

Extended Extraordinary Regulatory Framework

ESOL Skills for Life

(A full list of qualifications covered by this guidance is listed in [Appendix \(II\)](#))

Now that the ERF is finished, the regulators are implementing an extended version for the 2020-21 academic year. This is because they acknowledge that further disruption to teaching and learning is possible due to local lockdowns and social distancing measures. This regulatory framework will allow the usual 'rules' to be flexed temporarily by AOs permitting certain adaptations.

The regulators have confirmed that there will be NO Centre Assessment Grades / calculated results under the Extended ERF.

The Extended ERF will run alongside the General Conditions for the whole of the 2020-21 academic year. Learners can achieve either under the General Conditions or under the Extended ERF.

Context: ESOL and the ERF (ended 31st July 2020)

The mitigation against the disruption caused by the lockdown for Ascentis ESOL Skills for Life qualifications was confirmed by the regulators as 'calculate.' The only avenue available for achievement during the summer was a calculated result (a Centre Assessment Grade / CAG). This had to be based on **sufficient trusted evidence** that met a minimum threshold. There was no expectation for Centres to continue any assessment processes with learners after 21st March. Many Centres had sufficient trusted evidence 'banked' prior to this date, but some did not.

A number of Centres opted to delay achievement as they had insufficient trusted evidence to determine CAGs. **Centres that opted to delay should be making every effort to support those learners who would have achieved by 31st July 2020 to achieve by the end of December 2020.**

ESOL and the Extended ERF (up to 31st July 2021)

Awarding Organisations have been required by the regulators to consider what adaptations they will make available to Centres in 2020-21 under the Extended ERF **if Centres need to be more flexible than the General Conditions allow. If Centres can carry on as normal, albeit using social distancing protocols, then they may not need to consider the Extended ERF.**

Awarding Organisations have determined a number of common principles for ESOL in the EERF, including:

- The 2011 ESOL criteria still stand
- The content of the assessments remains the same
- Adaptations will seek to maximise teaching and learning time for our Centres
- Adaptations should not disadvantage any candidates or Centres
- **The focus of adaptations will be on assessment delivery** under different local restriction measures and **not on assessment criteria.**
- Adaptations should be fair for all candidates regardless of ethnicity, religious group, economic status, gender etc.

We have notified the regulators of the adaptations we are permitting in Ascentis ESOL and what we will do to manage any risks associated with them.

Current Ascentis situation

All Ascentis ESOL qualifications at all levels use externally set assessments, with resources available on demand to Centres. Three complete sets of assessments are available at any one time to all Centres. The bank is refreshed each academic year, with one paper being retired and a new paper made available on QuartzWeb. Learners therefore have three opportunities to achieve in an academic year. Centres are currently permitted to use a task from a different set in the event of a re-sit being required, so that learners do not have to re-take elements of the paper that they have already achieved. Centres are **not** currently permitted to split up the Reading assessment into separate tasks.

All assessments are taken in controlled conditions. Some units require face-to-face interaction between learner and tutor / assessor. Some units require group interaction.

Ascentis ESOL was developed to be flexible, with modular assessments that can be taken during usual class time, (under controlled conditions) which are available on-demand. The regulators would like us to promote this feature to Centres who may not be taking advantage of the 'modular' approach already.

Potential issues in 2020-21

- Disruption due to local lockdowns – Centres having to suspend contact with learners and scheduled assessment sessions being cancelled. This may result in learners not achieving the full qualification in the academic year.
- Social distancing requirements affecting the way controlled assessments are taken.

Many centres use termly or semester-based assessment approaches and then assess a full Award / unit e.g. Speaking and Listening at the end of the term / semester. In the event of disruption affecting the assessment date, this means that a full Award/unit may be missed or delayed.

However, in many other centres, learners take the assessments by sitting the three tasks separately on different dates, spread over the term or semester, rather than take a full paper in one sitting. This enables achievements to be 'banked' as the course progresses.

We therefore strongly advise Centres to bank by task, wherever possible (e.g. teach the completion of forms, then take the assessment on form-filling). This would mean that assessment and internal verification could still continue cumulatively and the risk that the qualification won't be completed by the end of the academic year would be reduced. If only one task is delayed, this could be completed as soon as possible (e.g. after a local lockdown is lifted), rather than learners having to complete a full Award/unit after a hiatus in their learning.

Social distancing measures will mean smaller class sizes and smaller assessment groups for most of our Centres. This may result in a larger number of separate assessment **sessions** over a period of time. The risk of learners being able to share the content of an assessment with other learners who are still due to sit the assessment is therefore increased.

