



PART OF **nocn** GROUP

Centre Handbook

ESOL Skills for Life

Version

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To know more about NOCN:

- Visit the NOCN website: www.nocn.org.uk
- Call the Customer Service Team: **0300 999 1177**

www.nocn.org.uk

Welcome

Welcome to the NOCN ESOL Skills for Life Centre Handbook. NOCN are pleased that you have chosen us for your ESOL Qualification, we are proud of the qualifications we provide. We work hard to ensure we provide quality assessment materials, that are well written and presented in a way to help learners' accessibility.

As an NOCN centre, you will have access to Centre Events, Webinars, and Principal Examiner reports to keep you up to date with ESOL Skills for Life, as well as access to help and support from our dedicated ESOL Team.

The NOCN Centre Handbook for ESOL Skills for Life includes all the information your centre will need to deliver NOCN ESOL qualifications. The handbook provides useful information to help you get started and kept up to date with NOCN ESOL Qualifications.

This document should be read in conjunction with the:

- [Qualification Specification](#)
- [NOCN Quality Assurance Manual](#)
- [NOCN Policies and Procedures](#)

These documents, and other policies and guidance within the handbook, provide support for centres with the general requirements that your appointed External Quality Assurer works to. All of these 'essential reads' are there to help us, help you.

We're confident that you will enjoy using the NOCN ESOL Qualifications. If you have any queries, or require further support, please contact us on 0300 999 1177 or by email at nocn@nocn.org.uk

We look forward to working with you!

The NOCN ESOL Skills for Life Team

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Getting Started

1.1 Familiarise yourself with NOCN via the Website, Horizon, Quartzweb and vLearn

NOCN uses various platforms that have specific functions.

[NOCN Website](#) – Here you will find some initial information about NOCN, its products, services and updates. For ESOL, this website gives access to the Qualification Specifications, Fees and Charges and Key Information for Centres

The following sites require log in details that should have been provided to you during the Onboarding process. Please ensure that you keep your log in details safe:

[Horizon](#) – This platform retains information relating to the delivery of ESOL e.g. your centre documents, key contacts/tutors/IQAs at your college/centre. You can view your Key Contacts for NOCN including your named External Quality Assurer. It is on this platform that you will also access your EQA reports once completed.

[Quartzweb](#) – You claim your students' achievements here and all SLC achievements (all levels).

[vLearn](#) - In the Document Manager – Section 14.1 – Foundations for Learning and Life. Here you will find ESOL Sample Assessments and Mark Schemes (all levels), and Live Assessments and Mark Schemes. Within the 'Key Information & Guidance' section you'll find information from NOCN and the Principal Examiners to help you to help your learners, along with free resources.

If you lose your password(s) or experience difficulties accessing these secure areas – please make use of the email contacts below:

Horizon and Quartzweb Queries – nocn@nocn.org.uk

vLearn Queries - vLearn@olivegroup.io

1.2 Familiarise yourself with the Qualification Specification

It is worth adding the Qualification Specification as a bookmark on your internet browser.

The Qualification Specification is an important document and gives key information about:

- the qualifications, components, timings, marks etc
- who the qualifications are for
- how to achieve the qualifications
- how the qualifications are assessed
- how to offer the qualifications
- how the qualifications are quality assured
- subject content information
- expectations
- centre guidance for conducting assessments etc.

The Qualification Specification reminds you of the staffing requirements:

Teachers/Tutors/Assessors should be able to demonstrate the following competences:

- be technically competent in teaching English as a Second or Other Language (the minimum expectation is that the tutor/assessor has a qualification in teaching ESOL, for example a Level 4 or 5 ESOL specialist qualification),
- hold a recognised full teaching qualification or, for new tutors, undertake and complete a full teacher training qualification such as Certificate in Education, PGCE or Level 5
- Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector.

IQAs must be able meet the quality assurance requirements for the specific qualification, and therefore should be confident in the subject area. They also need a detailed understanding of the Qualification Specification and assessment requirements, in order to fully support the learners and the Assurer and to be compliant with NOCN requirements. They should be technically competent in teaching English as a Second or Other Language and/or have experience of delivering training within the area. The minimum expectation is that the level of experience should be at the same level as the training that is to be delivered.

The Qualification Specification also provides assessment specific information:

Speaking and listening – Resource Requirements

Speaking and Listening assessments are conducted on a one to one, pairs or group basis. Where tutors are participating in the task, it is recommended that these particular tasks are recorded to enable the tutor to listen again and

confirm their judgements against the Assessment Mark Sheets. Malpractice occurs when the examination is not administered as per NOCN guidance.

Reading – Resource Requirements

Dictionaries are not allowed in assessments. A reader is not allowed but a scribe may be used in assessments for reading.

Writing – Resource Requirements

Dictionaries are not allowed in assessments. A reader is allowed but a scribe may not be used in assessments for writing.

Assessments may be invigilated by the tutor under controlled conditions. A minimum of 10% of all assessments must be sampled by the Internal Quality Assurer (IQA). A further 10% of Speaking and Listening assessments must be observed by an IQA who must complete an Observation of Assessment Form.

