

SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines

Assessment of Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) in Higher Education	2
Introductory text	2
Implementation	4
Descriptions of SpLDs.....	5
General Comments	6
How do these SpLDs affect learning?.....	7
Identifying Specific Learning Difficulties through Assessment	8
Suitable Tests for the Assessment of Specific Learning Difficulties in Higher Education	10
Guidance on assessment of students for whom English is an additional language	11
List of Suitable Tests for the Assessment of Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) in Higher Education	14
List of Suitable Tests for the Assessment of Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) in Higher Education	19
List of Suitable Tests for the Assessment of Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) in Higher Education	20
The Recommended Format for a Diagnostic Assessment Report for Specific Learning Difficulties	23
Details of content.....	24
Suitable Qualifications & Training for those Assessing Specific Learning Difficulties in Higher Education.....	36
The central role of training.....	36
Transitional Period and Procedures	37
Scope of Certificates	38
SpLD/Dyslexia Assessment Training and Practising Certificates - Standards for Specialist Teachers	39
SpLD/Dyslexia Assessment Training Practical Skills Outcomes	40
Routes to SpLD Practising Certificate	42
Flow Diagram – Specialist Teacher Routes to achieving an SpLD assessment Practising Certificate	46
Range of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) learning activities:.....	47
Assessment Report Checklist	48
Members of the SpLD Working Group	50
Contact List	51

Assessment of Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) in Higher Education

Introductory text

The DfES convened this Working Group following requests from Local Education Authorities (LEA) to clarify what would constitute acceptable evidence of SpLD in order to qualify for the Disabled Student Allowances (DSA). The report is intended to be a guide for those assessing SpLD in Higher Education students and a statement of what is considered to be an acceptable standard expected from those carrying out assessments.

Specific learning difficulties (SpLDs) are complex and there are many uncertainties amongst those administering DSA applications because of limited knowledge of the conditions and their effect on study. These concerns and uncertainties often lead to delays in processing applications.

The overall aims of the Working Group are:

- to provide an equitable DSA system that is simple to administer, enabling quicker and easier access for the student customer
- to establish evidential requirements that LEAs could confidently regard as providing a reliable professional judgement that a student has SpLDs
- to provide a DSA system that is giving value for money.

In order to progress this work the following functions were identified as priorities:

1. to identify a selection of tests that can be used by appropriately trained and qualified professionals
2. to arrange for the list of recommended tests to be updated by an appropriate body
3. to propose ways of enabling those with appropriate qualifications to obtain and maintain the skills and expertise in administering and interpreting the tests
4. to propose standards and a code of practice for all those involved in assessments including the production of reports in an agreed and accessible format
5. to produce clearer guidance for LEA Awards Officers and students in order to minimise local variances
6. to provide advice about identifying, assessing and referring students with any of the named SpLDs
7. to provide some advice on dealing with complex and borderline cases, including those where English is an additional language.

It was agreed that for the purpose of this group SpLD should include the following:

- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia, Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD)
- Dyscalculia
- Attention Deficit Disorder

It is recognised that there is considerable overlap between the characteristics of these four conditions. In general terms those with SpLDs have particular difficulties, which may include spelling, acquiring fluent reading and writing skills and/or manipulating numbers which may indicate their performance is well below their abilities in other areas. They may

also have problems with working memory, organisational skills, receptive and expressive language or oral and auditory skills, maintaining concentration and co-ordination.

It is also worth noting that moving into Higher Education represents a significant transition which will often exacerbate the problems for students with SpLDs. Strategies that have been sufficient at primary and secondary levels may no longer be adequate. This highlights the presence of learning difficulties and the need for additional support at this level.

Acknowledging their duties under the Disability Discrimination Act Part 4: Education and in the interests of upholding consistent national standards, the Working Group hopes that all Higher Education Institutions and LEAs will fully support the new Framework and work within it. This will include accepting reports by all those holding current Practising Certificates for assessment of SpLD for all purposes, such as providing evidence to support applications for the Disabled Student Allowances, recommending additional time or other access arrangements in examinations and assessments.

This Framework builds upon existing guidance in DfES documents and should be read in conjunction with guidance chapters on Disabled Student Allowances.

Implementation

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 this document. 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 2006.

From Academic Year 2005/06	▲ <i>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':</i> 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 AMDA [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	▲ <i>LEA Awards Officers continue to accept diagnostic reports from Psychologists and suitably qualified Specialist Teachers (as above)</i> ▲ <i>diagnostic reports use report format recommended in the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines</i> ▲ <i>diagnostic reports use tests recommended in the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines</i>
From Academic Year 2007/08	▲ <i>LEA Awards Officers accept diagnostic reports from Psychologists and Specialist Teachers who hold a current Practising Certificate in SpLD Assessment issued by their professional association (e.g. BPS or Patoss).</i> ▲ <i>diagnostic reports use report format recommended in the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines</i> ▲ <i>diagnostic reports use tests recommended in the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines</i>
From Academic Year 2008/09	▲ <i>procedures as from 2007 plus</i> ▲ <i>all training for assessment of SpLD should be incorporating SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines</i>

Descriptions of SpLDs

For the purpose of this guidance we have chosen to use more general descriptions of each specific learning difficulty rather than select from the many working definitions putting emphasis on differing aspects of the conditions. This is followed by some general comments and a longer section on how SpLDs can affect learning at Higher Education level. For each of the conditions covered below it must be stressed that the difficulties described vary in degree and from person to person.

■ Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a combination of abilities and difficulties; the difficulties affect the learning process in aspects of literacy and sometimes numeracy. Coping with required reading is generally seen as the biggest challenge at Higher Education level due in part to difficulty in skimming and scanning written material. A student may also have an inability to express his/her ideas clearly in written form and in a style appropriate to the level of study. Marked and persistent weaknesses may be identified in working memory, speed of processing, sequencing skills, auditory and/or visual perception, spoken language and motor skills. Visuo-spatial skills, creative thinking and intuitive understanding are less likely to be impaired and indeed may be outstanding. Enabling or assistive technology is often found to be very beneficial.

■ Dyspraxia / Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD)

A student with dyspraxia/DCD may have an impairment or immaturity in the organisation of movement, often appearing clumsy. Gross motor skills (related to balance and co-ordination) and fine motor skills (relating to manipulation of objects) are hard to learn and difficult to retain and generalise. Writing is particularly laborious and keyboard skills difficult to acquire. Individuals may have difficulty organising ideas and concepts. Pronunciation may also be affected and people with dyspraxia/DCD may be over/under sensitive to noise, light and touch. They may have poor awareness of body position and misread social cues in addition to those shared characteristics common to many SpLDs.

■ Dyscalculia

Dyscalculia is a learning difficulty involving the most basic aspect of arithmetical skills. The difficulty lies in the reception, comprehension, or production of quantitative and spatial information. Students with dyscalculia may have difficulty in understanding simple number concepts, lack an intuitive grasp of numbers and have problems learning number facts and procedures. These can relate to basic concepts such as telling the time, calculating prices, handling change.

■ Attention Deficit Disorder

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) exists with or without hyperactivity. In most cases people with this disorder are often 'off task', have particular difficulty commencing and switching tasks, together with a very short attention span and high levels of distractibility. They may fail to make effective use of the feedback they receive and have weak listening skills. Those with hyperactivity may act impulsively and erratically, have difficulty foreseeing outcomes, fail to plan ahead and be noticeably restless and fidgety. Those without the hyperactive trait tend to daydream excessively, lose track of what they are doing and fail to engage in their studies unless they are highly motivated. The behaviour of people with ADD can be inappropriate and unpredictable; this, together with the characteristics common to many SpLDs, can present a further barrier to learning.

The initial diagnostic assessment of ADD would be carried out by a medical professional. As the professional making the original diagnosis would not assess the impact of ADD on Higher Education study, an assessment of the SpLD would be carried out as for other students. In other circumstances, during the course of the SpLD assessment, it may appear that a student has ADD rather than dyslexia. In such cases, the student should be signposted to the appropriate professional for a diagnosis of the condition.

General Comments

Students with SpLDs will often present with significant and persistent difficulties despite appropriate learning opportunities even when additional educational provision has been made available.

The same difficulties can affect the processing of music symbols and provision may need to be made for music students in the music part of their course and not just in the language and maths components.

Those affected by dyslexia, dyspraxia/DCD, dyscalculia, attention deficit disorder or any combination of these learning difficulties, often underachieve within the education system unless they receive appropriate support enabling them to minimise their weaknesses and utilise their strengths. Many underperform in examinations.

Both the severity of the impairment and the effectiveness of compensatory strategies vary widely. Low self-esteem, often due to past humiliations, is especially apparent in mature students.

How do these SpLDs affect learning?