We need to support Centres in considering ways of maintaining the confidentiality of live papers by ensuring that the use of the papers is not predictable.

Ascentis ESOL – permitted adaptations under the EERF

1. **Centres are to be permitted to use tasks from different sets of live assessment papers, rather than have to complete a full assessment paper from the same set.** This will enable them to 'pick and mix' the content of live assessments, in order to mitigate against predictability across and within cohorts of learners. Centres will be required to use a tracking mechanism to ensure that there is clear auditable evidence of which tasks have been taken by each learner. Ascentis will provide tracking tools for Centres who do not currently have systems in place that could do this.
2. **The 'splitting up' of sets will now be permitted for the Reading units for the duration of the EERF.** Centres must ensure that they are providing an appropriate range of tasks for learners if they decide to use this adaptation. Centres must contact their EQA in advance if they are unsure about using this adaptation.
3. **Centres will be given the option to scan in and send selected assessments electronically to EQAs for verification in exceptional circumstances where original copies cannot be posted due to Covid restrictions.**

Please see [Appendix \(I\)](#) for further information.

4. **Centres will be permitted to use online platforms for remote practice assessments:** This would support Centres in keeping attendance in Centres to a minimum where necessary.

Ascentis will offer support to Centres by providing:

- Tracking mechanisms – Word / Excel versions will be made available to Centres. It is not mandatory to use these if Centres have their own systems that cover what is required. These will be made available on QuartzWeb with appropriate guidance.
- Webinars for Centres, starting with one on 15th October 2020. The focus of this was on the Extended ERF, the adaptations permitted and the rationale for these. The event also facilitated the sharing of ideas between Centres about online platforms they are using for blended delivery and practice assessments. Further ESOL webinars will be offered throughout the year, which will support Centres with their processes and provide opportunity for clarification on adaptations where necessary.
- An online platform / repository with accessible practice assessment materials in MS-Word format to facilitate online adaptations. Further details of this will be confirmed and communicated as soon as possible.

Please note that online or remote assessment of live assessments is NOT permitted for Ascentis ESOL as an adaptation under the EERF.

This is because:

- Ascentis could not ensure the confidentiality of the live assessment materials if these were to be shared with individuals online. There would be a much higher risk of the integrity of the qualification becoming compromised.
- Ascentis does not currently have a sufficiently tried and tested online platform for learners to complete ESOL assessments remotely (i.e. away from Centres without staff supervision).
- Ascentis would need to manage and monitor Centres' use of IT to ensure that it did not disadvantage learners taking assessments (in terms of both technological ability and the assessment of specific communication skills online in a less natural situation).
- We would have to insist on 100% internal verification of such an adaptation, which would increase the burden on Centre workloads.

However, Centres do have the option use blended delivery models to keep face-to-face contact with learners to a minimum where necessary, and practice assessments may be taken online. When learners are ready, time in the Centre could be focused on completing live assessments in small groups under controlled and socially-distanced conditions. This could be undertaken as soon as practicable, on a task by task basis. Learners could then re-sit individual tasks as necessary later in their course.

Summary

We will support Centres as far as possible to make live assessments unpredictable, so that they can increase the frequency / number of assessment sessions. These must still take place under controlled conditions in Centres.

We will support Centres by explaining the rationale behind our decisions regarding live assessments under the Extended ERF and work with them on their planning for the year ahead and with their 'logistics' in the event of local lockdown restrictions.

We will support Centres to deliver course content and practice assessments online so that they can minimise attendance in Centres if this is what is required.

Appendix (I)

Centres are permitted to scan in and send selected assessments electronically to EQAs for verification in exceptional circumstances.

Please note that assessors may **not** use electronic or scanning methods to mark assessments, and internal quality assurance should **not** be carried out electronically on live assessment papers.

This is a change to the normal process, where original copies of completed assessments must be sent through secure and tracked post. Where local restrictions are put in place that would make the posting of original assessments overly burdensome, we will allow Centres to scan in those scripts selected for sampling by an External Quality Assurer (EQA). These scanned copies can be sent to the EQA if this helps to avoid disadvantaging learners who would otherwise not receive timely results and certification.

Risks

- There is a risk that Centres will not send these through secure / encrypted platforms which imposes a higher risk of the integrity of the qualification becoming compromised.
- There will be duplicate copies (possible multiple duplications), both hard copy and electronic, which increases risk that there may be a breach of assessment confidentiality.
- There is a risk that the scanning equipment held in Centres do not scan in colour or to a high enough quality for the marks or learner responses to be clearly seen.
- Electronic copies may be easier to tamper with. Content can be deleted/changed and so the authenticity and validity of the assessment responses may be less secure.

