

## FAQs for DfES Report

# Developed by the SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC) and the Steering Committee on Test Standards of the British Psychological Society – March 2007

The following questions and responses have been developed in response to queries raised following the publication of the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines.

### 1. What is meant by a Practising Certificate?

A Practising Certificate is one which recognises not only professional achievement but also a commitment to continuing professional development (CPD). Practising Certificates have to be renewed on a regular basis. Therefore those wishing to hold or renew a Practising Certificate will be required to demonstrate this commitment by showing how they have regularly updated their professional skills and competence through study, professional discussion, training and practice.

### 2. Why do we need a Practising Certificate in assessment?

In recent years the demand for diagnostic assessments of specific learning difficulties has grown considerably. Assessments are increasingly needed for specific purposes such as determining the right to Access Arrangements in examinations and the eligibility for the Disabled Student Allowances. As the demand for assessments has grown, more professionals with qualifications in assessment of specific learning difficulties either as psychologists or as specialist teachers have become involved in this field. As a result of this, pressure for effective monitoring of standards in assessment has grown – both from those bodies such as the DfES or the Joint Council who use assessment reports to make important decisions and from within the professions themselves.

The DfES was responsible for setting up a working group to consider the whole question of assessments for eligibility for the Disabled Student Allowances and as many specialist teachers and psychologists are aware this working group has produced useful guidance, for example, on procedures, the choice of tests and the format of assessment reports for this particular purpose. In addition the working group recognised and emphasised in its report the need for some means of monitoring the quality of assessments, not on a case-by-case basis, but by ensuring that assessments were carried out by people who possessed requisite knowledge and skills to do the job to the highest professional standards. The quality of an assessment and subsequent report depends primarily on the knowledge and skills of the assessor rather than the selection of tests used. It is from this set of circumstances that the impetus has come for a Practising Certificate in Assessment which:

- encourages continuing professional development in the skills of assessment
- recognises and awards these skills

- is valid for a set period of time only and then will need to be renewed
- provides a focus for training to enable specialist teachers to achieve the requisite skills

**3. As a practising psychologist do I need to hold a practising certificate from Patoss or Dyslexia Action to assess and diagnose special needs and specific learning difficulties?**

No. The SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate, issued by Patoss and Dyslexia Action, is for specialist teachers who have followed an identified course of study and can demonstrate their knowledge and competence in both Specific Learning Difficulties and assessment.

**4. Is this certificate separate from the current type of general Practising Certificate I hold as a Chartered Psychologist? If so, how do I acquire such a certificate?**

The SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate for Specialist Teachers has no links to the Practising Certificate for Chartered Psychologists issued by the British Psychological Society. There is no requirement for a Chartered Psychologist to hold any other practising certificate.

**5. What is the difference between the Specialist Teacher SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate issued by Patoss or Dyslexia Action and the British Psychological Society's Level A Certificate of Competence in Educational Testing (CCET)?**

The CCET Level A is a competency based award relating to the use of assessment in educational settings which fulfils the first component of the requirement for the Specialist Teacher SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate. Those who hold the CCET Level A certificate are also fully competent to carry out a number of assessments in more general educational settings. To acquire the SpLD certificate a holder of CCET Level A would also have to demonstrate that they had either undertaken training in specific learning difficulties or can provide comparable evidence that they currently have the required knowledge and skills from their professional practice. The SpLD training and knowledge base should be equivalent to that required for BDA Approved Teacher Status (ATS) training.

**6. How do the DfES Guidelines relate to my practice as a psychologist?**

These guidelines relate to both psychologists and specialist teachers who are providing a report for a student as part of an application for the Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs). There is professional choice as to the assessment tools to be used. A report template is given and adhering to this will assist awards officers in decision making. Please also refer to Question 11, below.

**7. As a Specialist Teacher assessor when will I need a Practising Certificate?**

You will need a Practising Certificate from academic year 2007/08 in order to be qualified to assess for DSA allowances. You are now able to apply for a Practising Certificate from Patoss or Dyslexia Action. The recommendations of the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines will be phased in over the next three years. The following schedule indicates dates for implementing specific elements of the framework described in that report. Diagnostic reports written prior to the dates shown in the table below should comply with 2004/05 DfES Guidance, but could use the recommended format and suggested tests, although this will not be required until academic year 2006/07.