The following are recognised as characterising the learning process of students with SpLD. As previously stated the range of characteristics will differ from person to person. Particular areas of concern can include:

- lack of confidence
- becoming fluent in a new skill to the point where it becomes automatic, for example reading, writing and driving a car
- taking longer than other students to complete tasks
- organising work and other aspects of their lives
- a poor sense of passage of time, mixing up dates, times and appointments
- poor short-term memory for carrying out instructions or copying from the board and remembering what has just been read and/or said
- retrieving words when speaking and mispronunciations caused by motor problems or difficulties in discriminating sounds
- directional confusions, getting easily lost , having problems using maps or finding their way to a new place
- poor motor control resulting in a range of difficulties including handwriting, inaccurate reading and spelling
- retaining the visual image of words, signs, symbols, formulae, musical notation
- reading text due to visual distortions such as blurring or moving letters
- comprehension, despite appearing to read fluently
- sequencing letters in spelling, or numbers and signs in maths, difficulties using dictionaries, encyclopaedias and directories, remembering phone numbers and dialling them accurately
- sequencing, such as instructions and mathematical procedures, sequencing of numbers or letters and difficulties taking messages
- attention span and concentration
- particular susceptibility to stress, which may be associated with deadlines or examinations
- noticeable inconsistency between what can be achieved on “good” and “bad” days.

Identifying Specific Learning Difficulties through Assessment

The following diagnostic criteria are suggested as a basis for the diagnosis of dyslexia:

- **A history of difficulty with the acquisition of literacy skills**

In the case of dyslexia, students are likely to have been late in learning to read, have had difficulty reading aloud, have been slow and inaccurate readers, have been unsuccessful, or slow, in learning to read and write through phonic teaching methods, and have a history of poor spelling. Many will have had difficulty learning second languages at school.

Difficulties may not have been formally identified or even acknowledged by teachers and family. Conversely, students may not remember having problems but may have been told by others that they did indeed experience them. Some students may also have experienced problems in the development of speech and language.

- **Persisting difficulty**

Areas of persisting weakness in the case of dyslexia are likely to include slow reading, inaccurate reading, decoding difficulty (poor non-word reading), poor spelling (sometimes including non-phonetic spelling errors), poor punctuation, difficulty expressing ideas in writing and slow handwriting speed. Some students may also have difficulty expressing ideas orally, particularly in formal situations. Persisting difficulties in the case of dyspraxia/DCD include slow and poorly formed handwriting.

- **Evidence of an underlying cognitive deficit**

Areas of weakness include phonological processing speed, phonological awareness and visual and auditory working memory. Some students also have difficulty combining visual perceptual and motor processes.

- **Exclusion of other factors**

Consideration is given to other possible barriers to learning. These include sensory impairment, English as a second or additional language, environmental factors such as educational experience and opportunities for learning. In some cases, persisting literacy difficulties may be entirely attributable to one or more of these factors, in which case a diagnosis of SpLD would not be appropriate. It is the role of the assessor to attempt to tease apart possible causes of persisting literacy difficulties.

- **Underlying Ability / Achievement differentials**

Although a discrepancy between underlying ability and attainment in literacy skills is not a diagnostic criterion (Frederickson & Reason 1995, Howe 1997, Miles 1996, Stanovich & Stanovich 1997, Siegel 1999), where such discrepancies do exist, they provide further supporting evidence.

Gathering information about underlying ability is an important component of assessment. The assessment of verbal and non-verbal ability throws light on the extent to which students are likely to be able to develop compensatory strategies, and

informs specialist teaching intervention. The effect of SpLD on a student's learning can be evaluated more effectively when underlying ability is taken into account.

■ Supporting References

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Suitable Tests for the Assessment of Specific Learning Difficulties in Higher Education

This list of suitable tests for the assessment of specific learning difficulties (SpLD) in Higher Education is a key part of the National Assessment Framework for Applications for Disabled Student Allowances. The purpose of the list is to promote quality and consistency in the Disabled Student Allowances (DSA) process. The list of tests has been drawn up on the following principles:

- 1) Assessment of SpLD for the purposes of applying for DSA requires a **range** of tests, to investigate the cognitive profile of students as well as their attainments in literacy and (where appropriate) numeracy.
- 2) Wherever possible, tests should be **properly standardised on the adult population, with clear evidence of validity and reliability**. Tests not suitable for use with adults should be avoided.
- 3) It is recognised that there are various theoretical models, hence tests in the list do not reflect any particular school of thought. Nevertheless, the list is consistent with the current theory that SpLDs affect aspects of cognitive functioning. Therefore, tests of cognitive functioning are regarded as essential for a proper assessment.
- 4) In addition to the use of standardised measures of underlying ability, cognitive processing, and attainments in literacy (and numeracy), supplementary methods of information-gathering that inform the diagnostic process may be employed. These might include information concerning conditions such as dyspraxia/DCD and disorders of attention, drawn from qualitative evaluations of the student's functioning, from assessments carried out by other appropriate professionals (e.g. occupational therapists) and from recognised checklists.

The list has been prepared by a panel of experts in the field of SpLD. A sub-panel will review the list periodically and consider new tests for inclusion.

The list of tests includes both closed tests, which can be used by psychologists only, and open tests, suitable for use by specialist teachers. The guidance for suggested tests builds on the existing guidance in DfES documents and should be read in conjunction with guidance chapters on Disabled Student Allowances.

Diagnostic assessments conducted from the age of 16 would be appropriate for the purposes of DSA eligibility. If an assessment was conducted before the age of 16 years, an update of the student's skills in reading, writing and spelling, e.g. a top-up assessment, would be required.

Where applications for DSA are supported by appropriately reported evidence of SpLD from an approved assessor based on results of tests taken from this list, authorisation by LEA Awards Officers should be straightforward. That does not preclude approved assessors from using alternative tests on occasions where these are deemed necessary, but in such cases a justification for their use should be provided in the report.

Under normal circumstances tests included in this list should be used in assessments for SpLD, but it is not expected that any given assessment will include **all** tests mentioned in the list. Assessors should use their professional judgement as to which tests to administer according to the requirements of the individual case. However, most cases will require use of a test taken from most, if not all, subcategories in the list, in order to provide adequate evidence of the student's functioning across the full range of relevant cognitive and attainment skills, and other abilities vital to studying at the Higher Education level.

Guidance on assessment of students for whom English is an additional language

■ Background and rationale

When assessing students for whom English is an additional language (EAL) assessors should be aware that most psychological and educational tests have been developed and standardised on populations that are predominantly English-speaking and/or situated within mainstream Western culture. The format of the test, the test content and the test norms will all reflect that background.

Assessment of EAL students presents special challenges because of the lack of alternative tests and because it is not known how robust existing tests are when used with EAL students or when the administration of such tests is modified to accommodate a lack of experience of English. Nevertheless, EAL students are still entitled to be assessed for possible SpLD so that, if appropriate, application can be made for Disabled Student Allowances in order to gain access to disability support in Higher Education.

Consequently, assessment of EAL students requires a compromise between the demands of normal good assessment practice, on the one hand, and the need for EAL students to be assessed fairly and sympathetically, on the other.

This section is not intended to be a comprehensive manual of how to assess EAL students. The aim is to highlight the important issues in this controversial field. Wherever possible, assessment of EAL students should be carried out by an assessor with appropriate experience in this area. In cases where this is not possible, assessors are encouraged to seek advice from more experienced colleagues. It is hoped that special training for assessors working with EAL students will become available in due course.

Welsh-speaking students form a special subgroup of EAL students in that although their cultural background is not necessarily different from that of most English-speaking students, their language background may be quite different and thus performance on tests administered in English may be affected. Currently, approximately 14% of secondary school students in Wales are taught through the medium of Welsh, and many of these students go on to use Welsh extensively in Higher Education.

■ Test administration

When administering tests to EAL students, there should be careful consideration of linguistic and cultural variations that might affect test performance adversely. Such factors are likely to include limited English vocabulary – both spoken and written – and lack of experience of doing timed tests. Wherever possible, and when justifiable,

allowances should be made for such variations. Particular care should be taken when preparing EAL students for assessment and in ensuring that test instructions are fully understood. Some EAL students may need more explanation and/or practice items than usual, in order to grasp test requirements.

Assessors should try to find out how long the student has been speaking English, and reading and writing in English, and the circumstances surrounding this. For example, was English spoken in the home? Was English the principal medium of education? The effects on test performance are likely to be roughly proportional to the number of years during which the student has been speaking and learning English. Where the student's overall experience of English has been less than seven years, some impact on syntax, vocabulary and comprehension is generally to be expected. Where first exposure to English was after the age of seven some impact on phonology and pronunciation is generally to be expected. However, much will depend on the quality and quantity of English experience during formative years. Where English has been spoken in the home, effects may be less marked than where the sole experience of English has been outside the home.

A balance must be struck between **adaptation** of test administration procedures and instructions to meet an EAL student's needs, and **maintenance** of the standardisation of the test, which supports interpretations of test performance. The greater that test administration procedures are varied, the less valid and reliable the test will become.

To some extent, non-verbal measures of intelligence will usually give better indicators of the general ability of EAL students than verbally-based measures of intelligence. However, assessors should be aware that in cases of dyspraxia/DCD, non-verbal intelligence may be depressed.

Measures of cognitive deficits in SpLD (e.g. in phonological processing and working memory) may be less susceptible to linguistic and cultural influences than literacy attainment and consequently should be provided wherever possible. However, measures of cognitive processing are unlikely to be valid or reliable where students carry out covert translation of material from English to another language for processing and then back into English again in order to make the response, because this imposes an additional cognitive processing load. When assessing EAL students it would therefore be appropriate to investigate this, e.g. by enquiring what strategies the student was employing to carry out the task.

