment of Speaking and Listening at Entry level, especially where centre staff had previously been expected to conduct conversations with candidates whilst simultaneously trying to make assessment decisions.

Since then there have been several changes to public policy relating to ESOL within the UK, as well as the introduction of revised Entry level assignments for these qualifications and a new interim assessment for Reading at levels 1 and 2 (see below). The current ESOL Skills for Life qualifications will in any event be replaced next summer by a new suite of ESOL qualifications on the Qualifications and Credit Framework.

We will set out any specific approval conditions that might apply to our new Framework ESOL qualifications when these are launched, although in the meantime we appreciate the need to revise and clarify some of the current arrangements for the 3692 suite of qualifications.

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The conditions set out below are effective from 1 December 2013, and **supersede** those from October 2010:

1. Eligibility for qualification approval

The ESOL Skills for Life qualifications (3692) are only available to centres and learners based within the United Kingdom. We recognise that some UK-based organisations (eg HM Forces) might need to conduct assessments outside of the UK for operational reasons, although where applicable this **must** be agreed in advance with City & Guilds.

Centres offering any of our ESOL Skills for Life (3692) qualifications must be subject to public inspection (eg by Ofsted, ETI, HMIE or Estyn, as applicable). If the centre's ESOL provision is not subject to inspection (eg because public funding is not being sought), City & Guilds may accept independent monitoring of the centre's teaching and learning by an alternative external organisation such as the Accreditation Service for International Colleges (ASIC).

Any such alternatives must be agreed **in advance** with the centre's managing City & Guilds Customer Support team. The scope of any external inspection/monitoring activity must include all of the centre's provision leading to these qualifications.

2. Recording assessments

An audio recording must be made of **all** Entry level (Entry 1, 2 and 3) Speaking and Listening assignments so that they can be reviewed for Internal/External Quality Assurance (IQA/EQA) purposes.

The recording device (eg MP3 recorder, smartphone, tape recorder) should be positioned to ensure all voices can be heard clearly on the recording, though care should be taken to ensure it is as unobtrusive as possible for the candidate.

Video recordings are not required by City & Guilds, although we have no objection to their use as long as candidates' consent is obtained beforehand and they are not disadvantaged during the assessment as a result.

3. Assessor and interlocutor roles

The revised (2013) Entry level assignment documents outline the distinction between the role of an Interlocutor (responsible for facilitating discussion with the candidate during Speaking and Listening assessments) and that of an Assessor (responsible for making assessment decisions about each candidate). **Both** roles require a detailed understanding of the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum and assessment criteria for the assignment being used.

Each role should ideally be performed by different people with both present in the room whilst any Speaking and Listening assessments are taking place. However, it is acceptable for the same person to fulfil both roles providing they are not carried out simultaneously (eg if the assessment documentation is completed retrospectively, with the audio recordings used to help confirm assessment decisions).

There is no explicit Assessor/Interlocutor distinction within the supervised portfolio assessments for Speaking and Listening at levels 1 and 2. Nevertheless, it is crucial that assessors are able to give the assessment process their full attention.

4. Prior notification of assessments

Following changes to the Home Office Knowledge of Language and Life (KoLL) requirement in October 2013 (see below), It is **no longer necessary** to notify City & Guilds in advance when particular ESOL Skills for Life Speaking and Listening assessments will be taking place.

Nevertheless, as with any form of quality assured internal assessment, it is necessary for centres to plan their assessment activity and have a detailed Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) strategy. Centres must provide City & Guilds with details of these arrangements as and when required, so External Quality Assurance (EQA) monitoring activity can be planned accordingly. City & Guilds must also be advised of **all** locations where ESOL Skills for Life assessments will be taking place, with any new locations notified via a Centre Update (CU) form.

As indicated in the Supporting Customer Excellence Centre Manual (see 3.7, Quality Assurance Strategy), City & Guilds sometimes undertakes 'unannounced' monitoring activity.

5. Use of Entry level assignments

The bank of live Entry level ESOL assignments was refreshed earlier this year, and the previous assignment documents (dating from 2008) were removed from our website in August 2013. No further assessments may be carried out using the old assignments.

Centres must use at least **three** different assignment titles (at each of the Entry levels they offer) over the course of rolling twelve-month period. A range of assignments is provided so centres can select the topic(s) most likely to engage their learners' interests – although learners must not be 'taught to the test' and any live assignments must be presented to candidates unseen.

