

VTQ Contingency Regulatory Framework (VCRF): ESOL Skills for Life

Table of Contents

Context: ESOL and the ERF	2
The ERF ended 31 st July 2020.....	2
The Extended ERF (up to 31 st July 2021)	2
Ascentis ESOL under the General Conditions	3
Issues in 2020-21	3
Adaptations permitted under the VCRF since August 2020	4
Additional adaptations that are permitted from 22 nd February 2021	5
General guidance for conducting remote online controlled S&L assessments.....	6
Speaking and Listening all levels	7
Task 1 Listening	7
One-to-one	8
Small groups (maximum of 6 learners)	8
Task 2 Role Plays	8
Entry Levels 1 to 3 One-to-one	8
Level 1 Small groups (2 - 4 learners)	8
Task 3 Presentation / Discussions	9
Small groups (2 - 3 or 4 learners according to level)	9
Level 2 Presentation Small groups (2 - 4 learners).....	9
Marking & IQA	9
Record keeping	10
Attendance lists	10
Ascentis support.....	10
Appendix (I) – Qualifications covered by this guidance	11
New adaptations (from 22 nd February 2021).....	11
Ofqual regulated Qualifications	11
Qualifications Wales regulated Qualifications	11
Other Adaptations and Guidance (in place prior to 22 nd February 2021)	11
Ofqual regulated Qualifications	11
Qualifications Wales regulated Qualifications	12
Appendix (II) – Declaration of Intent form	13
Appendix (III) – Checklist for conducting remote online assessments.....	15
Appendix (IV) – Further Information on August 2020 Adaptations	16
Risks.....	16
Appendix (V) - Additional Centre Guidance: ESOL Skills for Life Assessments 2020-21	17

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

After the Extraordinary Regulatory Framework (ERF) ended last summer, the regulators implemented an extended version for the 2020-21 academic year. This is due to the further disruption to teaching, learning and assessment that has been inevitable due to lockdowns and social distancing measures. This regulatory framework allowed the usual 'rules' to be flexed temporarily by Awarding Organisations, permitting certain adaptations.

The Extended ERF (EERF) has now been incorporated into the VTQ Contingency Regulatory Framework (VCRF) which 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 VCRF.

Context: ESOL and the ERF

The ERF ended 31st July 2020

The mitigation against the disruption caused by the 2020 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, known as a Centre Assessment Grade (CAG). This had to be based on **sufficient trusted evidence** that met a minimum threshold.

The ERF was superseded by the Extended ERF for the academic year 2020-21. All of the temporary arrangements now fall under the **VTQ Contingency Regulatory Framework (VCRF)**.

VTQ Contingency Regulatory Framework (VCRF) (up to 31st August 2021)

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

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

- The 2011 ESOL standards and 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 learners.
- **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 learners 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.

Ascentis ESOL under the General Conditions

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 of assessments is refreshed each academic year, with one paper being retired and a new paper made available through QuartzWeb. Learners therefore have three opportunities to achieve during 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** 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.

Issues in 2020-21

- Disruption due to further lockdowns or restrictions: 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. 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. 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 assessment tasks / papers is not predictable.

Some 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 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.

1. **Therefore, we 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 continue cumulatively and the risk that the qualification will not 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 lockdown is lifted), rather than learners having to complete a full Award / Unit after a hiatus in their learning.