Ascentis therefore stipulates a number of conditions to mitigate risk if a Centre wishes to use this adaptation:

- Centres **MUST retain ALL original copies** of documents they have scanned in, if claiming achievement this way under the EERF. Ascentis reserves the right to request the original copies at any time during the period of the EERF (i.e. until 31st July 2021).
- EQAs may request original copies as part of the verification process if they are not satisfied with the scanned versions (for whatever reason) and Centres must be able to provide these prior to achievement being confirmed.
- Centres must train staff in scanning documents into appropriately labelled and organised folders / files, so that documents can be easily identified / located / signposted to EQAs.
- Centres must devise a documented process for securely sending electronic copies of live assessments while mitigating the risk outlined above. This should cover the management, monitoring and deletion of any electronic copies made.

This adaptation will be permitted **as a last resort** and a rationale will be required from the Centre as to why the original copies cannot be sent and how they plan to mitigate the risk identified.

If it is necessary for a Centre to use this adaptation, they must email qualityassurance@ascentis.co.uk in advance, to provide information relating to the specific circumstances preventing original copies from being sent for verification. The Centre must provide Ascentis with information on how they will be encrypting the documents / assessments and/or which secure platform they intend to use to share the confidential material.

Appendix (II) – Qualifications covered by this guidance

Ofqual regulated Qualifications

Ascentis Entry Level Certificate in ESOL Skills for Life (Entry 1) (601/4302/2)
Ascentis Entry Level Certificate in ESOL Skills for Life (Entry 2) (601/4080/X)
Ascentis Entry Level Certificate in ESOL Skills for Life (Entry 3) (601/4081/1)
Ascentis Level 1 Certificate in ESOL Skills for Life (601/4082/3)
Ascentis Level 2 Certificate in ESOL Skills for Life (601/4083/5)
Ascentis Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Speaking and Listening (Entry 1) (601/4325/3)
Ascentis Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Speaking and Listening (Entry 2) (601/4267/4)
Ascentis Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Speaking and Listening (Entry 3) (601/4268/6)
Ascentis Level 1 Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Speaking and Listening (601/4280/7)
Ascentis Level 2 Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Speaking and Listening (601/4269/8)
Ascentis Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Reading (Entry 1) (601/4326/5)
Ascentis Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Reading (Entry 2) (601/4270/4)
Ascentis Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Reading (Entry 3) (601/4271/6)
Ascentis Level 1 Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Reading (601/4281/9)
Ascentis Level 2 Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Reading (601/4272/8)
Ascentis Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Writing (Entry 1) (601/4327/7)
Ascentis Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Writing (Entry 2) (601/4273/X)
Ascentis Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Writing (Entry 3) (601/4274/1)
Ascentis Level 1 Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Writing (601/4279/0)
Ascentis Level 2 Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Writing (601/4275/3)

Qualifications Wales regulated qualifications

Ascentis Entry Level Certificate in ESOL Skills for Life (Entry 1) (C00/1191/1)
Ascentis Entry Level Certificate in ESOL Skills for Life (Entry 2) (C00/1191/7)
Ascentis Entry Level Certificate in ESOL Skills for Life (Entry 3) (C00/1192/1)
Ascentis Level 1 Certificate in ESOL Skills for Life (C00/1192/5)
Ascentis Level 2 Certificate in ESOL Skills for Life (C00/1193/0)
Ascentis Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Speaking and Listening (Entry 1) (C00/1191/2)
Ascentis Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Speaking and Listening (Entry 2) (C00/1191/8)
Ascentis Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Speaking and Listening (Entry 3) (C00/1192/2)
Ascentis Level 1 Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Speaking and Listening (C00/1192/7)
Ascentis Level 2 Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Speaking and Listening (C00/1193/1)
Ascentis Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Reading (Entry 1) (C00/1191/4)
Ascentis Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Reading (Entry 2) (C00/1191/9)
Ascentis Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Reading (Entry 3) (C00/1192/3)
Ascentis Level 1 Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Reading (C00/1192/8)
Ascentis Level 2 Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Reading (C00/1193/2)
Ascentis Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Writing (Entry 1) (C00/1191/6)
Ascentis Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Writing (Entry 2) (C00/1192/0)
Ascentis Entry Level Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Writing (Entry 3) (C00/1192/4)
Ascentis Level 1 Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Writing (C00/1192/9)
Ascentis Level 2 Award in ESOL Skills for Life - Writing (C00/1193/3)