If you have any queries or require further clarification of these revised requirements, please contact your managing City & Guilds Customer Support team.

New interim assessment for ESOL Skills for Life Reading at levels 1 and 2

(3692-11 and -12)

Applies to: *England, Northern Ireland and Wales*

As we indicated in our September update, access to the Basic and Key Skills (BKS) national tests has now **closed** and a new 'interim' assessment has been introduced for the Reading unit of ESOL Skills for Life at levels 1 and 2.

Candidates working towards the **full-mode** ESOL Skills for Life qualifications at levels 1 and 2 (ie 3692-11 or -12) will need to complete the interim Reading assessment, **unless** they have achieved any of the following:

- the relevant BKS test under a City & Guilds ESOL Skills for Life registration (ie 3692-303, -304, -983, -403, -404 or -984)^{*}
- the relevant BKS test as an ESOL Skills for Life candidate with another awarding organisation[†]
- the relevant BKS test as an Adult Literacy candidate – either with City & Guilds or another awarding organisation[†]
- the relevant BKS test as a Key Skills Communication candidate – either with City & Guilds or another awarding organisation[†]
- another awarding organisation's Ofqual-approved interim ESOL Skills for Life Reading assessment[†]
- the Reading component of **City & Guilds'** Functional Skills Qualification in English (ie 3748-110, -310, -010, -113, -313 or -013), since this is based on the same assessment specification as our interim ESOL Skills for Life Reading assessment. Please note other awarding organisations' Functional Skills assessments are **not** acceptable for this purpose[†].

About the interim assessment

The interim assessment is based on the same assessment specification and format as our existing Functional Skills English Reading assessments. The assessment specification has been re-referenced to the National Standards for Adult Literacy on which the ESOL Skills for Life qualifications are based (see grids below), although a discrete set of carefully chosen assessment papers is being used.

Like the BKS tests, the FS English Reading assessments (at both levels) last one hour, although there are some important differences:

- they are not 'fixed response' – so require human examiner marking (results turnaround will take a maximum of 20 working days)
- they allow candidates to use 'routine' equipment where this reflects their normal ways of working – eg there's no constraint on the use of dictionaries (although this must **not** include anything that might compromise independent achievement, eg any devices able to transmit/receive information, pre-prepared notes, crib-sheets or similar)
- since this is a temporary solution, it is unfortunately not possible to offer onscreen delivery or on-demand availability – instead there are three **fixed-date** assessment opportunities
 - Monday 16 December 2013
 - Monday 7 April 2014
 - Monday 23 June 2014.

The 3692-11 and 3692-12 Walled Garden Catalogue pages contain details of the codes to use when entering candidates for these assessments.

^{*} No further action is required, since this result will be counted automatically towards certification once the Writing and Speaking & Listening units have been achieved.

[†] In each of these cases, the relevant prior achievement 'proxy' code (3692-501 or -502) will need to be claimed to enable certification (see guidance on page 15 of the ESOL Skills for Life (3692) handbook).

A range of **sample Reading assessments** are available from our [Functional Skills Level 1](#) and [Functional Skills Level 2](#) webpages. We **strongly** advise tutors and learners to spend sufficient time familiarising with the format/content of these samples before entering for any live assessments.

The specification for each of these assessments is as follows:

Level 1

Skill Standard	Criteria and range	Marks available	Item type and number of items
Read and understand a range of straightforward texts	1.2.1 Identify the main points and ideas and how they are presented in a variety of texts	8	15 x free text response 3 x fixed response
	1.2.2 Read and understand texts in detail	17	
	1.2.3 Utilise information contained in texts	10	
	1.2.4 Identify suitable responses to texts	5	
Total		40	18

Pass mark range[‡]: 25-29 out of 40

ESOL Skills for Life standards coverage

		Read and understand straightforward texts of varying length on a variety of topics accurately and independently Read and obtain information from different sources					
		4.2.1	4.2.2	4.2.3	4.2.4	4.2.5	4.2.6
Read and understand a range of straightforward texts	1.2.1 Identify the main points and ideas and how they are presented in a variety of texts	trace and understand the main events of continuous descriptive, explanatory and persuasive texts	recognise how language and other textual features are used to achieve different purposes, eg to instruct, explain, describe, persuade	identify the main points and specific detail, and infer meaning from images which is not explicit in the text	use organisational and structural features to locate information, eg contents, index, menus, subheadings, paragraphs	use different reading strategies to find and obtain information	use reference material to find the meaning of unfamiliar words
	1.2.2 Read and understand texts in detail						
	1.2.3 Utilise information contained in texts						
	1.2.4 Identify suitable responses to texts						

[‡] The exact pass mark varies from paper to paper, to take into account slight variations in accessibility/difficulty and to ensure the standard of work required to achieve a pass is consistent.

