



National
Qualifications
2026

2026 ESOL

Reading

Higher

Question Paper Finalised Marking Instructions

These marking instructions have been prepared by examination teams for use by Qualifications Scotland appointed markers when marking external course assessments.

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General marking principles for Higher ESOL Reading

Always apply these general principles. Use them in conjunction with the detailed marking instructions, which identify the key features required in candidates' responses.

- (a) Always use positive marking. This means candidates accumulate marks for the demonstration of relevant skills, knowledge and understanding; marks are not deducted for errors or omissions.
- (b) If a candidate response does not seem to be covered by either the principles or detailed marking instructions, and you are uncertain how to assess it, you must seek guidance from your team leader.
- (c) Use your professional judgement, subject knowledge and experience, and understanding to award marks to candidate responses.
- (d) The marking instructions indicate the essential idea that a candidate should provide for each answer and there may be variation in candidate responses. Award marks according to the accuracy and relevance of a candidate's answers.
- (e) The answers for each question must come from the text. Award marks where the candidate's answer is accurate but expressed in their own words. For open questions requiring short answers, candidates must not lift large chunks of text from the passage. If specific words or phrases from the text are required, candidates must not use paraphrasing.
- (f) Where questions require a response of, for example, 'no more than three words', do not penalise candidates if they use an additional word, provided that the essential idea required by the question is correct.
- (g) Do not penalise candidates for spelling mistakes so long as the meaning is clear.
- (h) Where there is a multiple choice question and the candidate ticks more boxes than required, award **0 marks** where a candidate ticks all boxes. If two answers are required and the candidate ticks three boxes with two correct answers, award **1 mark**. If two answers are required and a candidate ticks three boxes with one correct answer, award **0 marks**.
- (i) For overall purpose questions, candidates must draw meaning from their overall understanding of the text.

Marking instructions for each question

Text 1

Question			Expected response(s)	Max mark	Additional guidance
1.			(remarkable) superpower	1	No more than 2 words (NMT2W)
2.			deadline	1	NMT2W DO NOT ACCEPT 'work opportunity'
3.			declined	1	NMT2W
4.			social gatherings	1	NMT2W Needs both words
5.			C	1	
6.			C	1	
7.			A	1	
8.			B	1	
9.			A	1	
10.			external approval/other people's approval/a feeling of security	1	DO NOT ACCEPT 'security' on its own
11.			freedom and empowerment (either of these)/liberated/free and empowered	1	DO NOT ACCEPT 'a gateway to freedom and empowerment'

Text 2

Question			Expected response(s)	Max mark	Additional guidance
12.			mundane tasks/dull work	1	No more than 2 words
13			corporate culture/corporate life/ dull work	1	NMT2W
14.			expertise/intellect/intelligence/ improvements/minds/intellectual gifts	1	NMT2W
15.			C	1	
16.			D	1	
17.			shirk	1	ONE WORD ONLY DNA 'shirk responsibility'
18.			go pear shaped (needs 'go')	1	
19.			B E D A	1 1 1 1	
20.			B	1	

Text 3

Question			Expected response(s)	Max mark	Additional guidance
21.			C	1	
22.			D	1	
23.			lasting memory	1	No more than 3 words Needs both words
24.			selective	1	NMT3W
25.			sensory information/data/pictures	1	NMT3W
26.			C	1	
27.			A	1	
28.			avoid (potential) threats	1	No more than 3 words DO NOT ACCEPT 'recall negative experiences'
29.			multitask	1	NMT3W
30.			slip away (unnoticed)	1	
31.			go against (the) grain	1	Must have 'go'.
32.			B	1	

[END OF MARKING INSTRUCTIONS]