After 2008, individuals applying for a Practising Certificate in SpLD Assessment will be eligible via Route 1 only if their AMBDA level qualification was issued within the last 5 years.

If, on application after 31 December 2008, their qualification is more than 5 years old they must have done more recent acceptable additional qualifications in SpLD assessment.

**From Academic Year 2005/06** LEA Awards Officers should accept diagnostic reports from Psychologists and suitably qualified Specialist Teachers. As stated in the DfES Guidance Chapter for LEAs 'Disabled Student Allowances': 91: It is recommended that diagnostic reports provided by chartered, educational, clinical and works psychologists (previously known as occupational psychologists) or other qualified individuals, usually teachers with a qualification in assessing students with specific learning difficulties, are accepted as evidence of dyslexia. Teachers who assess dyslexia should hold AMBDA [sic] (Associate Membership of the British Dyslexia Association) or a qualification from an advanced training course involving the assessment of adults for dyslexia which is recognised by the British Dyslexia Association's (BDA) Accreditation Board. [Ref: DfES Guidance: 2004/05 HE Student Finance, Disabled Student Allowances]

**From Academic Year 2006/07**

- LEA Awards Officers continue to accept diagnostic reports from Psychologists and suitably qualified Specialist Teachers (as above)
- diagnostic reports use report format recommended in the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines
- diagnostic reports use tests recommended in the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines

**From Academic Year 2007/08**

- LEA Awards Officers accept diagnostic reports from Applied Psychologists and Specialist Teachers who hold a current Practising Certificate in the assessment of SpLD issued by Patoss or Dyslexia Action.
- diagnostic reports use report formats recommended in the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines
- diagnostic reports use tests recommended in the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines

**From Academic Year 2008/09**

- procedures as from 2007 plus

- all training for assessment of SpLD should be incorporating SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines

