



# National Committee for Standards in SpLD Assessment, Training and Practice [SASC]

## SpLD Assessment Training for Teachers/Tutors Guidelines for SASC Approval of Courses

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### Introduction

The approval process and criteria described in this document stem from recommendations of the National Committee for Standards in SpLD Assessment and Training [SASC]. This committee is a standard-setting group concerned with the diagnostic assessment of specific learning difficulties in an educational setting. Its remit and foundation derive 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.

This document provides information for course providers and relates to modular courses which focus on SpLD assessment at or equivalent to Level 7 of the National Qualifications Framework. Courses currently approved for AMBDA do not require approval under this process. However, it is understood with the BDA that these criteria will be applied to courses seeking AMBDA reaccreditation from the beginning of the academic year 2008-2009.

### The Approval Process

The SpLD Assessment Standing Committee will approve courses, upon successful completion of which individual candidates will be eligible to apply for, and to be granted an SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate, providing these courses meet the criteria of the Certificate granting body in full.

Candidates who have completed a course prior to its approval will not, automatically qualify for an SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate.

The Standing Committee currently consists of members who are specialist teachers, psychologists or who represent specialist organisations. Many of the members act as qualified SpLD assessors or assessor trainers. The committee meets 3 times a year: November, January and April.

The criteria for approval are set out in full below, and the summary Approval Checklist outlines the information required by the Standing Committee.

Applications should be made to SASC, PO Box 10, Evesham, Worcs, WR11 1ZW. **Paperwork should be sent in triplicate.**

The Standing Committee will acknowledge applications from course providers and a liaison team for each application will be appointed at the next available Standing Committee meeting. The team will receive copies of all paperwork and will work directly with applicants towards the approval of their courses from this point.

In order to speed up the approval process, it is strongly advised that the paperwork for applications should be complete and cross-referenced to the summary Approval Checklist.

The team will review the paperwork and provide further advice as required. If all the evidence is covered satisfactorily the liaison team will then recommend to the Standing Committee that the course be approved. This will be confirmed to course providers in writing, and on receipt of final payment a certificate will be issued.

**In all cases, the final decision will rest with the Standing Committee.**

## **Approval Period**

The approval period lasts for 4 years. This is contingent on the Standing Committee's endorsement of any significant changes to the course or its personnel. It is your responsibility to inform the committee of any such changes.

## **SASC Criteria for Approval of Courses**

SASC will approve your course on the basis of the following:

### **1) Course content**

#### **i) syllabus – detailed lecture programme to clarify time allotted to various topics including**

- (a) details of how development of practical skills in assessment and reporting are embedded in the course
- (b) details of how the course ensures the acquisition of appropriate skills for a candidate to operate as an SpLD assessor at an independent level
- (c) description of the extent and nature of assignments
- (d) details of time allocation – It is expected that training should provide, as a minimum, 60 hours lectures, seminars and guided learning hours plus private study time, including 12 hours of lectures and seminars to be devoted to study of psychometric testing.

#### **ii) learning objectives**

##### **Upon successful completion of the course, participants should**

- (a) understand the nature of specific learning difficulties and be able to identify learners with SpLD
- (b) demonstrate an understanding of the cognitive and affective issues observed in learners with SpLD
- (c) understand the principles, theory and application of psychometric and educational assessment
- (d) be able to identify appropriate methods and materials for screening and in-depth assessment of individual needs, based on an understanding of current theory
- (e) know how to administer tests correctly and interpret resulting data accurately
- (f) have demonstrated the ability to produce professional reports written in a language easily accessible to non-specialists
- (g) be able to make teaching and learning recommendations that are directly linked to assessment findings and to the individual's needs
- (h) understand current legal and professional issues, rules and regulations affecting individuals with SpLD

- (i) be able to complete relevant forms and reports to meet varied individual needs
- (j) understand all aspects of processing documentation and managing special arrangements for learners with SpLD
- (k) have demonstrated the ability to 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
- (l) have developed self-reflective practice.

**Course providers will need to ensure that each candidate provides evidence of having met the above learning objectives.**

**This evidence is not restricted to, but must include**

1. evidence of independent, practical application of above skills
2. evidence of understanding of the theory underpinning assessment and the use of standardised tests
3. evidence of practical skills in conducting assessments comprising a minimum of
  - a. 3 assessment reports, stemming from 3 different assessments and demonstrating a range\* of assessment experience
  - b. assessment plans and working papers relating to the 3 assessment reports submitted.
  - c. tutors' or mentors' reports on 3 assessments carried out under supervision, one of which is observed (video/dvd evidence acceptable)
4. evidence of the candidate's ability to evaluate and modify own practice.

