

OFQUAL

English for Speakers of Other Languages Consultation Questions

ESOL for life in the UK

1. To what extent do you agree that we should introduce new regulations for an ESOL for life in the UK qualification, designed to define and assess achievement of the Home Office's English language requirements for entry, settlement or citizenship in the UK?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know or no opinion

2. Do you have any comments or suggestions about this?

UCU does not consider that there is a need for a new qualification 'ESOL for Life in the UK'. We believe that the rationale for such a qualification is not driven by educational requirements, but rather by the requirements of the UK Border Agency (UKBA). In the context of shrinking resources for ESOL providers, the introduction of such a qualification may distort the totality of the ESOL curriculum. Currently we understand that there are a number of ESOL qualifications that are used in relation to UKBA requirements. So ESOL students wanting to meet these requirements can participate alongside other ESOL students. This has made for a range of viable ESOL programmes. Having a single programme for UKBA requirements may endanger this range of programmes by making some of them unviable because those wanting the qualification are in separate provision. We have not seen anything to indicate the numbers using current qualifications for UKBA requirements so it is impossible to say if the numbers are sufficient the creation of this new qualification. We know this government has made its intention that the numbers migrating to the UK will be subject to control on numbers, so it should be possible to make estimates of how many people may require this proposed qualification. There may be little point in the awarding bodies developing a whole new suite of qualifications which it may only be taken up by a small number of learners.

The consultation document states that there is clear evidence of malpractice concerning the current ESOL qualifications in their use to support applications for UK settlement and citizenship. It states that such incidences were higher than in other qualifications amounting to 12% of all malpractice incidents. This amounts to 87 in ESOL qualifications. There is no data showing in what kind of providers these malpractices occur. It is our understanding that none were in colleges, the main deliverer of ESOL programmes. They usually appear in small number of small private providers. Whilst UCU does not condone any malpractices in regard to qualifications and the uses that these are made, we consider this proposal is out of proportion to the actual problem. In our view the incidence of malpractice in publicly funded provision does not justify the proposal for a new qualification. The problem seems to be one in the practices of some providers. A better method would be to ensure that all

providers and assessment centres are reputable and meet OFQUAL and the awarding bodies' requirements.

The OFQUAL consultation further proposes that all assessment for the new qualification should be 100% externally marked. UCU believes that the kind of assessments that should be made in any qualification is that it should be fit for purpose, that is suit the programme being assessed and the students who take up the programme. We would particularly argue for an amount of internal teacher assessment in ESOL where the teachers know their students and their capabilities. If the current qualifications were used for UKBA requirements, it may be sufficient to introduce the additional regulations into the programmes that are used for this purpose rather than introduce an entirely new qualification. Providers who wish to provide ESOL students with citizenship letters could then use externally accredited examinations. This would also limit the development to Entry Level 3 as that is what is required by the Home Office. UCU strongly argues that there should not be a connection between ESOL examinations and immigration. If there is to be such a connection, then ESOL students should at least not have to contend with a whole new qualification.

3. To what extent do you agree that ESOL for life in the UK is an appropriate title for this kind of qualification?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know or no opinion

4. Do you have any comments or other suggestions for an appropriate title?

As UCU does not consider that a sufficient case has been made for the creation of the new qualification, we cannot make any suggestions for an appropriate title.

5. To what extent do you agree that ESOL for life in the UK qualifications should be set at any single level from Entry Level to Level 2, mapped to the descriptions of language proficiency in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages as follows:

- Entry Level 1 mapped to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages level A1
 - Entry Level 2 mapped to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages level A2
 - Entry Level 3 mapped to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages level B1
 - Level 1 mapped to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages level B2
 - Level 2 mapped to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages level C1?
- Strongly agree

- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know or no opinion

6. Do you have any comments or suggestions about this?

It is difficult to set the level of any new qualification as the Home Office and UKBA requirements as we understand that these have not yet been set. If there is to be the new qualification, it should be set at the level and levels that the UKBA require.

7. To what extent do you agree that we should require that the qualification should clearly indicate the areas covered in relation to:

- **The demand of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages common reference levels**
- **How contextualised activities, as appropriate to the student group, relate to the four Common European Framework of Reference for Languages domains (public, personal, educational and occupational)**
- **Communicative and linguistic competences**
- **Coverage of production and interaction (for speaking mode)?**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know or no opinion

8. Do you have any comments or suggestions about this?

These would seem to be sensible areas for the new qualification to cover if it is introduced.

9. To what extent do you agree that we should require that ESOL for life in the UK should demonstrate a clear relationship to the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum and meet the requirements of the National Standards for Adult Literacy?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know or no opinion

10. Do you have any comments or other suggestions about this?

If there is to be the proposed qualification then a clear relationship must be made to the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum and it should meet the requirements for the National Standards for Adult Literacy

11. To what extent do you agree that we should require that the qualification should assign a minimum of 60 guided learning hours?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know or no opinion

12. Do you have any comments or suggestions about this?

UCU does not consider that OFQUAL should setting even minimum numbers of guided learning hours. In the current context of drastic reductions to resource to the providers of ESOL programmes, it is likely that if such a minimum is assigned then that will become the amount of guided learning hours that will be so assigned, regardless of education and learning factors or the types of learners who make take these programmes.

13. To what extent do you agree that requiring 100 per cent external assessment will help to secure the standard of this qualification?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know or no opinion

14. Do you have any comments or suggestions about this?

We have set out our arguments against the requirement for 100% external assessment in our response to Question 1 above.

15. To what extent do you agree that verification of valid official photographic identification at assessments will help to secure the security of this qualification?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know or no opinion

16. Do you have any comments or suggestions about this?

UCU believes that the verification of a valid photographic identification might secure the security of this qualification for the UKBA's purposes, but we would suggest that this should not be the sole purpose of a qualification, and these other purposes may not be concerned with the kind of security that the UKBA requires.