## **8. How will I be able to get an SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate?**

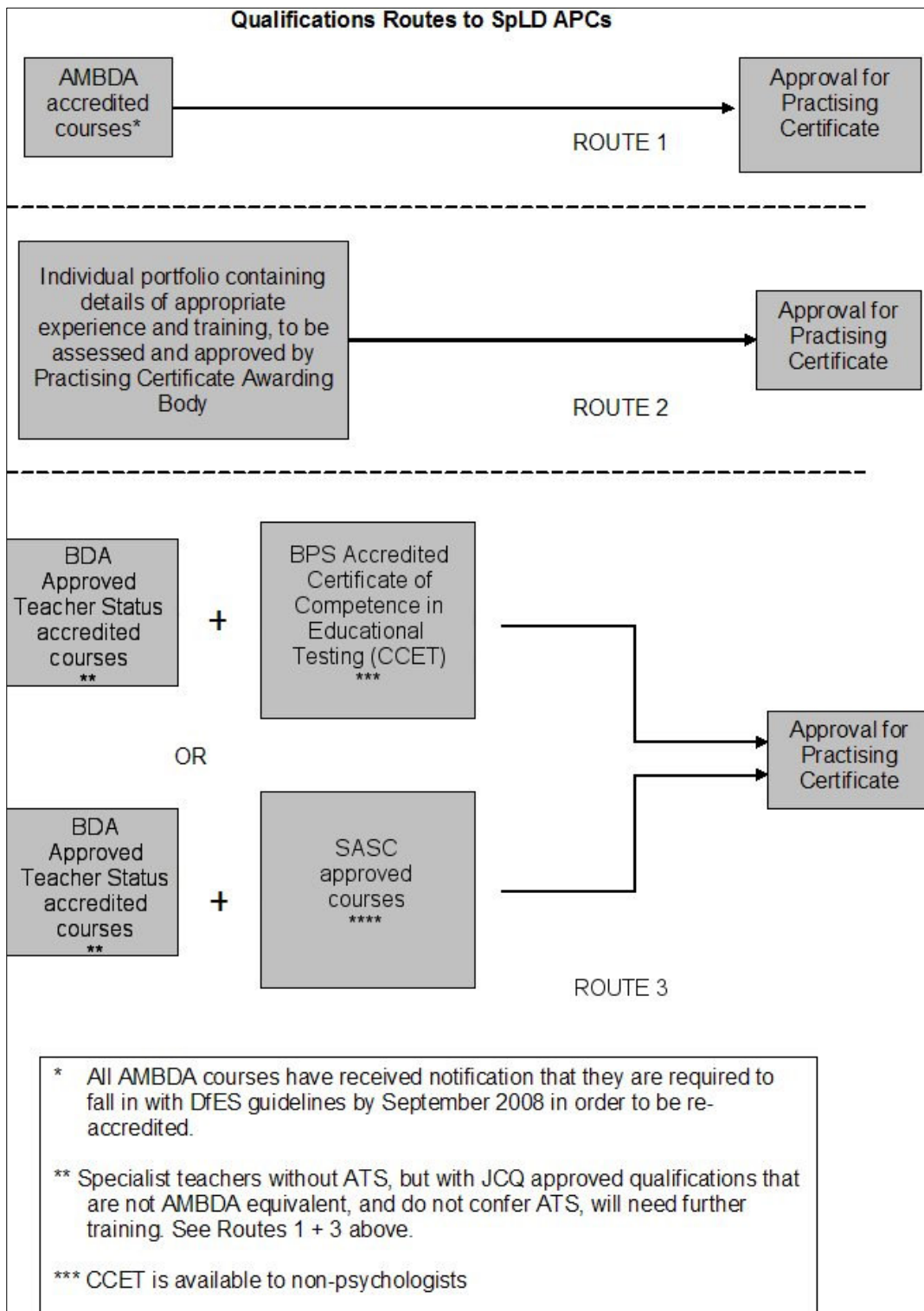
You must either

- hold a qualification meeting the requirements for AMBDA or the equivalent. These qualifications are listed on the BDA , Patoss and Dyslexia Action websites ([www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk](http://www.bda-dyslexia.org.uk), [www.patoss-dyslexia.org](http://www.patoss-dyslexia.org), and [www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk](http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk))
- hold a qualification meeting the requirements for ATS and either the BPS CCET or a SASC approved course.
- Be able to demonstrate through a portfolio of evidence relating to your current practice that you meet all the knowledge and competence requirements which would be incorporated in the above courses.

All of these qualifications require evidence of observed practical application of skills in teaching and assessment. Candidates do not need QTS to apply for a Patoss Practising Certificate.

The different routes to achieving a Practising Certificate, depending on the applicant's prior training and experience, are outlined in the flow chart and explained in the Patoss Guidance on Training for a Practising Certificate [Patoss website – Practising Certificates] and on Dyslexia Action's website - Practising Certificates.

See flow chart below:



## 9. How much will it cost?

There will be some costs involved in the process of gaining accreditation for the Practising Certificate. These will vary depending on the route taken. (See Flow Chart above).

If, for example, an applicant has a current qualification which gives direct eligibility for a Practising Certificate (Route 1), there will only be a small administrative cost

involved in claiming accreditation for the Practising Certificate. For Patoss, the cost will be £75 in addition to your Patoss membership fee. The cost from Dyslexia Action is comparable and includes membership of the Dyslexia Guild (Professional Association)

If the application requires accreditation of prior learning/experience (Route 2) this will incur a cost which reflects the time and process needed to assess a portfolio of evidence. For Patoss the cost will be £250 [Payment of £175 to cover processing application then, if successful, an additional £75 for your Practising Certificate which is valid for 3 years]. This fee is in addition to your Patoss membership fee. Dyslexia Action will advertise its fees for this service and provide information from early in 2007 on its website, [www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk](http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk)

Those applicants who need training (Routes 3 and 4) will have to meet the costs of such training as well as the cost of applying for the Practising Certificate.

### **10. Who will provide training?**

Many agencies already provide training – universities, colleges, awarding bodies - will be able to modify or develop their existing programmes as well as devise new courses in order to meet the requirements of the Practising Certificate. Many have already expressed an interest in so doing. BDA, through the BDA Accreditation Board, working closely together with SASC, will be responsible for approving such courses.

New courses are being developed to train candidates with ATS level training in SpLD to extend their skills to encompass diagnostic assessment (Route 3). This includes The Certificate of Competency in Educational Testing accredited by the BPS. These courses are approved by SASC and will be listed on the Patoss, BPS and Dyslexia Action websites.