2. From January 2021, many Centres experienced closures due to the national lockdown, and in many cases scheduled assessments did not take place or learners did not attend. In many Centres, learning has continued online for most learners, but these learners may be disadvantaged by the continuing lockdown and be unable to complete the necessary amount of learning to achieve their qualifications. Many Centres have reported that learners would prefer to have their assessments delayed so that they can complete their learning and acquire the skills and knowledge that they were expecting. **Therefore, we strongly advise that the first mitigation Centres should consider for these learners would be to extend their courses and / or delay assessments wherever possible**, into the final months of the 2020-21 academic year when we expect most Centres to have reopened.
3. Where delay is not possible for learners, Ofqual have reassured Awarding Organisations that learners due to complete their qualification by this academic year will not be disadvantaged. "Alternative arrangements" are therefore in place and Teacher Assessed Grades may be permissible for eligible learners. Please refer to the Ascentis website: [Coronavirus – Information and Advice for our Customers](#)
4. Ascentis has also been working to provide Centres with further adaptations to support the achievement of learners who have been continuing to learn online. **These further adaptations should be considered for learners where the mitigation of delaying assessments is not possible or practicable.**

Adaptations permitted under the VCRF since August 2020

1. **Centres are permitted to use tasks from different sets of live assessment papers, rather than having to complete a full assessment paper from the same set.** This enables them to 'pick and mix' the content of live assessments, to mitigate against predictability across and within cohorts of learners. Centres are required to use a tracking mechanism to ensure that there is clear auditable evidence of which tasks have been taken by each learner. Ascentis has provided tracking tools for Centres which do not already have systems in place that can do this.
2. **The 'splitting up' of sets is permitted for Reading assessments for the duration of the VCRF.** This means that all the tasks do not have to be taken together at the same time but can be taken separately, on different dates. Centres must ensure that they are providing an appropriate range of tasks for learners if they decide to use these adaptations. It is the Centre's responsibility to manage the use of sets and tasks appropriately. The assessment criteria for Entry level tasks are identical across the different sets so they are interchangeable without any issues. However, at Levels 1 and 2, if a Centre mixes tasks from different sets or if a learner needs to take only one task from a different set for a re-sit, the Centre must ensure that the learner has a fair opportunity to achieve: the Centre must ensure the replacement task covers the necessary assessment criteria for achievement and has the same number of marks.

Centres must contact their EQA in advance if they are unsure about using this adaptation.

3. **Centres have 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-19 restrictions.**

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

4. **Centres are permitted to use online platforms for remote practice assessments:** This will support Centres in keeping attendance in Centres to a minimum where necessary. An online repository with accessible **practice assessment** materials in Microsoft Word format is now available. This was set up to facilitate online adaptations where learners are studying at home and preparing for live assessments in the Centre. Please email support@ascentis.co.uk to arrange access to the repository.

Additional adaptations permitted from 22nd February 2021

Speaking and Listening controlled assessments may be undertaken remotely online, providing that Centres and learners are able to adhere to the specific guidance and protocols outlined in this document.

These adaptations apply to all learners who are not able to complete assessments face-to-face in Centres, from 22nd February 2021, until such time as the VCRF ceases to be operational.

These adaptations to assessments should **only** be used if:

1. a learner is not able to be assessed in the way outlined in the qualification specification, and
2. it is not possible to delay their assessment until later in the academic year.

Centres are not permitted to make any further adaptations to the delivery or content of assessments beyond those set out in this document. Unless specified otherwise in this document, all assessments must be conducted in accordance with the Qualification Specification, Ascentis ESOL Handbook and Assessor Guidance.

Centres will be asked to provide a clear rationale for having to use these adaptations.

Centres are responsible for ensuring that no learner is disadvantaged or advantaged by using these adaptations.

The qualification must retain its integrity and the award of the qualification must be comparable with awards in previous years and across cohorts and Centres nationally.

It is the Centre's responsibility to consider risk in this context and to identify, manage and monitor risk to ensure the security and integrity of all assessments.