■ **Interpreting results**

As far as possible, interpretation of test results from EAL students should endeavour to take linguistic and cultural factors into account as well as any adjustments that were necessary in the process of test administration. The band of error around a score obtained by an EAL student will be greater than for students for whom English is the primary language, and will be affected by the degree of change in administration process, the ease and familiarity of the student with the test taking process and test content, and the appropriateness of the norms used.

As a general rule, where SpLD is suspected, it is likely that the student will have experienced similar problems (e.g. in reading and writing) in his/her other language(s) and therefore information of this should be sought wherever possible. However, phonological differences between languages mean that conditions such as dyslexia can exhibit themselves differently. For instance, reading and spelling may be more accurate (but not necessarily more fluent) in a language with a more regular orthography. This is

because dyslexia is usually due to an underlying problem in processing phonological information and irregular orthographies (such as English) make higher demands on phonological processing. Hence dyslexia may not have been detected in an EAL student in his/her primary language or before they were required to attain a high level of functioning in written English. Additionally, there may not have been sufficient professional awareness of SpLD in the country where the student was brought up or went to school, so any features of dyslexia may not have been formally recognised.

When preparing the report it is helpful for the assessor to state how long the student has been speaking, reading and writing in English, whether English is now his/her principal medium of spoken and written communication, and what experience they have of being educated in the medium of English. An impression of the student's oral skills in English may also be helpful to contrast with any observed literacy difficulties. However, it is important that evidence for SpLD is presented, as opposed to evidence only of difficulties in literacy. Where a diagnosis of SpLD is being made, the assessor should state why they believe that possible linguistic and cultural causes of the observed difficulties may be ruled out in this particular case, or – at the very least – that the impact of the dyslexic difficulties on test performance outweighs the impact of linguistic and cultural factors.

List of Suitable Tests for the Assessment of Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) in Higher Education

Categories:	Name of Test	Closed/ Open	Age Range	Admin. Time	Publisher and Distributors	Components	Comments
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ATTAINMENTS IN LITERACY

Reading:

Single word recognition	Wide Range Achievement Test 3 (WRAT3)	Open	5-75 years	5-10 mins	Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., USA/Harcourt Assessment/Dyslexia Institute		Co-normed with WRIT
	Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests (WRMT-R)	Open	5-75+ years	Approx 10 mins	American Guidance Service, USA/Dyslexia Institute	Word Identification	
	Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE)	Open	6-24.11 years	5 mins	Pro-Ed, USA/Taskmaster/Dyslexia Institute/Harcourt Assessment	Sight Word Efficiency subtest with alternate forms.	This is a timed test that provides a measure of fluency reading real words. Together with the TOWRE Phonemic Decoding Efficiency test it will yield an overall Reading Efficiency measure. Can be used qualitatively for ages over 24.11 years.
Continuous text reading Oral Reading	Spadafore Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT)	Open	6-Adult	Varies	Academic Therapy Publications, USA/Ann Arbor		An appropriate passage can be used for miscue analysis purposes

List of Suitable Tests for the Assessment of Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) in Higher Education

Categories:	Name of Test	Closed/ Open	Age Range	Admin. Time	Publisher and Distributors	Components	Comments
	The Adult Reading Test (ART)	Open	16-55 years	30 mins	Harcourt Assessment	Reading accuracy; reading comprehension; speed of reading and speed of writing	Reading is assessed by reading aloud only Memory, factual and inferential comprehension questions. It is advisable in the case of dyslexia to carry out a piece of free writing over a longer time than 2 minutes.
	Gray Oral Reading Test Fourth Edition (GORT-4)	Open	6-18.11 years	15-45 mins	Pro-Ed, USA/Harcourt Assessment	2 parallel forms; 14 paragraphs; 5 comprehension questions per paragraph.	Rate; Accuracy; Fluency; Comprehension; Oral Reading Quotient. Student is not allowed to refer back to the passage for answers to comprehension questions. Can be used qualitatively for ages over 18.11 years.
Silent Reading	Gray Silent Reading Test (GSRT)	Open	7-25 years	10-15 mins	Pro-Ed, USA/Harcourt Assessment	2 parallel forms; 13 paragraphs; 5 comprehension questions per paragraph;	Different types of comprehension questions; can be administered as group test. Multiple-choice format.
	Spadafore Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT)	Open	6-Adult	Varies up to 30 mins	Academic Therapy Publications, USA		An appropriate passage can be used. Literal recall and inference comprehension questions. Student is not allowed to refer back to the passage for answers to comprehension questions. Comment on reading speed.

List of Suitable Tests for the Assessment of Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) in Higher Education

Categories:	Name of Test	Closed/ Open	Age Range	Admin. Time	Publisher and Distributors	Components	Comments
	Advanced Reading Comprehension Test (ARC)	Open	Adult	20 mins	Department of Psychology, University of Hull	Two Versions (M & C)	Norms collected under timed conditions & based on sample of students which, in terms of intelligence & educational attainment, is probably slightly above the average for the UK HE sector as a whole. Version M slightly easier than Version C. Literal & inferential comprehension questions - in multiple-choice format. Further standardisation using students from a wider range of HE Institutions currently in progress and new norms scheduled to be published in 2006.
	WRAT-Expanded Group Assessment (Form G) Reading Comprehension Test	Open	7-18.11 years	50 mins	Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., USA/Harcourt Assessment/Dyslexia Institute		Multiple-choice; can be used individually. Can be used qualitatively for ages over 18.11 years.
	WRAT-Expanded Individual Assessment (Form I) Reading Comprehension Test	Open	7-24.11 years	Approx 15 mins	Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., USA/Harcourt Assessment/Dyslexia Institute		Multiple-choice; can be used individually. Can be used qualitatively for ages over 24.11 years.

List of Suitable Tests for the Assessment of Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) in Higher Education

Categories:	Name of Test	Closed/ Open	Age Range	Admin. Time	Publisher and Distributors	Components	Comments
	Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests (WRMT-R)	Open	5-75+ years	Approx 15 mins	American Guidance Service, USA/Dyslexia Institute	Passage Comprehension	Modified cloze procedure
Non-word reading	Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE)	Open	6-24.11 years	5 mins	Pro-Ed, USA/Taskmaster/Dyslexia Institute/Harcourt Assessment	Phonemic Decoding Efficiency subtest with alternate forms.	This is a timed test that provides a measure of fluency of reading nonwords. Together with the TOWRE Sight Word Efficiency test it will give an overall Reading Efficiency measure. It can be used qualitatively for ages over 24.11 years.
	Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests (WRMT-R)	Open	5-75+ years	Approx 10 mins	American Guidance Service, USA/Dyslexia Institute	Word Attack	
	Non-word Decoding Test	Open	Non-standardised use	5-10 mins	Dyslexia Institute		
Listening Comprehension	Spadafore Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT)	Open	6-Adult	Varies	Academic Therapy Publications, USA		An appropriate passage can be used.

Spelling:

Single word	Wide Range Achievement Test 3 (WRAT3)	Open	5-75 years	5-10 mins	Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., USA/Harcourt Assessment/Dyslexia Institute		Co-normed with WRIT.
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Categories:	Name of Test	Closed/ Open	Age Range	Admin. Time	Publisher and Distributors	Components	Comments
	Helen Arkell Spelling Test (HAST)	Open	5-19+ years	Approx 15-20 mins	Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre	Includes high and low frequency, and regular and irregular words.	Standardised on UK population. Can be used for group or one-to-one testing.
	British Spelling Test Series (BSTS)	Open	15.6-24+ years	30 mins	NFER-Nelson	Series 5 (X/Y forms)	Can give information about dictation abilities and proof reading abilities.

Writing:

	Free Writing	Open	Non-standardised	Up to 15 minutes			Timed – up to 15 minutes. Writing speed score can be obtained; comparison of spelling usage and single word spelling. Comment on: structure, punctuation, spelling in context, organisation, legibility & use of vocabulary. Student can either: (1) choose a topic to write about, (2) write about a topic in his/her area of study or (3) write about a passage he/she has read, putting in the key points. (1) & (2) can be used for the Speed of Writing Prose Task.
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List of Suitable Tests for the Assessment of Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) in Higher Education

Categories:	Name of Test	Closed/ Open	Age Range	Admin. Time	Publisher and Distributors	Components	Comments
UNDERLYING ABILITY							
	Wide Range Intelligence Test (WRIT)	Open	4-85 years	20-30 mins	Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., USA/Dyslexia Institute	Verbal (Vocabulary & Verbal Analogies); Visual (Matrices & Diamonds).	High correlation with WAIS-III & WISC-III; co-normed with WRAT3. Published 2000.
	Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale, 3rd Edition UK version (WAIS-IIIUK)	Closed	16-89 years	75 mins	Harcourt Assessment.	Indices: Verbal Comprehension (Vocabulary, Similarities, Information); Perceptual Organisation (Picture Completion, Block Design, Matrix Reasoning); Working Memory (Arithmetic, Digit Span, Letter-Number Sequencing); Processing Speed (Digit Symbol Coding, Symbol Search).	Published 1999 (superseded WAIS-R).
	Wechsler Abbreviated Scale of Intelligence (WASI)	Closed	6-89 years	30 mins	Harcourt Assessment	Verbal Scale (Vocabulary, Similarities); Performance Scale (Block Design, Matrix Reasoning).	Published 1999.