The amount of training needed to meet the requirements of the Practising Certificate will depend on the route which each candidate is taking. (See Flow Chart above)

### **11. I am concerned by the report format that is suggested in the DfES Guidelines. It appears to require the provision of information that may not always be appropriate. Must my reports always contain all the information outlined?**

The report format offered is a guideline. To assist awards officers in local authorities it is required that the general format is adhered to. It is not envisaged that reports should be over long. Rather they should contain pertinent information including a clear explanation of test performance and the deductions derived from the assessment. A concluding summary will greatly assist local authority awards officers.

### **12. I would like to ask whether use of the DAST (Dyslexia Adult Screening Test) in the assessment of adults with potential specific learning difficulties is likely to disadvantage candidates in an application for the DSAs?**

The use of the DAST will not disadvantage a candidate's application for the DSAs.

The DAST is a valuable screening instrument which offers information as to the possibility of a candidate experiencing dyslexic difficulties. Results from the DAST cannot, however, be offered as a diagnosis of dyslexia. Assessors may choose to use sub-tests diagnostically to indicate an area of particular difficulty.

**13. I am concerned that many of the tests suggested only have norms from the USA. Is it appropriate to quote such norms?**

There are few assessment tools available for use in educational settings with the adult population in the UK. It is agreed that the use of USA norms per se is not appropriate and this should be clearly explained to test takers. It should also be stated within a report that results are only an indication of performance. The diagnostic information obtained from the use of these instruments, however, can be of great value.

**14. My main responsibilities are to assess and diagnose dyslexia, dyspraxia and other SpLD's for students in Higher Education. I am currently investigating how to get myself an SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate (as recommended in the SpLD DfES guidelines). I am not a chartered psychologist but have been working as an assessment officer for three and a half years. I would therefore be grateful for some advice on how to get an SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate as a non-chartered (but suitably experienced) psychological assessor.**

There is a flow chart contained within the DfES Guidelines which allows you to ascertain as to whether you have appropriate accredited prior learning, APL. This will include training in assessment and specific learning difficulties and/or eligibility for AMBDA, Associate Membership of the British Dyslexia Association.

Appropriate training in both assessment and specific learning difficulties is available from a number of sources and relevant information may be found on the websites of the British Psychological Society [www.psychtesting.org.uk](http://www.psychtesting.org.uk), BDA [www.bdadyslexia.org.uk](http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk), Patoss [www.patoss-dyslexia.org](http://www.patoss-dyslexia.org), and [www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk](http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk),

**15. Will the Specialist Teacher SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate allow me to undertake assessments for application for Access Arrangements for examinations?**

Yes, the SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate is recognised by the JCQ as an approved qualification accepted for the provision of reports and evidence for candidates requiring Access Arrangements for examinations and assessments by Specialist Teachers.

**16. Will the Specialist Teacher SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate allow me to undertake assessments that will be recognised to make application for Further Education funding streams?**

Yes. The SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate is based on AMBDA approved training as well as new training provision specifically aimed at developing skills in SpLD assessment in an educational setting, in line with DfES SpLD Guidance. It will allow practitioners to undertake assessments for Further Education funding streams as well as for DSA funding.

**17. I am already providing diagnostic assessments for DSA, do I need a practising certificate?**

Yes, from academic year 2007/08 a Practising Certificate in SpLD Assessment will be required by the DfES for those carrying out diagnostic assessments for DSA.

**18. I hold a qualification approved by the JCQ in assessing for access arrangements. Do I automatically qualify for a Practising Certificate?**

No. Only those qualifications which have been accredited by Dyslexia Action, Patoss and BDA Accreditation Board will qualify holders for a Practising Certificate. Currently those qualifications suitable for AMBDA meet these criteria. In the future courses specifically designed to train specialist teachers in SpLD assessment will also be accredited by SASC as noted in Route 3 in the accompanying flow chart (see above).

You can apply via Route 2 (Application Based on APL/APE) to have your prior training/experience accredited for a Practising Certificate. [See guidance notes Guidance Notes -Training for a Practising Certificate in SpLD Assessment]. Dyslexia Action will post further details on how to apply through route 2 on its website early in 2007

**19. I have a post-graduate qualification in assessment of SpLD. Will I automatically qualify for a Practising Certificate?**

No, but you can apply via Route 2 (Application Based on APL/APE) to have your prior training/experience accredited for a Practising Certificate. [See guidance notes Guidance Notes -Training for a Practising Certificate in SpLD Assessment]. Dyslexia Action will post further details on how to apply through route 2 on its website early

**20. How can I evaluate whether or not my prior training/experience will be sufficient to gain accreditation for a Practising Certificate under Route 2?**

See guidance from your PC awarding body for Guidance on Training and Application for a Practising Certificate based on APL/APE.