General guidance for conducting remote online controlled S&L assessments

1. Centres **must not** offer online remote assessment to any learner who may in any way be disadvantaged by the controlled assessment process being completed remotely. (E.g., where learners may not have access to appropriate technology, their home conditions are not conducive to taking controlled assessments, or where the Centre considers there is a risk of malpractice). Instead, the learner's assessment must be delayed until it is possible to conduct it within the Centre.
2. Centres may conduct any or all three Speaking & Listening tasks remotely online using video-conferencing applications or other technology platforms that they have been using for online teaching and learning (e.g., Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams, Skype, Zoom). This is conditional on the Centre being able to ensure the security of the platform used and the confidentiality of live assessment materials. The platform used must have the facility to show all candidates onscreen at all times, and to save a video recording of the assessment.
3. The live assessment materials can be downloaded by the Exams Officer or Superuser from QuartzWeb and put in a folder on the Centre's secure portal (e.g., SharePoint) from where only authorised assessors can access them electronically. Centres may not otherwise copy, share, save, or email live assessment materials. Email **must not** be used for communicating any content related to live assessments or learner responses.
4. Centres must ensure learners have access to suitable equipment, which must be a PC, laptop or tablet and a satisfactory Wi-Fi / broadband connection. Mobile phones, smart watches and other electronic devices should not be accessible to learners during the assessment and learners must not access any other application or information on screen. The assessor must check and remind learners of this at the start of every assessment.
5. A mobile phone, connected to the Centre's application or technology platform, may only be used instead of a PC, laptop, or tablet, as a last resort and it is the Centre's responsibility to ensure that the learner is not disadvantaged or advantaged in any way during the live assessment. 'Audio only' calls / recordings using a phone will not be permitted under any circumstances.
6. The Centre should be confident of the learner's digital skills and familiarity with the technology to be used. This should ideally be evidenced by completion of a practice assessment using the same equipment and following the same procedures.
7. Every controlled assessment carried out online remotely must be video recorded and commence with introductions as instructed in the ESOL Centre Handbook. This includes Task 1 Listening assessments. Ascentis EQAs are entitled to join any online remote assessment at any time to ensure compliance and provide supportive guidance.
8. Centres must complete this [online Declaration of Intent form](#) to notify Ascentis of their intentions to complete controlled assessments remotely. Centres must briefly outline the processes and systems that will be used, and how risk will be managed. The content of the online form is available at [Appendix \(II\)](#). The form must be submitted no less than one week before the remote online assessments are scheduled to take place.
9. A subject specialist ESOL tutor / assessor **MUST** facilitate every task completed remotely. **Where more than one learner is being assessed, another staff member must also be online** to observe the assessments as they take place, to focus on 'invigilation'. Their role will be to minimise risk and ensure that learners are observed closely throughout. This second person does not need to be a subject specialist unless their role also includes assessing learners.

10. Authorised assessors should access the Task 1 Listening Recordings, Assessment Candidate Paper, the Assessor Guidance and Mark Scheme from the Centre's secure portal in order to conduct the assessments. Assessors may not copy, save, print, or email live assessment materials, but can display them on-screen and play recordings to learners during assessments.
11. Video recordings of assessments must be suitably named and stored in a separate folder on the secure portal by assessors, immediately the assessment is concluded. These can be accessed for marking and IQA purposes by authorised staff only.
12. Centres must make it clear to all learners that learners must not record any audio or video or save, copy, or share any of the live assessment materials that they are accessing during the assessment. Learners must not take screenshots or otherwise record any of the content. Live assessment materials must not be available to learners at any time, other than during the assessment when they are being controlled by the assessor and the learners are being closely observed.
13. During assessments, learners must observe the usual regulations for the conduct of assessments. They must not have access to notes or any papers on the desk or in front of them except where it is explicitly permitted. For example, Entry 3 Task 2, a learner may have a blank piece of paper to write information given to them by the assessor or take notes during presentations / discussions. Any notes made during an assessment must be shown to assessors at the end of the assessment and the assessor may request for them to be destroyed immediately.