List of Suitable Tests for the Assessment of Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) in Higher Education

Categories:	Name of Test	Closed/ Open	Age Range	Admin. Time	Publisher and Distributors	Components	Comments
COGNITIVE PROCESSING							
Working Memory	Wechsler Memory Scale, 3rd Edition UK version (WMS–III)	Closed	16-89 years	75 mins	Harcourt Assessment.	Immediate Memory (Auditory & Visual); General Memory (delayed) (Logical memory; Verbal Paired associates, Faces, Family Pictures); Working Memory (Spatial Span; Letter-Number Sequencing).	Published 1999.
	Wide Range Assessment of Memory and Learning Second Edition(WRAML2)	Open	5-90 years	20+ mins	Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., USA/ Harcourt Assessment	6 core tests; 2 optional delay recall tests; 4 optional recognition tests; 3 optional memory tests	The factor structure contains verbal memory, visual memory and attention/concentration information. Excellent range of memory tests.
	Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale, 3rd Edition UK version (WAIS–IIIUK)	Closed	16-89 years	10-15 mins	Harcourt Assessment.	Digit Span; Letter-Number Sequencing	
	The Digit Memory Test	Open	6-Adult	5-10 mins	Dyslexia Institute	Digit Span forward and backward	
Phonological Processing	Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP)	Open	5-24.11 years	30 mins	Pro-Ed, USA/Taskmaster	Phonological Awareness Quotient; Phonological	Can be used qualitatively for ages over 24.11 years.

List of Suitable Tests for the Assessment of Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) in Higher Education

Categories:	Name of Test	Closed/ Open	Age Range	Admin. Time	Publisher and Distributors	Components	Comments
						Memory Quotient; Rapid Naming Quotient; Alternative Phonological Awareness Quotient; Alternative Rapid Naming Quotient.	
Speed of Processing	Symbol Digit Modalities Test (SDMT)	Open	8-Adult	90 secs	WPS, USA/Dyslexia Institute	Matching number with symbol	Similar to Digit-Symbol Coding sub-test of WAIS III; administered as written and/or oral test; measure of speed of processing.
	Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP)	Open	5-24.11 years	30 mins	Pro-Ed, USA/Taskmaster	All Rapid Naming subtests & Quotients.	
	Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale, 3rd Edition UK version (WAIS- IIIUK)	Closed	16-89 years	10 mins	Harcourt Assessment.	Processing speed index (Digit-symbol coding & Symbol search).	
	Speed of Writing Prose Task	Open	Adult	Up to 15 mins			Timed - up to 15 mins. Student can choose topic to write about. Provides words per minutes and indicates speed of processing. Can also be used for the Free- Writing Task.

List of Suitable Tests for the Assessment of Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) in Higher Education

Categories:	Name of Test	Closed/ Open	Age Range	Admin. Time	Publisher and Distributors	Components	Comments
OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION							
Attainments in numeracy (where appropriate)	Wide Range Achievement Test 3 (WRAT3)	Open	5-75 years	15 mins	Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., USA/ Harcourt Assessment/Dyslexia Institute		Timed test; quick to administer; only tests arithmetic skills; presentation of items is in an American format
	WRAT-Expanded Group Assessment (Form G) Mathematics Test	Open	7-18.11 years	45 mins	Wide Range Inc, USA/ Harcourt Assessment/Dyslexia Institute		Can be used individually; multiple-choice; assesses understanding of concepts, computation and problem solving. Can be used qualitatively for ages over 18.11 years.
	WRAT-Expanded Individual Assessment (Form I) Mathematics Test	Open	7-24.11 years	Approx 15 mins	Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., USA/ Harcourt Assessment/Dyslexia Institute		Multiple-choice; assesses understanding of concepts, computation and problem solving. Can be used qualitatively for ages over 24.11 years.
	Mathematics Competency Test	Open	11.6 - Adult	30-40 mins	Hodder & Stoughton	Using & Applying Mathematics; Number & Algebra; Space & Shape; Handling Data	Useful for students who have difficulty with mathematics; gives percentile scores only; can be used qualitatively.
Attainments in motor control	Morrisby Manual Dexterity Test	Open	14-49 years	5 mins	The Morrisby Organisation		Fine motor control indicators for dyspraxic-type difficulties

The Recommended Format for a Diagnostic Assessment Report for Specific Learning Difficulties

The specific learning difficulties under consideration are dyslexia, attention deficit disorder, dyspraxia/DCD and dyscalculia. Diagnostic assessment reports should present evidence for SpLD in such a way as to facilitate their perusal by student support officers in Local Education Authorities. The information contained in them and their format should therefore be consistent. While acknowledging that individual assessors must be able to exercise their professional judgement in selecting appropriate tests, assessment reports should conform to certain basic standards.

Wherever possible, tests should be **properly standardised on the adult population, with clear evidence of validity and reliability**. Tests not suitable for use with adults should be avoided.

Certain information needs to be given in a report so that a diagnosis can be seen to be based on evidence. The evidence required will relate to the agreed definitions of the relevant SpLD and to the related diagnostic criteria. The student support officer can then determine whether the Disabled Student Allowances are appropriate.

The recipient of the report will be the student who has been assessed and not third parties, unless the student has requested that a copy be sent to a tutor or to the Disability Coordinator of the institution.

The core components of an assessment report in which SpLD are identified are listed below and a report proforma is provided. Assessors of students referred primarily because dyslexia is suspected may also need to investigate problems related to numeracy, attentional function and motor control but these further “probes” will not always be necessary.

■ Report layout (see proforma for detail)

Cover sheet

Summary

Background Information

Test Conditions

Attainments in Literacy

<i>Reading</i>

<i>Spelling</i>

<i>Writing</i>

Underlying Ability

Cognitive Processing

Other Relevant Information

Conclusion

Recommended Support

Statement of assessor (signed)

Appendix – List of tests used and summary of scores
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Details of content

■ Cover sheet

The candidate's name; date of assessment; date of birth; age at assessment; correspondence address; college/university attended; course of study (subject and degree); year and length of course (e.g. second year of four year course); assessor's details and contact information. Assessors should state whether they are psychologists or specialist teachers holding an approved qualification. Assessors should specify their qualifications, and (from 2007/08) all assessors should quote their current assessment Practising Certificate number and issuing body.

■ Summary

The main assessment findings should be summarised and placed immediately after the cover sheet for ease of reference. There should be a clear statement as to whether or not, according to performance at assessment, taking account of and incorporating any background information, the student has a specific learning difficulty, and if the student has been found to be dyslexic this should be specified. A diagnosis will have been based on converging evidence from all parts of the assessment and this evidence should be summarised in support of the diagnosis. Significant differentials between underlying ability and attainment should be highlighted if these have been identified. The effects of the specific learning difficulty on the student's literacy and study skills should be outlined, taking account of compensatory strengths. Other relevant conclusions should be drawn; for example, if previous experience or affective factors appear to have had a significant effect on the student's development of literacy skills this should be noted. If the student shows characteristics of dyspraxia/DCD or any other SpLD this should be stated so that any assessment of need for DSA can take this into account.

■ Background Information

The diagnostic assessment report should start with referral information (e.g. assessment suggested by tutor). The main part of this section will cover the student's developmental, educational and family history, any previous exam access arrangements, statement of Special Educational Needs, learning support and relevant medical information. Any previous reports which may include psychological, speech and language or occupational therapy assessments should be summarised, with details of previous scores quoted. Where English is spoken as a second or additional language, details of the student's language history and current levels of competence in spoken and written English should be included. The student's own perceptions of his/her difficulties and motivation for assessment should also be stated.

■ Test Conditions

Conditions in a test setting may influence the student's performance. These can include environment, comfort, interruptions as well as health of student, attention, motivation, anxiety. A student's behaviour during the assessment session may influence his or her performance. A student may be very nervous or anxious; appear to have difficulty sustaining concentration; or behave in a defensive manner, apparently wishing to deny his/her difficulties. It is therefore recommended that reports include a brief statement about the test conditions and the student's response to them so that results can be interpreted accordingly.

■ **Assessment**

Reports of performance in individual tests should be prefaced by a brief statement about the attainment or cognitive function which the test is designed to examine, and a description of the requirements of the task for the student.

Attainments in Literacy

This section of the report can be subdivided under headings for reading, spelling and writing:

1. Reading

Assessment of reading can include single words (a graded, single word reading test), non-word reading, text reading (both oral and silent) and reading comprehension. Performance in each test should be reported separately and should cover qualitative analysis of errors, evidence of strategies being used (for example whole word recognition, decoding), fluency, reading speed (oral and silent) and ability to extract information from text. There should follow a summary of the student's reading profile relating this to expected performance in Higher Education, to demands of his/her course of study and to the recognised profile of students with SpLD.