UCU would also oppose any attempt to make ESOL teachers and lecturers validate such photographic evidence. To do so would run totally contrary to the kind of relationship of trust between student and teacher that must underpin any learning experience. This is particularly so in ESOL programmes in which many students have had experiences of official harassment and even persecution and where many of them experience racism and discrimination in their daily lives.

17. Do you have any other comments or suggestions about this qualification?

ESOL International

18. To what extent do you agree that we should introduce regulations for ESOL International qualifications, based on existing regulations?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know or no opinion

19. Do you have any comments or suggestions about this?

20. To what extent do you agree that the ESOL International title should be kept?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know or no opinion

21. Do you have any comments or other suggestions for an appropriate title?

If the actual structures and content of these qualifications are not be greatly changed, then there seems in little point in changing the title of the qualifications which are known by prospective learners and by end users such as employers and educational institutions

22. To what extent do you agree that we should require ESOL International qualifications to be set at any single level from Entry Level to Level 3, mapped to the descriptions of language proficiency in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages as follows:

- Entry Level 1 mapped to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages level A1
- Entry Level 2 mapped to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages level A2
- Entry Level 3 mapped to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages level B1
- Level 1 mapped to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages level B2
- Level 2 mapped to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages level C1
- Level 3 mapped to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages level C2?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know or no opinion

23. Do you have any comments or suggestions about this?

24. To what extent do you agree that the qualification should clearly indicate the areas covered in relation to:

- The demand of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages common reference levels
- How contextualised activities, as appropriate to the student group, relate to the four Common European Framework of Reference for Languages domains (public, personal, educational and occupational)
- Communicative and linguistic competences
- Coverage of production and interaction (for speaking mode)?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know or no opinion

25. Do you have any comments or suggestions about this?

These would seem sensible requirements

26. To what extent do you agree that we should require that the qualification should reflect the interests and needs of adult learners at all levels and not be designed specifically for use pre-16?

- Strongly agree

- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know or no opinion

27. Do you have any comments or suggestions about this?

We would support that the qualification should primarily reflect the interests and needs of adult learners at all levels. We note that the proposal states that its design should not specifically be used pre-16. We assume that this means it could be used pre 16 if it the programme benefited certain students within its basic design and content.

28. To what extent do you agree that we should not set a requirement for ESOL International to be based on the requirements of the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum and the National Standards for Adult Literacy?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know or no opinion

29. Do you have any comments or other suggestions about this?

Our response would depend on the numbers taking the qualifications in the UK as opposed to outside the UK. It would also depend on the purpose for taking these qualifications. If it were for use in the UK by employers or other educational institutions, then there may be some merit in basing it on the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum and the National Standards for Adult Literacy.

30. To what extent do you agree that requiring 100 per cent external assessment will help to secure the standard of this qualification?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know or no opinion

31. Do you have any comments or suggestions about this?

UCU has already made its position in relation to a requirement for 100% external assessment clear. We believe that the assessment requirements should be fit for the purposes of the qualification and the type of students taking the qualification.

32. Do you have any other comments or suggestions about this qualification?

ESOL Skills for Life and ESOL for Work

33. To what extent do you agree that we should withdraw the existing regulations for ESOL Skills for Life qualifications?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know or no opinion

34. Do you have any comments or suggestions about this?

UCU considers that OFQUAL's General Regulations are sufficient for these qualifications as a base line, however there may be specific issues in ESOL qualification which might need some further regulation. We would recommend OFQUAL to enter into a dialogue with ESOL providers and practitioners as to what further regulation should be introduced.

35. To what extent do you agree that we should withdraw the existing regulations for ESOL for Work qualifications?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know or no opinion

36. Do you have any comments or suggestions about this?

The take-up of this qualification was always poor, even before the withdrawal of all government funding for ESOL at work. Since then it is virtually non-existent. There then seems little point in keeping the existing regulations for this qualification.

Other

37. To what extent do you agree that we should not introduce additional qualification-specific Conditions (beyond those in the General Conditions of Recognition) for any other kinds of ESOL qualifications?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



Don't know or no opinion

38. Do you have any comments or suggestions about this?

Whilst not necessarily wishing to see ESOL qualifications being subject to all of the additional regulations, there may be specific needs around ESOL qualifications which might require further regulation

39. Do you think we should set any additional requirements for organisations that offer ESOL qualifications?

No

40. Are there any equality issues which have not been considered in the accompanying equality analysis?

We find the equality analysis to be very thin. It seems to focus on a narrow range of issues: the use of British Sign Language and associated costs of external assessments being introduced. It does not take up other issues around equality such as the requirement for valid photographic identity when assessments are made. We believe that this may have negative effects on some ESOL students for the reasons we have given in our response to Question 15. This is all the more surprising in view of the fact that the Analysis itself states that a higher proportion of ESOL students identify themselves as black or minority ethnic than for all further education.

41. Do you have any other comments you would like to make about any aspect of these proposals?

Your Information

Name

Dan Taubman

Organisation name

UCU

Organisation *This question is required

Representative group / interest group type Trade Union

How many staff does your organisation employ (full and part time)?

50-249

Nation

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How did you find out about this consultation?

- Our newsletter or another of our communications
- Via internet search
- From our website
- From another organisation (please state which)
- Other (please state below) Please enter an 'other' value for this

May we contact you for more information?

- Yes

Would you like your response to be kept confidential? *This question is required.

- Yes
- No

We are changing the way we communicate. We want to write clearly, directly and put the reader first. Overall, do you think we have got this right in this document? *This question is required.

- Yes
- No