Speaking and Listening all levels

Task 1 Listening

At all levels, listening tasks within the controlled assessment can be carried out remotely one-to-one or with groups of up to 6 learners (maximum). The recordings can be played, and the questions displayed on the assessor's PC and "screen-shared" through the web-conferencing software the Centre is using. The assessor must be able to view all learners at all times during the assessment, so candidate questions should be displayed in a window or split screen whilst the assessor can still see the learners. **The recording must capture the candidates at all times so they must not be obscured by the questions.**

Learners must be instructed that they are not allowed to speak during the assessment (it may be advisable to "mute all" except the assessor) or communicate in any way with other candidates.

The questions on the candidate paper should be displayed on the assessor's screen before, during and after playing the recording and the assessor should read them out in accordance with the instructions in the assessor guidance.

Ascentis has produced blank answer books for Task 1 online assessments at all levels and these can be found on QuartzWeb. These should be copied to a separate folder on the Centre's secure portal where learners can access them.

The answer books should be downloaded by learners on the day of the assessment and not before. These should be completed electronically on screen during the assessment. Learners must type their responses into the answer book, whilst being observed by the invigilator on video during the assessment. Once completed, candidates should upload their answer book to another folder on the Centre's secure portal whilst still being observed. **This must be done in a way that does not reveal any one learner's responses to others and does not give them an opportunity to edit their responses once submitted.**

All responses must be uploaded / submitted confidentially before the online assessment ends and while the session is still being recorded. Learners **must not** keep a copy on their own PC. They must not have access to the secure folders after they have submitted their completed answer book.

Alternatively, Centres can convert the answer books into a secure online form within their own technology platform for learners to access and complete, provided they are submitted securely and immediately.

Once the answer books have been completed by learners, they become live assessment material and potentially evidence of achievement and as such must be kept securely and confidentially. Learners are not permitted to email completed answer books as accessing their email account during an assessment constitutes an unacceptable security risk.

Submissions that are not made immediately, whilst the learner is being observed, will **not** be accepted.

One-to-one

If the learner is unable to complete the answer book electronically, they can give their answers verbally to the assessor, who can type them into an answer book on their behalf. In this situation the assessment will have to be conducted individually and not in a group. The assessor will need to put the learner's name, learner ID and date of birth on the learner answer book. The assessor can record this rather than the learner.

If there is another reason for the assessment to be conducted one-to-one the learner can complete the answer book or online form in the usual way.

Small groups (maximum of 6 learners)

If a Centre wishes to deliver Task 1 controlled Listening assessments with small groups, they must use a second member of staff to invigilate and observe the learners.

Centres must take steps to ensure learners do not disclose the listening task topics to other learners and one way of addressing this may be to rotate Task 1 assessments from different sets within a group of learners.

Task 2 Role Plays

Entry Levels 1 to 3 One-to-one

At Entry levels, Role Play tasks within the controlled assessment can be carried out online remotely on a one-to-one basis. The assessor can conduct invigilation and marking themselves or a second member of staff may conduct invigilation / marking.

Assessments must be conducted in accordance with the appropriate assessor guidance. This assessment must be presented to the learner unseen without prior knowledge of the assessment topic. The task and topic should be read out and displayed on screen by the assessor after the usual introduction has been completed, on video.

Centres must take steps to ensure learners who have completed their assessment do not disclose the task topic to other learners. One way of addressing this may be to rotate Task 2 assessments from different sets within a group of learners.

Where the learner needs to write down information (e.g., Entry 3), they can do so on a blank piece of paper.

Level 1 Small groups (2 - 4 learners)

At Level 1, Role Play tasks within the controlled assessment can be carried out remotely with small groups and Centres must use a second member of staff to invigilate and observe the learners. This second member of staff does not need to be a subject specialist unless their role also includes assessing the learners.

Assessments must be conducted in accordance with the appropriate assessor guidance. **This assessment must be presented to learners unseen, without prior knowledge of the assessment topic.** The task and topic should be read out and displayed on screen by the assessor after the usual introduction has been completed on video.

Centres must take steps to ensure learners do not disclose the task topic to other learners and one way of addressing this may be to rotate Task 2 assessments from different sets within a group of learners.