2. Spelling

Information about spelling should come from a standardised spelling test (single words), a piece of free writing and, at the assessor's discretion, dictation of sentences. The report should give a qualitative analysis of errors and should take account of the student's knowledge as well as lack thereof. Where there are non-phonetic errors these should be reported. The free writing may reveal lack of consistency in spelling or a tendency to omit suffixes; a student may also limit vocabulary to simple words so that spelling is not a problem. All these aspects of performance should be reported and should be related to expected attainment levels in Higher Education and to SpLD.

3. Writing

The student's free writing should be analysed to provide information about ability to write grammatically, the complexity of sentence structure, the coherence of writing, use of vocabulary, writing speed and legibility of handwriting. It is also important to report handwriting speed in a copying task so that difficulties relating to the process of composition and to motor skills can be teased apart.

■ **Underlying Ability**

The student's performance in other areas of testing can then be considered within the context of his/her underlying ability. Qualitative observations should be made about the student's test performance and profiles of scores should be discussed, with particular reference to any significant discrepancies between verbal and non-verbal ability, and to weaknesses in working memory or processing speed if these cognitive functions have been assessed. Information about both verbal and non-verbal ability should be reported.

Gathering information about underlying ability is a vital component of assessment. The assessment of verbal and non-verbal ability throws light on the extent to which students are likely to be able to develop compensatory strategies, and informs specialist teaching

intervention. The effect of SpLD on a student's learning can be evaluated more effectively when underlying ability is taken into account.

■ **Cognitive Processing**

As it is widely accepted that the underlying causes of SpLD are weaknesses in particular cognitive processes, a section of the report should be dedicated to reporting the student's performance in tasks designed to tap these skills. In some cases a full IQ test (WAIS III UK) will have been administered and reported in the previous section, so tests of working memory and some tests of processing speed may have been covered. If not, performance in a test of auditory working memory should be reported here. For the identification of dyslexia, phonological processing should also be reported and this will need to include phonological awareness and phonological processing speed (for example rapid naming).

■ **Other Relevant Information**

At the assessor's discretion, performance in a range of other tests may be reported here. These may include tests of competence in certain aspects of numeracy or tests of motor control. Assessors may additionally consider it appropriate to screen for disorders such as Meares Irlen Syndrome, or to use recognised checklists to identify whether a student might show signs of dyspraxia/DCD or ADD. The results of any such screening procedures should be reported in this section.

■ **Conclusion**

■ **Recommended Support**

A brief statement about the type of support which might help the student should be made here, particularly in relation to study skills tuition. Diagnosticians should also bear in mind that students will have a full assessment of their needs for the purposes of DSA, and the final recommendations for support will be made through that assessment. We would expect recommendations from the diagnostician to be used to inform the academic staff and those who undertake a later assessment of the student's course related needs which will identify the appropriate DSA support for the Higher Education course. If recommendations are made about examination arrangements it should be borne in mind that universities may have their own systems for supporting students with SpLD. Information about the procedure for applying for the DSA can also be given here.

■ **Assessor Statement (signed) (see proforma)**

Assessors should sign the statement that the assessment and report comply with the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines for the Assessment of SpLD in Higher Education. The report should be dated.

■ **Appendix**

- A list of tests used in the assessment (with references)
- A summary of scores achieved in the tests, with notes to aid interpretation of scaled scores, standardised scores and percentile ranks.

Diagnostic Assessment Report Proforma

Candidate's name:

Date of assessment:

Date of birth:

Age at assessment:

Correspondence address:

College/University attended:

Course of study (subject and degree):

Year and length of course:

Name of the author of this report & contact details

The author of this report

- holds a current Practising Certificate
- certifies that this assessment has been conducted and the report written in accordance with the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines for Assessment of SpLDs in Higher Education.

Name: (printed)

Signature:

Date:

The author is (delete the profession that does not apply)

A qualified psychologist /specialist teacher holding an approved qualification (as noted in the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines).

Qualification held and awarding institution

Current Practising Certificate number and issuing body.
(must be completed by all assessors from 2007/08)

Summary

Diagnostic findings should be stated, with summary of evidence on which this is based; outline of effects of SpLD on student's literacy and study skills, taking account of compensatory strengths. There should be a clear statement as to whether or not, according to performance at assessment, taking account of and incorporating any background information, the student has a specific learning difficulty, and if the student has been found to be dyslexic this should be specified.

Background information

Referral information; family, developmental, educational and language history; relevant medical information; summaries of previous assessment reports; student's perceptions of his/her difficulties and motivation for assessment, previous educational support, examination access arrangements.

Test conditions

Conditions in test setting and his/her response to these factors may influence the students' performance. Provide a brief statement about environment, comfort, interruptions as well as health of student, attention, motivation, anxiety and his/her response to these or any other factors that might have affected the results.

Assessment

(Reports of performance in individual tests should be prefaced by a brief statement about the attainment or cognitive function which the test is designed to examine and a description of the requirements of the task for the student.)

Attainments in Literacy**Reading**

Single words (a standardised single word reading test); non-word reading; text reading (both oral and silent) and reading comprehension; qualitative analysis of errors; evidence of strategies such as whole word recognition; decoding; fluency; reading speed (oral and silent) and ability to extract information from text; summary of student's reading profile.

Spelling

A standardised single word spelling test; free writing; dictation of sentences (optional). Qualitative analysis of errors.

Writing

Free writing analysed to cover vocabulary, ability to write grammatically, complexity of sentence structures, coherence of writing, writing speed and legibility of handwriting.

Handwriting speed for copying should be reported separately.

Underlying Ability

Information about both verbal and non-verbal ability; observations about test performance; discussion of profile of scores highlighting any significant discrepancies.

Cognitive Processing

A range of tests selected by the assessor to probe relevant aspects of cognitive functioning: tests of working memory (if these have not been reported in the section Underlying Ability); tests of phonological processing (phonological awareness and phonological processing speed). Tests should be reported under separate headings.

Other relevant information

Performance in a range of other tests may be reported here. These may include tests of competence in certain aspects of numeracy or tests of motor control. Assessors may additionally consider it appropriate to screen for disorders such as Meares Irlen Syndrome, or to use recognised checklists to identify whether a student might show signs of dyspraxia/DCD or ADD. The results of any such screening procedures should be reported in this section.

Conclusion

Recommended Support

A brief statement about the type of support which might help the student should be made here, particularly in relation to study skills tuition. Diagnosticians should also bear in mind that students will have a full assessment of their needs for the purposes of DSA, and the final recommendations for support will be made through that assessment, although recommendations from the diagnostician should be used to inform the academic staff and those who undertake a later assessment of the student's course related needs which will identify the appropriate DSA support for the Higher Education course. If recommendations are made about examination arrangements it should be borne in mind that universities may have their own systems for supporting students with SpLD. Information about the procedure for applying for the DSA can also be given here.

The author of this report:

- **holds a current Practising Certificate (see cover sheet)**
- **certifies that this assessment has been conducted and the report written in accordance with the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines for Assessment of SpLDs in Higher Education**

Name (please print):

Signature:

Date:

Appendix

Tests used in assessment and summary of scores achieved.

Suitable Qualifications & Training for those Assessing Specific Learning Difficulties in Higher Education

The brief of this Working Group was to respond to two related needs:

- 1) The demand for diagnostic assessments of specific learning difficulties for the purposes of determining eligibility for the Disabled Student Allowances has grown considerably in recent years. There are not enough suitably qualified assessors able to meet this demand.
- 2) Awards Officers in LEAs find it difficult to evaluate the quality of assessments from existing assessors and are in need of clearer guidance as to what constitutes good professional practice.

The current situation, following on from the report of the National Working Party on Dyslexia in Higher Education (1999) *Dyslexia in Higher Education: Policy, Provision and Practice*, is that diagnostic assessments should be carried out by psychologists or by specialist teachers holding a BDA recognised qualification. However, in practice, many LEAS do not accept reports from specialist teachers. They find that the quality of assessments and reports from both psychologists and specialist teachers is highly variable.

This Working Group was asked to make recommendations in relation to:

- a) appropriate tests
- b) appropriate report format
- c) appropriate training and qualifications for specialist assessors.

The central role of training

The Working Group was clear in emphasising that 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. A recurrent theme in our discussions was that assessments require **interpretation** of test results and integration of this with other relevant information in order to reach a conclusion. The choice of tests and the results are critical, but they do not tell the whole story. Thus, it is our view that LEA officers, in the long term, will be better served if they could find some means of determining that a suitably trained person had conducted the assessment, rather than having to determine the suitability of the report on a case-by-case basis by scrutinising the test choice and results. Our starting point was that the current system needed strengthening since LEA officers do not have confidence in all assessors at the present time. It was also clear that many teachers trained to conduct assessments felt that they lacked knowledge and skills in some areas and that additional training and support would be required. We therefore considered what elements would need to be added to existing training courses and began this process by reviewing courses available from several training providers. From this emerged the framework that is described later. It will be seen that this framework embodies the following principles and recommendations:

- 1) Existing post-graduate level training courses could be suitable with relatively small changes to ensure:
 - a) a minimum input on psychometric testing principles and practice and
 - b) more extensive practical case-work experience involving assessments.