\* range could include: different tests, age ranges, levels of ability, purposes of assessment, cognitive profiles [e.g. Access, DSA, parental information, LEAs, schools, workplace]

## 2) Personnel

1. Detailed CVs of the course leaders/lecturers/tutors
2. All observations must be carried out by a qualified SpLD assessor, i.e. the observer must hold [from academic year 2007/2008] an SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate or demonstrate equivalent professional competence.

## 3) Support for Course Participants

To include evidence of:

1. allocation of hours for tutorials and seminars
2. how course participants will be supported in order to achieve independent competence in practical and theoretical aspects of assessment

3. guidance on routes open to successful course participants for obtaining Assessment Practising Certificate

**4) Arrangements for formative and summative assessment of course participants**

To include:

1. internal and external arrangements for moderating examinations and quality assurance
2. standards or performance criteria by which observed assessments will be judged
3. practical arrangements for the observation of assessment of learners
4. age range of the learners to be assessed
5. number of learners
6. minimum number of observed assessments

**5) External Validation and Moderation**

Details of external validating body and of external moderation, with evidence that these are in place

**6) Record keeping**

To include proformas on which to record the observed assessments and track progress

**7) Resources**

To include the course reading list, recommended teaching materials and up to date and appropriate assessment tests

**8) Sample reports**

To demonstrate course tutors' knowledge of good practice in assessment reporting

**9) Permission for access to course work**

This may be requested in the case of applications from existing rather than proposed courses

**10) Confirmation that the following items are covered by the institution's quality assurance and internal procedures**

**[In general, Standing Committee members should not need to consider these matters as they are governed by the institution's own policy]:**

1. Admissions policy and entry criteria including provision for APL / APE
2. Equal Opportunities and Health & Safety provision
3. The mechanisms for teaching, learning and assessment policy
4. Exam arrangements.

## Recommendations for Training

- Training for the Practising Certificate in Assessment should provide a minimum of:
  - 60 hours lectures, seminars and guided learning hours plus private study time
  - 12 of the 60 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

See application of SASC Criteria (p6)

- 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 be able to assess across the age range should carry out a minimum of 3 assessments under supervision, one of which is observed in the adult range and one in each of the other two, one of which is observed. [Practising Certificates do not specify age range. However, in accordance with a commitment to ethical principles, practitioners will be expected to limit their assessments to the age group(s) for which they are trained.]
- candidates wishing to qualify in one age range should carry out a minimum of 3 assessments 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.

## **Application of SASC Criteria and Recommendations for Training**

**The above criteria and recommendations will apply to:**

- **Patoss/ AMBDA Approved Courses (Route 1 candidates )**

The Practising Certificate can be earned by candidates successfully completing a Patoss/AMBDA currently approved course as long as the **SASC Criteria for Approval of Courses** are (by 2008/2009) fully met within the course. Note especially that:

- 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.

- **Modular courses (Route 3 candidates)**

Training can also be pursued through SASC approved modular courses of 60 hours, for Route 3 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 Approved Teacher Status of the British Dyslexia Association (BDA ATS) or other SpLD Certificate Level candidates.

## **Assessors' qualifications**

It is anticipated that from 2007/2008 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, Patoss and the BPS will maintain registers of individuals holding current practising certificates. Patoss and BDA websites will hold information on SASC approved courses as recommended by the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES guidelines for the assessment of SpLD in Higher Education.

## Costs

### Approval

The normal administrative cost of approving a course is £500. A non-refundable deposit of £275 will be necessary before your course is added to the Committee agenda. The balance is due and payable within 1 month of your course being granted SASC approval. Your Certificate of SASC Approval will be sent **only** upon receipt of the final balance.

Candidates applying for SpLD Practising Certificates after completing your recognised course will be refused until your payment is received.

It may be necessary for Committee member(s) to visit your institution to discuss certain issues face to face. This will incur additional cost; however, this will be agreed with you before any action is taken.

### Reapproval

Shortly before your 4 year approval period is due to lapse, we will contact and invite you to apply for formal reapproval. This will incur a fee of £175.

If reapproval is not sought within four months of your approval period lapsing, you will have to pay for formal approval and incur the full costs again.

Applications should be made to SASC, PO Box 10, Evesham, Worc WR11 1ZW. **Please send your paperwork in triplicate.**