Task 3 Presentation / Discussions

Small groups (2 - 3 or 4 learners according to level)

For Task 3 at all levels, the Presentation and Discussion tasks within the controlled assessment can be carried out online remotely with small groups and Centres must use a second member of staff to invigilate and observe the learners. This second member of staff does not need to be a subject specialist unless their role also includes assessing the learners.

Assessments must be conducted in accordance with the appropriate assessor guidance. Group sizes, allocation of different aspects of the topic to different learners at Entry 1, notification times in advance of assessments, introductions and all other instructions should all be conducted as usual, according to the Assessor Guidance. Where a task suggests three different topics for a group each learner should present a different topic, to ensure that no learner is unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged.

Where a learner wishes to show a picture or artefact to the group, this must be done by showing the physical object to their camera and it may not be displayed electronically on screen. No mobile phones or electronic devices may be used for this purpose.

Level 2 Presentation Small groups (2 - 4 learners)

PowerPoint or other presentation software is allowed at Level 2. However, all learners must be visible on screen at all times and so the screen must not show presentation slides rather than the learner, and **the recording must show learners at all times**. Learners may share their presentation slides with their tutor in advance and present from printed handouts or notes, or the Centre may address this another way.

Please consider how your Centre will manage this well in advance, so that you can details can be included on your Declaration of Intent form

Notes or presentation slides prepared prior to the controlled assessment should be shared with the tutor in advance so that the tutor can check they have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the assessment.

Marking & IQA

Only authorised assessors and IQAs should have access to the folder on the Centre's secure portal to view and assess / IQA Speaking & Listening assessment recordings and completed Task 1 answer books.

Recordings of all 3 tasks must be properly and accurately labelled so they can be identified and accessed as required.

Printed Candidate Assessment Papers are required in order to make a claim for learner certification. These cannot be completed electronically. These can only be printed in Centre under the supervision of an Exams Officer or Superuser.

Where printed Candidate papers cannot be accessed at the time of the assessment (e.g., because the Centre is closed), assessors may record marks electronically on a tracking sheet or other device for single or multiple learners in the secure folder, and then transfer the marks to individual printed learner papers, with the assessor's signature, at a later date.

The Task 1 answer books contain marking grids, and these can be printed in Centre and marked for each learner by the assessor, or the assessor can put the Task 1 marks onto a learner's Candidate paper. Marks for Tasks 2 and 3 need to be entered on the candidate paper and signed by the assessor, and where applicable, the IQA.

These will need to be made available to EQAs for sampling at the time of External Quality Assurance.

Individual Tasks may be taken at different times and marked separately, but we recommend IQA is carried out after the completion of all 3 Tasks to accurately confirm that the whole assessment has been achieved.

IQA records may be kept electronically and should be uploaded to the secure folder. In the case of electronic IQA records, these do not need to have authentic signatures, but Centres can use electronic tracking and controls instead. The exception to this is IQA1 which must have authentic staff signatures.

Record keeping

Centres will already have in place documentation used for assessment recording, tracking, IQA planning and recording, as well as systems for the collation and saving of learner assessment evidence. As part of that record keeping, **Centres must keep records of the adaptations applied** for every learner, for example by adding this information to existing IQA or assessment tracking records or to attendance lists.

Attendance lists

Electronic attendance lists should be produced and kept in the secure folder. Learners will not be able to sign the list so assessors should indicate attendance on the list on their behalf. Centres / assessors must ensure the authenticity / identity of every learner taking an online assessment.

Ascentis support

- Tracking mechanisms – Word / Excel versions are available to Centres. It is not mandatory to use these if Centres have their own systems that cover everything that is required. Updated versions will be made available on QuartzWeb with appropriate guidance.
- Please contact your EQA if you have any questions or concerns about how to run these assessments. Please contact your EQA in the first instance or qualityassurance@ascentis.co.uk if you have any queries regarding internal or external quality assurance.