- 2) Training should include a cycle of training, learning and discussion followed by practical, supported experience which, in turn, would be followed by opportunities for reflection, clarification and further learning.
- 3) Assessors should be required to continually up-date their skills through Continuing Professional Development (CPD).
- 4) Assessors should hold a Practising Certificate, issued by their relevant professional body, which will only be renewed on production of evidence of continuing good practice and CPD.
- 5) Assessors need, particularly when they are newly trained, to have access to peers and those with more experience who can provide advice and act as 'mentors'.
- 6) Reports should contain a statement from the assessor to confirm that s/he holds the relevant qualification (see above) and current Practising Certificate and that his/her work conforms to relevant guidance, including the guidance given by this Working Group.

Transitional Period and Procedures

It is recognised that there will be a transitional period during which training providers may wish to update their courses and those previously trained may seek to have their prior qualifications and experience recognised as meeting the new standards. A key feature of the training standards is access to a mentor both for training and CPD purposes, identification of people suitable for this role will also take place during the transitional period.

The Working Group has asked a subgroup of the BDA Accreditation Board to produce further guidelines for training providers, based on the standards presented here, and set up procedures for accrediting courses. Training providers would be expected to identify suitable tutors and practitioners who could act as mentors, who should have been recognised under the Practising Certificate system or working towards recognition.

Individuals wishing to have their qualifications recognised should approach their professional organisation to obtain an assessment practising certificate. Currently, the only professional associations offering such certificates are Patoss, for specialist teachers and the BPS for psychologists. Other teaching and training organisations may wish to offer that feature, either as part of initial training or CPD, but any training so provided will have to be accredited by the BDA/Patoss CPD Committee as meeting the standards of the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines.

To ensure consistency of standards, the Working Group has asked a small committee, lead by Patoss and the BDA to take a lead in developing guidelines for the evaluation of applications for certificates from specialist teachers. This committee will be augmented by other professionals will also process applications from those wishing to become recognised as assessors or mentors via this route.

Scope of Certificates

These standards for training in SpLD assessment are designed to address the training needs of SpLD assessors at all age ranges thus insuring the production of clear reports for other professionals to use as a basis for determining Disabled Student Allowances (DSA), Access Arrangements for Examinations and other forms of special educational provision for individuals with SpLD.

Those providing diagnostic assessments for DSA will have to:

- 1) sign a self monitoring statement that their assessment has been conducted and the report written in accordance with the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines for Assessment of SpLDs in Higher Education
- 2) be a suitably qualified member of a relevant professional body (e.g. BPS or Patoss)
- 3) hold a current Practising Certificate issued by their relevant professional body, from 2007/2008
- 4) update, every 3 years, their Practising Certificate through CPD.

This outline is to give guidance for trainers in the content and range of provision leading to developing an appropriate level of knowledge and expertise to fulfil this role. These standards will be formalised through QCA.

It is expected that all those conducting these assessments, both psychologists and specialist teachers, will conform to these standards and the recommendations of this Working Group.

SpLD/Dyslexia Assessment Training and Practising Certificates - Standards for Specialist Teachers

The role of the assessor in establishing individual learning needs and informing or designing appropriate approaches to address an individual's SpLD is fundamental to the development of a successful learning programme.

In recognition of the increased depth of knowledge and range of experience required by specialist teachers most existing training programmes provide for the candidate to concentrate on the specific age ranges relevant to their areas of expertise. This enables the training to be much more focused.

To train successfully for an Assessment Practising Certificate candidates must produce evidence from within the age group(s) where they have qualified as specialist teachers and demonstrate relevant experience in working within an institution or with individuals of the relevant age(s).

It is understood that, at present, courses meeting requirements for Full Membership of Patoss and AMBDA, in large part, train candidates at post-graduate level to meet the requisite practical skills outcomes. It is hoped that they will be extended, by 2008, to meet the following standards by incorporating the more extensive use of simulations and multiple supervised assessments with concentration on relevant age ranges.

Courses meeting these Assessment Practising Certificate standards, at postgraduate level, could be delivered by university departments, awarding bodies [e.g., OCR, AQA], LEAs and independent organisations [e.g. training consultancies, Dyslexia Institute, HADC, Hornsby Institute].

It is understood that Assessment Practising Certificates will have a currency of 3 years. After that time practitioners will need to update their Certificates by providing evidence of CPD in the skills of assessment which are practical and relevant to their work situation. To be considered adequate for this purpose, such evidence should include records of a minimum of 20 hours training or **equivalent** recorded CPD activities, which have taken place during the 3 years since prior registration for a Practising Certificate (see table of possible CPD activities).

Training for the renewal of a Practising Certificate will encompass changes in regulations and legislation, and include practical opportunities for exploring new assessment methods and materials. Understanding and application of these same issues will need to be demonstrated by all those seeking renewal.

A portfolio of evidence of CPD will therefore be required, including, for example, records of training, relevant study, evaluation of current practice, professional dialogue and INSET, logs of assessments with accompanying reports.

SpLD/Dyslexia Assessment Training Practical Skills Outcomes

■ **Outcomes:**

It is expected that an accredited course, approved by the BDA/Patoss or the BPS will enable the candidate to

- understand the nature of specific learning difficulties and identify learners with specific learning difficulties
- demonstrate an understanding of the affective issues observed in learners with specific learning difficulties
- understand the theory and application of psychometric and educational assessment [The BPS Checklist of Competence in Educational Testing – Level A is a good model.]
- identify appropriate methods and materials both for screening learners and for assessing their individual needs
- select appropriate assessment materials, administer tests correctly and interpret resulting data accurately
- produce professional reports written in a language easily accessible to non-specialists
- make teaching and learning and assessment recommendations that are directly linked to assessment findings and subject's needs
- understand current legal and professional issues, rules and regulations relating to or affecting SpLD individuals
- complete relevant forms and reports to meet varied individual needs
- understand all aspects of processing documentation and managing special arrangements for SpLD learners
- communicate effectively findings and implications of any assessments to relevant individuals both orally and in writing as required, with due regard for building a positive framework.

■ **Evidence Requirements:**

- evidence of practical application of above skills
- assessment reports stemming from 3 different scenarios, demonstrating the ability to assess students/pupils from different learning situations who present different patterns of ability and difficulty
- tutors' or mentors' reports on 3 assessments carried out under supervision, one of which is observed (video/dvd evidence acceptable)
- logs of assessments.

■ **Recommendations for training**

- practical exercises in data analysis including use of previously videoed sessions performed by others
- inclusion of simulation exercises making use of:
 - video/dvd evidence covering appropriate age ranges
 - genuine raw data

- practice in writing specific objectives linked to subject's needs
- opportunities for tutor-led and peer discussions of genuine case studies relating to special arrangements, Disabled Student Allowances, examination access arrangements, other assessment requirements as may be relevant
- training in the skills of observing pupils'/students' strategies and listening to their explanations of strengths and difficulties; using these to expand the process of exploration
- training in highlighting the difficulties in identifying learners who have developed compensatory strategies, but which might not be sufficient for the increased demands of their next level of studies
- candidates should generate reports on evidence found within the age groups where they are qualified as a specialist teacher and in their own place of work where possible
- practitioners must recognise that proper liaison and co-operation with learners/ teachers/ tutors and examination personnel is necessary and that it is wholly inappropriate to produce reports without this
- candidates wishing to qualify across the age range should have a minimum of 3 assessments carried out under supervision, one of which is observed in the adult range and one in each of the other two, one of which is observed
- candidates wishing to qualify in one age range should have a minimum of 3 assessments carried out under supervision, one of which is observed
- training should include the writing of reports of a professional standard which are accessible to the intended audience.

As part of CPD practitioners will be expected to extend their skills by making use of post-qualification mentoring.

The assessment award can be earned within the provisions of a Patoss/AMBDA approved course as long as certain criteria are met:

- a. assessments actual and simulated must be carried out with subjects in age ranges appropriate to the candidate's area of work
- b. a minimum of 3 assessments must be carried out under supervision, one of which must be observed.

Such training could be pursued with top-up courses of 60 hours, for Route 2 candidates who have other SpLD qualifications, or possibly SEN qualifications, wanting and needing to move into this field. SENCOs might fit into this category as well as candidates with Approved Teacher Status of the British Dyslexia Association (BDA ATS) or other SpLD Certificate Level qualifications.

We wish to enable those who are already doing satisfactory assessments and reports to continue doing so. Assessors are needed to continue to carry out assessments for DSA. Mentors are needed to train specialist assessors and to give guidance in practical assessment in the period following initial training. Course tutors would be obvious candidates for this role. Practising assessors who are not course tutors could also be mentors. Therefore, in the initial stages of this system, assessors can apply to have their qualifications and skills recognised as suitable without the need for further training.

Assessors must:

- a. have an approved qualification as a psychologist or specialist teacher. For specialist teachers, those qualifications approved for AMBDA or for Full Membership of Patoss are suitable.
- b. be a member of an appropriate professional body which requires a relevant qualification in SpLD assessment, (e.g. British Psychological Society [BPS], the Professional Association of Teachers of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties [Patoss])
- c. hold a current Practising Certificate issued by their professional body
- d. after 3 years assessors will need to show evidence of relevant CPD to update their current Practising Certificate.