**21. I want to apply for a Practising Certificate based on APL/APE, when should I send in my application and supporting documentation?**

For Patoss your application with relevant documentation and video/dvd evidence must be received in the Patoss office at least one month prior to the review committee meeting. For the academic year 2006/7 the committee is meeting on 17 September, 19 November; 11 February 2007; 10 June 2007.

Dyslexia Action will post details of its process and costs for processing applications via Route 2 on its website early in 2007

## **22. I have a qualification as a Speech and Language Therapist, can I get an SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate?**

Professionals other than specialist teachers (psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists) wishing to gain the Practising Certificate in SpLD Assessment would need to provide evidence of training in SpLD teaching for this educational role to obtain a PC from Patoss or Dyslexia Action. These professionals would have been trained in psychometric testing and assessment reporting as part of their occupational training. Those wishing to receive a PC must meet the knowledge, competence and evidence required by the issuing organisation. There are currently 2 organisations issuing Practising Certificates in this area of SpLD assessment, Patoss and Dyslexia Action. However, there is no exclusivity intended. Other organisations who fulfil the criteria established by the National Committee for Standards in SpLD Assessment Training and Practice [SASC] could also issue Practising Certificates.

## **23. Is Patoss the only organisation issuing SpLD Assessment Practising Certificates for specialist teachers?**

No. Dyslexia Action as well as Patoss are currently offering such certificates for specialist teachers. You must belong to one of these organisations to get a Practising Certificate from them.

Other teaching and training organisations will be offering this feature, either as part of initial training or CPD, but any training or certification so provided will have to be approved by the SASC (The National Committee on Standards in SpLD Assessment Training and Practice) as meeting the standards of the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines. Details of SASC and approved organisations will be listed on the Patoss website, [www.patoss-dyslexia.org](http://www.patoss-dyslexia.org), the BDA website, [www-bdadyslexia.org.uk](http://www-bdadyslexia.org.uk), and Dyslexia Action website, [www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk](http://www.dyslexiaaction.org.uk).

## **24. What kind of continuing professional development should I do?**

CPD may take place through study, professional discussion, training and practice. It is important to maintain logs containing evidence of ongoing learning and practice in order to build up a CPD portfolio. Check with your Practising Certificate awarding body for details of their requirements. Evidence may include:

- records of practical experience (e.g. recent assessment reports; evidence of advice and guidance given to students, parents and other professionals)
- records of correct use of up-to-date materials records of attendance on relevant courses
- records of attendance at conferences/ day courses witness statements
- records of reading relevant to assessment records of self-evaluation and reflection on practice.

## **25. Why just assessment and not teaching?**

The demand for a Practising Certificate in Assessment has come from the particular set of circumstances described above. However, this is a part of wider picture. The concept of continuing professional development (CPD) is increasingly so important that regulatory bodies, for example the Health Professions Council, are being established to monitor standards within different areas of expertise in order to ensure that professionals have a commitment to maintaining standards of proficiency and regularly updating their skills. (Speech and Language Therapists are amongst the 12 professions who may currently register with the Health Professions Council).

As part of this wider picture it is quite possible that a Practising Certificate in SpLD Teaching may be not too far ahead in the future.

A further important point regarding the relationship between teaching and assessment is that assessment is not conducted in a vacuum. The skills and knowledge required for SpLD assessment build on a sound knowledge of normal literacy and numeracy development, of appropriate teaching techniques and available resources.

## **26. What is SASC?**

SASC is the National Committee for SpLD Assessment Training and Practice. It is a standard-setting group concerned with the diagnostic assessment of specific learning difficulties in an educational setting. The authority for this committee and its remit stem from the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines. The committee seeks to extend the principles of good practice contained in the Guidelines across all age ranges and throughout the profession.

The committee deals with procedures for issuing Practising Certificates, including setting guidelines for APL/APE applications, evaluation and approval of training courses for assessors, and guidelines for Continuing Professional Development. The SpLD Assessment Steering Committee will approve courses to award successful individual candidates an SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate. The Committee will also approve other organisations for granting Assessment Practising Certificates.