Please note that online or remote assessment of live Reading and Writing assessments is NOT currently permitted for Ascentis ESOL as an adaptation under the VCRF.

However, Centres do have the option use blended or online delivery models to keep face-to-face contact with learners to a minimum where necessary, and practice assessments may be taken online.

Appendix (I) – Qualifications covered by this guidance

New adaptations (from 22nd February 2021)

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)

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)

Other Adaptations and Guidance (in place prior to 22nd February 2021)

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)

Appendix (II) – Declaration of Intent form

Here is a link to the online [Declaration of Intent form](#), which must be completed to notify Ascentis of a Centre's intentions to complete controlled assessments remotely. The form must be submitted no less than one week before any remote online assessments are scheduled to take place.

N.B. the online form **cannot be partially completed and saved** for completion at a later time. The contents of the form are therefore listed below so you can ensure you have all the required information before completing it.

We can only accept your Declaration of Intent through the online form.

Declaration of intent: ESOL adaptation under the VCRF – remote assessment

Before completing this form, it is essential that you have read and understood the latest guidance for the VCRF - ESOL Skills for Life (updated June 2021).

This form is for you to declare your intent to use the Remote Online Assessment adaptation for Speaking and Listening assessments. Remote assessment of Writing and Reading is not permitted

Centre details

1. Centre Name
2. Name of Quality Nominee
3. Quality Nominee email address
4. Name of Head of ESOL/ Appropriate Subject Leader/ Manager
5. email address

Rationale and Arrangements

6. Rationale for using this adaptation (please outline the specific centre / learner circumstances)
7. Which online platform(s) and technology do you propose to use for conducting controlled assessment(s) remotely? Please outline the processes and systems that will be used.
If presentation software (e.g. PowerPoint) for Level 2 is to be used, please include details of how this will be managed.
8. Have practice assessments been carried out using the same processes (as outlined above) with every learner who will take the live assessment remotely?
9. How will risk be managed during the live assessment?
10. How will the centre monitor the conduct of the assessments and ensure a standardised approach across tutors / assessors?
11. What checks has the centre completed to ensure that no learner will be disadvantaged by using this adaptation? For example, have learners got to the appropriate IT systems and are they confident in using them? Is their home environment suitable for a live assessment to be conducted?
12. Will any learners use a mobile phone instead of a PC/Laptop/Tablet during their assessment? If yes, please state the reason this cannot be avoided.
13. What measures has the centre put in place to minimise the risk of malpractice?
14. When will the assessments take place? Please provide the specific dates if these are known.
Otherwise, please give approximate date range.

Declaration

It is the centre's responsibility to:

- determine which learners will be able to use this adaptation and ensure that any learner being assessed remotely is not being either advantaged or disadvantaged by the adaptation
- ensure that learners are fully aware of their right to delay the assessment until face-to-face assessment is possible, if this is their preference
- provide training to all relevant staff in the requirements as specified by Ascentis (as per the latest Ascentis ESOL guidance on VCRF Adaptation document) as well as in the processes and systems
- ensure that all relevant staff understand the requirements for security and confidentiality of the live materials before, during and after the live assessment(s). Live assessment materials must be kept confidential from learners as appropriate to the task and level in the usual way – please refer to the Assessor Guidance
- ensure that for every live assessment completed remotely, a video recording is taken, saved securely, and made available to Ascentis upon request
- ensure that learners are fully aware that copying / recording / sharing the content of live assessment materials in any way is forbidden
- ensure that once the live controlled assessment is complete, all evidence is stored securely and confidentially by relevant staff as this is the equivalent of a live script.