It is anticipated that from 2007/08 assessors should have an appropriate current Practising Certificate. Assessors will be able to apply on the basis of their current qualifications. Those qualified as psychologists or specialist teachers (for specialist teachers, those qualifications approved for AMBDA or for Full Membership of Patoss are suitable for this purpose) will be eligible for a current Practising Certificate from their relevant professional body. Individuals who do not hold such qualifications may apply to their professional body to have their qualifications and experience considered based on Accreditation of Prior Learning and/or Experience (APL/APE) or pursue further training as noted below.

From 2007/08, Patoss and the BPS will maintain registers of individuals holding current Practising Certificates. Patoss and BDA websites will hold information on courses accredited as meeting the requirements of training in SpLD assessment as recommended by the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines for the Assessment of SpLD in Higher Education.

Routes to SpLD Practising Certificate

The following routes to achieving an SpLD assessment Practising Certificate will be recognised (also see Flow Chart attached):

- **Route 1: Applicants holding membership of a relevant professional body or a post-graduate qualification entitling them to membership of their relevant professional body**

Applicants via Route 1 should include:

- a) a personal statement supporting the application, specifying:
 - i) relevant qualifications and experience
 - ii) confirmation of membership of a professional body which requires a relevant qualification in SpLD assessment (e.g. Patoss, BPS)
 - iii) a signed statement that the applicant agrees to work within current legislation and guidance relating to SpLD which is relevant to the particular phase of education in which s/he is involved.
- b) copy of certificate(s) of relevant qualification(s) as a specialist teacher or psychologist. For specialist teachers, those qualifications approved for AMBDA or for Full Membership of Patoss are suitable for this purpose (e.g. post-graduate qualification with practical elements in teaching and assessment such as the OCR/RSA Diploma

(SpLD), or those meeting requirements for AMBDA (Associate Membership of the British Dyslexia Association)).

■ **From 2008**

It is understood that, at present, courses meeting requirements for Full Membership of Patoss and/or AMBDA, in large part, train candidates at post-graduate level to meet the requisite practical skills outcomes. It is hoped that they will be extended, by 2008, to meet the following standards by incorporating the more extensive use of simulations, multiple supervised assessments with concentration on relevant age ranges.

Training should include the following:

- 90 hours of lectures, seminars and guided learning hours plus private study time
- 12 hours of lectures and seminars to be devoted to study of psychometric testing
- 18 hours evaluated specialist teaching
- 1 hour teaching observed and assessed by course tutor
- training in writing assessment reports
- 3 diagnostic assessments carried out under supervision, one of which is observed

Evidence must demonstrate current practical application of skills in diagnostic assessment and reporting specific to one or more age ranges. It must include records related to 3 separate diagnostic assessments, demonstrating the ability to assess students/pupils from different learning situations who present different patterns of ability and difficulty. These records should comprise:

- logs related to each assessment showing the ability to plan an assessment, liaise with others as appropriate and choose appropriate assessment materials
- evidence of one hour of an observed assessment session (video/dvd evidence acceptable) and tutor reports on supervised assessments
- diagnostic assessment reports (linked to each assessment carried out) showing the ability to present a professional report; score tests correctly; interpret data from tests used; give an overview of pupils'/students' strengths and difficulties; suggest relevant learning support (see Assessment Report Checklist, below)
- supporting documentation for each report such as score sheets, records of observations.

■ **Route 2: Applicants via Accreditation of Prior Learning/Accreditation of Prior Experience (APL/APE) for individuals who do not hold membership of a relevant professional body (see b above) and who do not hold one of the approved qualifications**

Applications via Route 2 should include:

- a) a personal statement supporting the application:
 - i) reviewing the applicant's current responsibilities for assessment for SpLD

- ii) specifying the assessment materials which the applicant currently uses and is familiar with

b) a full CV detailing:

- i) relevant experience and qualifications (e.g. first degree, PGCE, specialist teacher training, postgraduate diploma or Master's degree),
- ii) training and experience within the past five years which was directly relevant to SpLD assessment.

NB. Training must have included the use of psychometric tests to be considered acceptable

c) copies of certificates of relevant qualifications detailed in CV

d) evidence of current practical application of skills in diagnostic assessment and reporting specific to one or more age ranges. This evidence must demonstrate:

- i) the ability to administer, score and interpret cognitive and attainment tests, including standardised tests
- ii) the ability to make appropriate recommendations based on the assessment
- iii) the ability to write a report on assessment which is appropriate for purpose.

**EVIDENCE
REQUIREMENTS**

It must include records related to 3 separate diagnostic assessments, demonstrating the ability to assess students/pupils from different learning situations who present different patterns of ability and difficulty. These records should comprise:

- logs related to each assessment showing the ability to plan an assessment, liaise with others as appropriate and choose appropriate assessment materials
- diagnostic assessment reports (linked to each assessment carried out) showing the ability to present a professional report; score tests correctly; interpret data from tests used; give an overview of pupils'/students' strengths and difficulties; suggest relevant learning support (see assessment report checklist, attached)
- video/dvd evidence of one of the 3 assessments conducted by the applicant, with supporting documentation such as score sheets, records of observations.

e) a statement of support from two relevant professionals with recognised standing and experience in the area of assessment (e.g. SENCo, Learning Support Manager, Educational Psychologist)

f) a signed statement that the applicant agrees to work within current legislation and guidance relating to SpLD which is relevant to the particular phase of education in which s/he is involved

g) a signed statement that the applicant has read the professional body's Code of Ethics and agrees to abide by it.

■ **Route 3: Applicants who have SpLD specialist teacher training but no training in the use of psychometric tests.**

Applicants should seek further training that will provide:

- 60 hours lectures, seminars and guided learning hours plus private study time

**MINIMUM
REQUIREMENTS**

- 12 hours of lectures and seminars to be devoted to study of psychometric testing
- training in writing assessment reports
- 3 diagnostic assessments carried out under supervision, one of which is observed.

Evidence must demonstrate current practical application of skills in diagnostic assessment and reporting specific to one or more age ranges. It must include records related to 3 separate diagnostic assessments, demonstrating the ability to assess students/pupils from different learning situations who present different patterns of ability and difficulty. These records should comprise:

**EVIDENCE
REQUIREMENTS**

- logs related to each assessment showing the ability to plan an assessment, liaise with others as appropriate and choose appropriate assessment materials
- evidence of one hour of an observed assessment session (video/dvd evidence acceptable) and tutor reports on supervised assessments.
- diagnostic assessment reports (linked to each assessment carried out) showing the ability to present a professional report; score tests correctly; interpret data from tests used; give an overview of pupils'/students' strengths and difficulties; suggest relevant learning support. (see assessment report checklist, attached)
- supporting documentation for each report such as score sheets, records of observations.

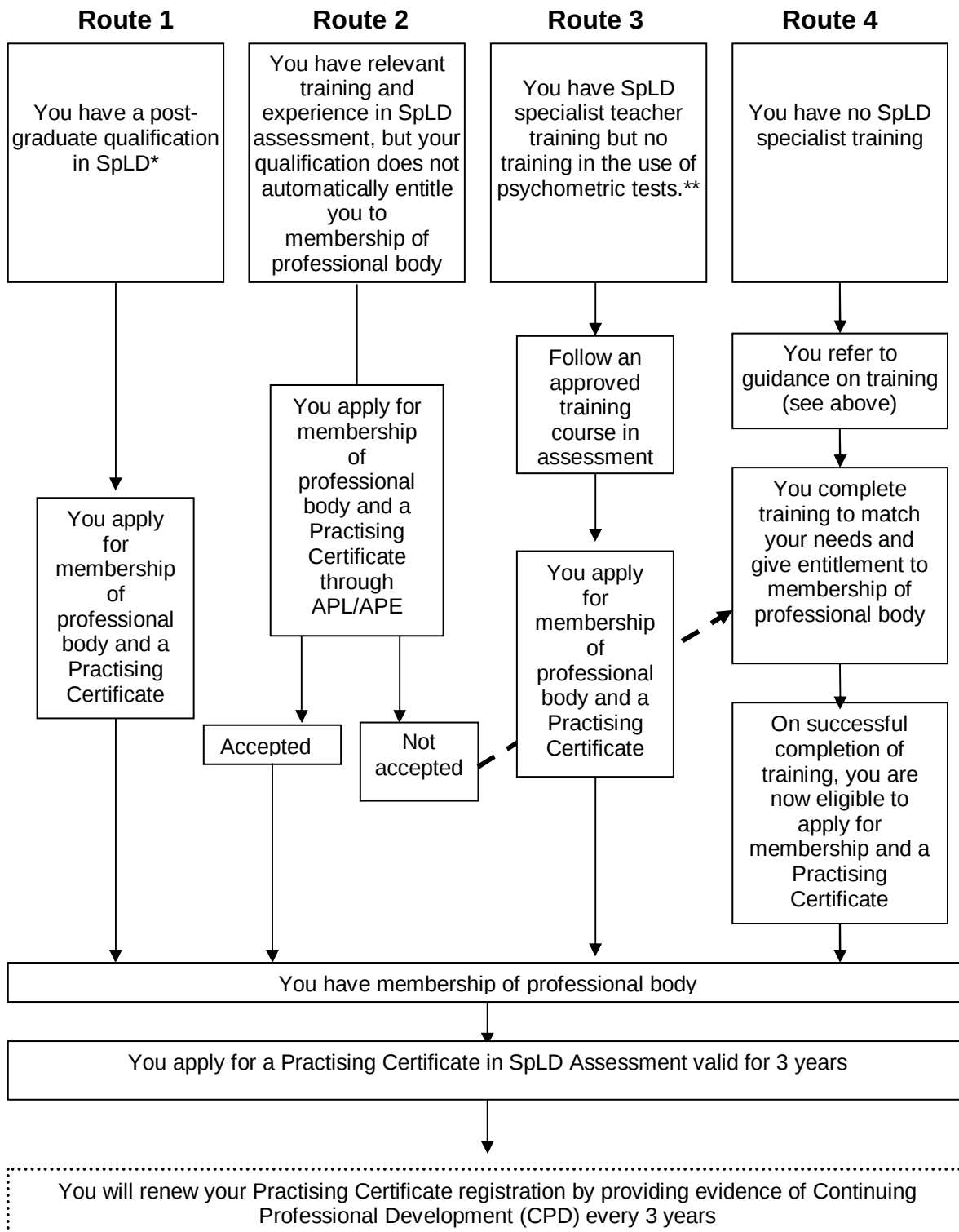
■ **Route 4: Applicants who have no SpLD specialist training**