Following internal quality assurance, the centre should request an external quality assurance visit.

[ESOL Skills for Life Qualification Specification](#)

1.3 Familiarise yourself with the Subject Content of the Qualifications

To fully support your learners to achieve their ESOL Qualification, it is essential that all elements of the ESOL Core Curriculum – Subject Content for ESOL is taught for the level being studied. This should also be clearly evidenced in Schemes of Work.

Speaking and Listening – NOCN would like to encourage centres to ensure that the full subject content is taught (for the level being studied).

Reading - NOCN would like to urge centres to ensure the full subject content is taught (for the level being studied).

Writing – NOCN would like to urge centres to ensure the full subject content is taught (for the level being studied).

[Link to the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum](#)

1.4 Familiarise yourself with the NOCN Quality Assurance Manual and the key regulations, policies and procedures

NOCN has a variety of Quality Assurance documents that you will have been made aware of during the Onboarding process when you first joined NOCN. It is essential that you revisit the documents regularly and ensure you are compliant with the requirements of being an NOCN centre.

The NOCN Quality Assurance Manual is a key document to access. This document supports the NOCN Centre Agreement and Terms and Conditions in outlining the requirements of centres to gain and retain Centre Approval.

NOCN centres are monitored against their adherence to the NOCN Approval Criteria, which are listed individually within the Quality Assurance Manual, alongside the relevant supporting information, guidance and requirements in how centres must meet or evidence their compliance with that criteria. It is therefore key that your centre is familiar with and adheres to the Approval Criteria. If in doubt, please contact your NOCN External Quality Assurer (EQA) in the first instance or email Quality Assurance via assurance@nocn.org.uk.

From the links provided below you will be able to access the Quality Assurance Manual, Quality Assurance documents, Policies and Procedures, Quality Assurance Support and Guidance, Invigilator Handbook, etc.

[Link to NOCN Policies and Procedures](#)

[Link to NOCN Quality Assurance documents](#)

[Link to NOCN Quality Assurance Manual](#)

[Link to NOCN Quality Assurance guidance including Invigilator Handbook](#)

1.5 Familiarise yourself with the Fees and Charges for ESOL

NOCN's Fees and Charges document is updated annually. This document provides the Annual Centre Fee and charges for individual qualifications.

[Link to NOCN Fees and Charges document for 2022/23](#)

1.6 Familiarise yourself with the Sample Assessments

These can be found on vLearn - Section 14.1

If you want to make use of online assessments, complete the expression of interest form (on the above link) and a member of the Qualification Approval team will contact you to help with your request.

1.7 ESOL Assessments

1.7.1 Accessing Assessments

Assessments are downloaded from vLearn and printed by the centre up to 48 hours before the assessment time. These are stored in a secure location before and after the assessment. They are entrusted to the safekeeping of the Tutor/Assessor for the time before/during/after the assessment.

In all cases, it is imperative that a learner has engaged with a sample assessment before taking their live assessment. Failure to do so could severely impact the learners' ability in the assessment itself.

1.7.2 Marking the Assessments

ESOL Skills for Life assessments are externally set by NOCN, internally assessed by centres, internally quality assured by centres and externally quality assured by NOCN. All Entry Level assessments and mark schemes along with all Speaking, Listening and Communication documents are hosted on vLearn.

When writing the SLC assessment reports please ensure a report is completed for each learner. The report should clearly narrate what occurred e.g. who, did what, when and how. The report should also provide a few quotes (ideally 3) on how they proved their competence in each part of their assessment. The following is an example of a presentation write up:

Thelma carried out her Level 2 SLC presentation (using books, photos and PowerPoint) on 'Why I love Harry Potter books' on (date) in front of 4 peers DN, EP, KW, RYM.

Thelma presented a good argument on why Harry Potter is a good series of books. She expressed her opinions clearly on her favourite characters and supported this with evidence, e.g. 'I've always liked the strength and mental reasoning abilities of Hermione'. Her pitch was clear, and she explained the terminology clearly, e.g. 'muggles are what JKR describes as non-magic folk'.

The presentation lasted for 12 minutes, then she invited questions from her peers. She nominated by pointing, to ensure all had an opportunity to ask questions. DN asked 'why isn't Harry one of your favourite characters', Thelma responded politely 'Whilst he's the main character he does rely on the strength of his friends, especially Hermione. She's the one with the knowledge and guidance that gets them out of mischief time and time again'.

Total length of assessment 19 minutes 40 seconds.

1.7.3 Results of Assessments and claiming of Qualifications

Centres should inform learners that they have achieved and that the centre's decision is subject to External Verification from NOCN. Please ensure that the learner is made aware that an EQA may wish to speak with them about their experience with the qualification. Centres claim achievement via Quartzweb. Please make your EQA aware that you have processed these claims, as timescales for verification is dependent on whether the centre has Direct Claims Status or not.

1.8 Key Contacts

Please find below some key contacts at NOCN:

- Customer Experience Team – nocn@nocn.org.uk
- Assurance – assurance@nocn.org.uk
- Business Development – business-enquiries@nocn.org.uk

Please include ESOL Query in the subject heading.