15. I confirm that I have read and understand the above responsibilities

16. Your name

17. Your role within the centre

18. Your email address (if not listed at the beginning of this form)

Appendix (III) – Checklist for conducting remote online assessments

- Ensure that the video recording of the session has begun, and all candidates are present. Candidates must not join group tasks after they have started.
- Remind the candidate(s) that the session is being recorded.
- Explain the process to the candidate(s).
- Confirm that the candidate(s) do not have access to anything which might compromise assessment (e.g. notes, mobile phones or other applications open on their device) and there is no one else present in the room.
- Remind the candidate(s) that
 - They are not allowed to communicate with each other in any way outside the assessment, ask for help from or give help to another candidate while the assessment is in progress. They must not disclose the content of any live assessments to other learners at any time.
 - If an assessor or invigilator suspects malpractice, they have the right to terminate the assessment immediately and/or exclude the suspected candidate from the remainder of the online assessment.
- For Task 1 Listening, check all candidates have their answer book or online form open on screen and know how to complete and submit it.
- For Task 1 Listening, ensure all candidates are on mute before starting the assessment.
- Give the appropriate introduction as described in the ESOL SfL Handbook and ask the candidate(s) to say their own name as well as the tutor saying it to camera.
- Read out the Task from the candidate paper to start the assessment
- Carry out the assessment.
- Instruct the candidate(s) to upload their completed answer books or submit online forms (Task 1 Listening only) while still being video recorded.
- Ensure that the candidate(s) dispose of any notes they have made.
- End the session.
- Securely save the recording of the session, ensuring it is appropriately labelled.
- For Task 1 Listening, securely save the answer books or form responses, ensuring they are appropriately labelled.

Appendix (IV) – Further Information on August 2020 Adaptations

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 VCRF. Ascentis reserves the right to request the original copies at any time during the period of the VCRF (i.e. until 31st August 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 (V) - Additional Centre Guidance: ESOL Skills for Life Assessments 2020-21

(Originally published in November 2020)

Following the [Centre guidance published on 21st October 2020](#), Ascentis facilitated a number of online quality meetings with ESOL providers to discuss the implementation of EERF / VCRF adaptations and to learn how assessments are being undertaken or planned at the moment.

Many suggestions and questions have arisen from these meetings. Lots of Centres have already started to undertake assessments and are finding effective ways of working within the many restrictions imposed because of Coronavirus. We have listed the ideas and suggestions that were made by Centres in the recent meetings below, along with questions that arose. Thank you to all our Centre colleagues who contributed to these meetings.

Questions from us	Centre responses / suggestions
How has your delivery model changed due to Coronavirus?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smaller classes • Lower numbers, Entry Level classes no bigger than 6 • 50% face to face and 50% online • We've moved Speaking & Listening to Term 3 in the hope we will be better able to deliver and assess it by then • Instead of two 3-hour classes we have one in College and one online so we can split learners to ensure social distancing • E3 and above is online. We moved some E1/E2 to classrooms but max 8 learners • Blended learning for all levels except E1 • RARPA for Term 1, then assessments in Terms 2 and 3
What measures have you put in place for face to face ESOL classes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPE for staff / clear visors for teachers • One-way system in operation • Spaced out desks, one learner per desk • Desks are sanitised between classes • 2 metre distancing • Face coverings, opened/removed when in a discussion or other necessary activity • No masks for S&L as it causes problems and is not clear what they are saying • We offer all students clear visors • Visors can be sanitised between uses • Teachers stay at the front and use pointers • Anti-bac/hand sanitiser in the classroom, used at start and end of lesson, learners clean their own desks before and after class • No mingling exercises, minimal contact between learners • Teachers use disposable gloves to handle paper
What measures have you put in place for face to face ESOL classes? (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners put their papers in a box, and these are left for 48 hours before the teacher marks them • Limit or reduce peer checking • Less/no pair or group work, distanced pair work, lots more whole class work • Minimal handouts (displayed on board instead) • ILPs are now completed online • eILPs and Learner journals • Learners use their phones to text messages or answer questions to the whiteboard instead of on paper • Students use their own devices in class - no shared electronic devices / computers