Level 2 Skill Standard	Criteria and range	Marks available	Item type and number of items
Select, read, understand and compare texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	2.2.1 Select and use different types of texts to obtain and utilise relevant information	8	12 x free text response 3 x fixed response
	2.2.2 Read and summarise, succinctly, information/ideas from different sources	8	
	2.2.3 Identify the purposes of texts and comment on how meaning is conveyed	10	
	2.2.4 Detect point of view, implicit meaning and/or bias	7	
	2.2.5 Analyse texts in relation to audience needs and consider suitable responses	7	
Total		40	15

Pass mark range[§]: 26-28 out of 40

ESOL Skills for Life standards coverage

		read and understand a range of texts of varying complexity accurately and independently read and obtain information of varying length and detail from different sources									
		5.2.1	5.2.2	5.2.3	5.2.4	5.2.5	5.2.6	5.2.7	5.2.8	5.2.9	5.2.10
		trace and understand the main events of continuous descriptive, explanatory and persuasive texts	identify the purpose of a text and infer meaning which is not explicit	identify the main points and specific detail	read an argument and identify the points of view	read critically to evaluate information and compare information, ideas and opinions from different sources	use organisational features and systems to locate texts and information	use different reading strategies to find and obtain information, eg skimming, scanning, detailed reading	summarise information from longer documents	read and understand technical vocabulary	use reference materials to find the meanings of unfamiliar words
Select, read, understand and compare texts and use them to gather information, ideas, arguments and opinions	2.2.1 Select and use different types of texts to obtain and utilise relevant information										
	2.2.2 Read and summarise, succinctly, information/ideas from different sources										
	2.2.3 Identify the purposes of texts and comment on how meaning is conveyed										
	2.2.4 Detect point of view, implicit meaning and/or bias										
	2.2.5 Analyse texts in relation to audience needs and consider suitable responses										

[§] The exact pass mark varies from paper to paper, to take into account slight variations in accessibility/difficulty and to ensure the standard or work required to achieve a pass is consistent.

All Reading assessments must take place on the **specified day**, although may start at any time from 00:01 until 23:59 on that date. Candidates should be accommodated together if at all possible, although if multiple sittings are required care should be taken to ensure there is no collusion between candidates (there is a confidentiality statement on the front page of each assessment paper that candidates are required to sign). To ensure results are turned around within 20 working days, all completed assessments must be returned to City & Guilds **together** in one envelope.

ESOL qualifications on the Framework – update (3692 - all)

Applies to: *England, Northern Ireland and Wales*

Work is continuing on our new Framework-based ESOL qualifications that will replace the 3692 suite from next summer.

We'd like to say thank you once again to all of the ESOL practitioners and centres that we've spoken to about the new qualifications over the last couple of months. If you haven't yet had a chance to have your say, please feel free to get in touch (via mathsandenglish@cityandguilds.com).

Changes to Knowledge of Language and Life (KoLL) requirement for Naturalisation/Settlement – reminder (3692 – all qualifications at Entry 3 or higher)

Applies to: *England, Northern Ireland and Wales*

Finally, a reminder that the Home Office has published further guidance on the range of language qualifications that can be accepted for the revised KoLL requirements that came into force on 28 October 2013 – see <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/settlement/knowledge-language-life/demonstrating/#>.

As we indicated in September's update, **any** of the following may be used as evidence of meeting the language part of the KoLL requirements (applicants also need to pass the Home Office 'Life in the UK' test):

- ESOL-designated qualifications at Entry 3 or higher listed on the Ofqual Register of Regulated Qualifications, completed in England, Wales or Northern Ireland
- SQA ESOL qualifications at SCQF Level 3 or higher, completed in Scotland
- internationally available language qualifications at CEFR B1 or higher, designated by the Home Office as a Secure English Language Test (SELT).

The KoLL requirements are **completely separate** from the language conditions that apply to certain categories of visa for entry or extension of stay (only SELT-list qualifications are acceptable for this purpose).