1.9 Horizon and your Centre File

Please ensure that all staff information (that are involved with the qualification), together with their CVs are uploaded to Horizon. This information enables NOCN to send you important updates and helps your EQA to contact and support you. Please remember to update this information when staff join or leave your organisation.

Please also ensure that you keep your Centre File updated. This file would include the key information that your EQA will wish to see when they visit, e.g. Entry Level assessments, SLC assessments at all levels, tracking documents to show enrolments, component achievements and full qualification achievements.

1.10 Make use of Reasonable Adjustments that are available to your learners

At NOCN we believe that all learners deserve a fair and equal opportunity to access our ESOL assessments. Whether you have an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) in place for your learner or other valid evidence to support your application for a Reasonable Adjustment, please make yourself familiar with what help/support can be requested from NOCN. Full guidance is given in the Reasonable Adjustment Policy and Procedure document. Please note that the Reasonable Adjustment form must be sent to NOCN at least 10 working days prior to the assessment taking place. Once you have completed the form e.g. learners'

details, rationale and supporting evidence, please send the completed Reasonable Adjustment Application Form to assurance@nocn.org.uk NOCN will process this request as soon as possible.

Please store the approved form in an electronic folder or print it and add it to your Centre File, as your EQA may wish to view this as part of their checks.

As you'll see in the documents, various help/support is available – including extra time, a comfort break, a reader, a scribe, a prompter, the use of a word processor or an enlarged assessment for ease of reading. For SLC this could mean a reduced number of learners present during the assessment, or a person nominated to simply encourage the learner.

Please make use of the Reasonable Adjustments, they are there to help your learners.

[Link to Reasonable Adjustments Application Form via Key Information for Centres](#)

Assessment Ready?

2.1 Plan for Assessment

Your Scheme of Work, or Assessment Plan, should detail when assessments are likely to take place. Please also ensure that you plan dates for mock assessments completed under time constraints, to help prepare the learner for their assessment.

For ESOL, we would recommend staggering the assessments rather than end-loading them. For example, an English 24-week course could consist of the following: - SLC group discussion week 8, Reading week 12, SLC presentation week 16, Writing week 20, leaving weeks 21-24 for resits, recaps, preparation for the next level etc. Good practice would also be to inform your EQA when you have assessments and SLC activities taking place, they can then offer help and support and may also want to see these taking place.

2.2 Plan the time to complete the Sample/Familiarisation Assessments

Please ensure that the sample assessments/familiarisation papers are used. As mentioned previously, these should only be used when all subject content teaching has taken place and the teacher regards that the learner is ready for assessment.

The mock assessments provide an excellent opportunity for learners to familiarise themselves with the assessment itself before their actual live assessment. This enables them to get used to the type of questioning used within an NOCN assessment.

2.3 Plan the assessment day so that all runs smoothly

Assessments are to be completed within the time constraints, however, the tasks themselves can be completed over more than one session if required. The assessments are to be carried out in controlled conditions rather than examination conditions.

3.1 Results

Pass result – This is great news and a reflection that the full subject content was taught, and that the learner was assessment ready.

Fail result – This simply means that your learner is not yet ready to pass.

Things to consider:

1. How near to the pass mark was the learner?

Pass marks are shown on the Mark Schemes.

2. Is more tuition required before the next assessment?

If the learner was more than 3 marks away from the pass mark, we'd strongly advise more tuition takes place before another assessment attempt. Too many assessment attempts can dishearten a learner and de-motivate them.

If the learner was within 3 marks of the notional pass mark, we'd advise that tuition continues to ensure the good practices that the learner has obtained are maintained. Another assessment could be booked within 2-3 weeks.

The tutor should provide more tuition, focusing on areas that the learner struggled with whilst teaching took place.

3. Resits:

If a learner does not pass the assessment, a different assessment may be completed after two weeks of teaching and learning has taken place.

4.1 Final thoughts and suggestions

Please ensure you monitor your emails and the vLearn site for the latest information from the ESOL Team. As explained, it's essential that Horizon is kept up to date by your centre to ensure these key messages are received by the right staff.

We endeavour to keep emails, communications, and bulletins to a minimum, as we realise you are all extremely busy, but we encourage you to make the time to read the information that is sent.

Please also make use of the information we upload to vLearn, including mock assessment papers, Principal Examiner Report, Hints and Tips Webinars etc. These have been provided to assist you to prepare your learners for assessment.

Finally, each year we organise a Centre Event, either in person (at various locations throughout the UK) or remotely. Please do engage with these events, they are there to support you to support your learners. These usually take place in February/March.

The ESOL Team are here to support you and very much value your business. We look forward to supporting you.

Thank you for your time in reading this information.

The NOCN ESOL Team

Useful Links for Centres

ESOL Skills for Life Qualification Specification

Link to NOCN Fees and Charges document for 2022/23

Link to NOCN Policies and Procedures

Link to NOCN Quality Assurance documents

Link to Reasonable Adjustments Application Form via Key Information for Centres

NOCN Website

Quartzweb

<https://quartzweb.nocn.org.uk/>

Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration Policy and Procedure