Applicants should seek training that will provide qualifications as noted in Route 1.

It is suggested that teachers either

- a) write directly to the Patoss-BDA led CPD Committee at: Patoss, PO Box 10, Evesham, Worcs., WR11 1ZW
- b) contact their initial specialist training provider who could advise on
 - i) needs for additional training and production of evidence
 - ii) options for obtaining a practicing certificate

Flow Diagram – Specialist Teacher Routes to achieving an SpLD assessment Practising Certificate



*Post-graduate qualification with practical elements in teaching and assessment such as the OCR/RSA Diploma (SpLD), or equivalent qualification, e.g. qualifications meeting requirements for AMBDA (Associate Membership of the British Dyslexia Association) are suitable for this purpose.

**Qualification with practical elements in teaching such as the OCR/RSA Certificate (SpLD), or equivalent qualification. Qualifications meeting requirements for BDA ATS (Approved Teacher Status of the British Dyslexia Association) are suitable for this purpose.

Range of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) learning activities:

Work-based learning	Professional Activity	Formal/ educational	Self-directed learning	Other
• Learning by doing • Case studies • Reflective practice • Coaching from others • Discussion with colleagues • Peer review • Gaining and learning from experience • Involvement in wider work of employer e.g. representative on a committee • Shadowing • Secondments • Job rotation • Journal club • In-service training • Supervision of staff/students • Visits to other departments and reporting back • Role expansion • Completion of self-assessment questionnaires • Project work/ management	• Involvement in a professional body • Membership of specialist interest group • Lecturing/ teaching • Mentoring • Examiner • Tutor • Branch meetings • Organisation of journal clubs or other specialist groups • Maintenance of and/or developing specialist skills • Expert witness • Membership of other professional bodies/groups • Presentation at conferences • Organisation of accredited courses • Research supervision • National assessor • Appointment to a promoted post	• Courses • Further education • Undertaking research • Attendance at conferences • Submission and publication of books/ articles/papers • Seminars • Distance learning • Courses accredited by professional body • Planning or running a course	• Reading journals/ articles • Review of books/articles • Updating knowledge via www/TV/press • Progress files	• Public service • Voluntary work • Courses

Specific guidance on appropriate CPD must be sought from the relevant professional body.

Assessment Report Checklist

This checklist was originally developed as an informal marking aid for tutors. It can equally well be used for self-assessment. [reprinted from Backhouse & Morris et al *Dyslexia? Assessing and Reporting, the Patoss Guide*, 2005]

Background Information

Good practice	Weak practice
Concise	Too long
Focused, relevant	Discursive
Objective	Anecdotal
Outlines learner's priorities for learning clearly	Disregards learner's priorities for learning

Choice of tests

Good practice	Weak practice
Tests are age-appropriate, age of learner taken into account in number of tests used	Inappropriate for age and stage
Tests cover all important areas	Inadequate range of tests
Tests current	Out-of-date tests
Tests selected judiciously	Too many test used, unnecessary repetition
Tests valid, well known and reputable	Validity of tests used questionable

Summary of scores

Good practice	Weak practice
Scores summarised in clear table	Scores difficult to find, not summarised in tabular form
Correct transcriptions of scores	Transcription errors
Scores correctly calculated	Calculation errors
Descriptors of range used correctly and significance of these understood.	Statistical concepts not understood (e.g. average range; below average, above average)
Test name given correctly, information given on edition used and test ceiling	Test names spelled wrongly or acronyms used without explanation

Interpretation of results

Good practice	Weak practice
Discussion/interpretation groups tests logically (e.g. underlying ability, attainment, diagnostic tests)	Discussion/interpretation of results is muddled and illogical.
Relevant links between results are recognised and discussed	No links are made between different test results
Observations of learner's strategies and learning style are discussed with insight; examples are given	Discussion does not take into account observations of learning style and strategies
Report clearly interprets information in relation to norms	Norms do not seem to be understood – e.g. where reading age matches chronological age, this is not recognised
Where inferences are made they are treated cautiously and presented as suggestions rather than facts	Incorrect or unreliable inferences are made – for example in relation to intelligence – and treated as fact

Good practice	Weak practice
Interpretation recognises strengths as well as difficulties	Interpretation is unduly negative
Phonological awareness and its importance as a skill underlying literacy clearly understood	Phonics confused with phonological awareness
Strengths and difficulties summarised clearly	Strengths and difficulties not summarised
Detailed interpretation of what is known and where breakdown points occur	Vague: gaps in knowledge are not defined – so report gives no specific information on which to base a programme

Recommendations and teaching programme

Good practice	Weak practice
Recommendations/programme show clear links to the individual pattern of strengths and difficulties revealed in the report	Recommendations/programme show no links to individual's pattern of strengths and weaknesses
Recommendations specific and detailed	Recommendations vague and unspecific
Programme draws on individual's interests and needs; where a published programme is used, it is adapted to match individual needs	Heavy reliance on published materials (or on one published teaching programme) – programme not individual
Programme provides ideas for multisensory teaching	Heavy reliance on worksheets rather than multisensory methods
Programme matches teaching objectives to relevant curricular needs	Programme takes no account of curricular needs
Programme appropriate for age and stage in both objectives and methods	Programme not age-appropriate
Both long-term and short-term targets for learning are outlined and supported by recommendations for method and pace	Programme does not define teaching/learning objectives

Overall style

Good practice	Weak practice
Clear, plain English, jargon-free	Obscure, uses jargon
Language appropriate for audience	Language inappropriate for audience
Succinct, to the point	Wordy, rambling
Uses terminology correctly	Misuses terminology
Explains any 'technical' vocabulary	Uses terminology which would not be widely understood without any explanation
Acceptable standard of written English	Grammatical and/or spelling mistakes, colloquial style
Non-patronising style	'Talks down' to the reader
Well formatted, accessible, appropriate font	Difficult to read, inaccessible.
Well prioritised – main points and/or conclusions stand out clearly in the text	Difficult to locate main points
Teaching programme clearly separated from rest of report.	Teaching programme mixed in with other information

Members of the SpLD Working Group

Carol Youngs (Chair)	British Dyslexia Association
Angela Kennard	East Sussex County Council
Dr Chris Singleton	University of Hull
Bernadette McLean	The Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre
Professor Susan Tresman	British Dyslexia Association
Kate Goddard	Skill: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities
Joanne Aston	Stockton on Tees Borough Council
Dr David McLoughlin	Chartered Psychologist Adult Dyslexia Centre
Dr Michael Vinegrad	Chartered Psychologist
Glynis Lavington	Academy of Contemporary Music (PATOSS)
Janet Kruger	PATOSS
Lynn Greenwold	PATOSS
David Laycock	University of Westminster
Dr John Rack	The Dyslexia Institute
Claire Jamieson	University College London
Anne Mitchell	The Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre
Dr James Palfreman-Kay	University of Bournemouth
Melanie Jameson	Dyslexia Specialist
Dr Geraldine Price	University of Southampton
Jools Jones	NUS (Wales) SWD Officer
Finton J O'Regan	The National Attention Deficit Disorder and Information Service (ADDISS).
Rev. Alex Gowing-Cumber	Dyspraxia Foundation
Andrew Smyth John Joseph Ian Thompson	DfES DfES DfES

Contact List

If you have any enquiries on the report, please contact on of the following organisations for further advice.

British Dyslexia Association	info@bdadyslexia.org.uk
British Psychological Society	Psychological Testing Centre Manager e-mail: julmro@bps.org.uk
Dyslexia Institute	info@dyslexia-inst.org.uk
Patoss, The Professional Association of Teachers of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties	patoss@evesham.ac.uk