<p>How do you conduct group role plays, discussions and presentations in S&L assessments under social distancing?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the size of the groups, ideally to two or three at a time with an assessor • Ensure 2m spacing and use individual audio recorders to capture each learner’s contribution • Use Perspex screens if they face each other in a discussion • For presentations, let the presenter stand or sit at the front and deliver to the others • Give candidates clear plastic visors to wear instead of masks if face coverings are required at all times • Ensure the room is well ventilated <p>Note: The Further Education Operational Guidance states that “Face coverings could have a negative impact on learning and teaching and so their use in the classroom should be avoided.”</p> <p>There are also clear grounds for exemption from wearing face coverings for candidates in speaking assessments.</p>
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Questions from Centres	Our responses
<p>If we are separating tasks, will there be clean breaks between tasks i.e. no tasks on both sides of the paper?</p>	<p>As papers are printed in Centres, it is the Centre’s responsibility to ensure that tasks are printed separately.</p>
<p>Where new learners are enrolled on an Award for one term ending in December 2020 can we use Set 4 as a final resit?</p>	<p>Set 4 has been retained to accommodate the needs of learners taking delayed assessments from the summer ERF period. It is not intended for use with new learners. However, as learners are entitled to 3 opportunities to sit assessments, if there is no other option, as a last resort, set 4 tasks can be used as a final resit before 31st December 2020. Ideally, learners requiring a third opportunity would use the new set (set 7) which will be available to them from January 2021. You must notify your ESOL EQA if you need to use Set 4 for learners who were not due to take assessments prior to 31st July 2020.</p>
<p>Can assessors take live materials from secure storage to mark them at home?</p> <p>Can IQA be done outside of centres?</p>	<p>When Centres were closed during the lockdown earlier this year, we permitted live assessments to be marked and quality assured by assessors/IQAs at home in some instances, with clear requirements and conditions in place. Current government guidance indicates that there is no expectation that Centres will need to close this year so this should not be necessary.</p> <p>However, if your Centre is closed due to exceptional circumstances relating to Covid-19 and you have to mark or quality assure live assessments from home, you must contact your EQA before removing live materials from secure storage, to outline your Centre’s specific circumstances. Your EQA will then discuss the options and conditions with you.</p>

<p>Can assessors assess speaking and listening tasks remotely online, by viewing video evidence, if the assessment tasks are facilitated by another member of staff working with learners in the centre?</p>	<p>The person facilitating live ESOL speaking and listening assessments must be a competent assessor and a trained ESOL specialist with knowledge of the qualification requirements. This is to ensure that the learners undertaking the assessment have appropriate opportunities to achieve.</p> <p>Some Centres use one member of staff to facilitate the tasks (as interlocutor) and also have a second person in the room to make and record assessment decisions. Both of these individuals must be competent assessors and subject specialists.</p> <p>If your Centre has a well-established system of 'doubling up' staffing during assessments, then the person acting as assessor can assess using video evidence rather than be in the room at the same time.</p> <p>Video evidence is already used to support the IQA process and it supports the assessment process where one member of staff acts as both interlocutor and assessor. When a member of staff acts as interlocutor and assessor, they may assess 'live', but they are able to revisit recorded evidence afterwards if necessary, to complete the process, possibly when considering 'borderline' decisions.</p>
<p>Can Ascentis provide Word versions of the practice papers so that they are easier to use on our platform?</p>	<p>In order to support Centres teaching online or using a blended teaching model, Word versions of all the ESOL practice papers are now available via a Moodle site. The Word versions can then be adapted by Centres to suit individual Centre requirements, including adding them to a Centre platform. While the papers can be adapted, we would recommend changes to the format only, leaving the content as provided by Ascentis. It is the Centre's responsibility to ensure that any changes allow the papers to remain as valid and reliable assessments and reflect the appropriate assessment level. In order to access the Word versions of the practice papers, Centres should contact: support@ascentis.co.uk.</p>