

Vocational Qualifications (QCF, NVQ, NQF)

OCR Level 5 Diploma in Teaching Learners with Dyslexia/Specific Learning Difficulties – **10218**

OCR Level 7 Diploma in Teaching and Assessing Learners with Dyslexia/Specific Learning Difficulties – **10219**

OCR Report to Centres November 2015

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) is a leading UK awarding body, providing a wide range of qualifications to meet the needs of candidates of all ages and abilities. OCR qualifications include AS/A Levels, Diplomas, GCSEs, Cambridge Nationals, Cambridge Technicals, Functional Skills, Key Skills, Entry Level qualifications, NVQs and vocational qualifications in areas such as IT, business, languages, teaching/training, administration and secretarial skills.

It is also responsible for developing new specifications to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers. OCR is a not-for-profit organisation; any surplus made is invested back into the establishment to help towards the development of qualifications and support, which keep pace with the changing needs of today's society.

This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

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1 Overview

The suite of courses is in line with the top two levels of the Professional Development Framework (see Section 4) and these correspond to the top of the pyramid of training recommended in the Rose Report on Dyslexia (2009). They refer to the highest level of training for those working with Dyslexia/SpLD as being Specialist Teachers and Specialist Assessors. The ambition is to have a Specialist Teacher in every school in England.

External Verifiers have continued to work well to support a range of Centres. They encourage Assessors to engage in CPD. They offer advice when new members of staff need to be recruited so that new assessors can be inducted and trained on the job. Aiming for sustainability is encouraged by considering succession planning. Shadowing is recommended and double marking is carried out until it is felt that the new assessors can work independently.

Quality of marking is in general praised and candidates on courses comment on this also.

Sampling by IVs and EVs has been in line with national standards, and on the rare occasion when IV sampling has not been sufficient this has, on the recommendation of the EV, been improved by the second visit. There is a sense of evolving improvement whether the Centre is relatively new or of long standing. There is good continuity between one visit and the next. Even when there is a change of EV the new EV has ensured a smooth transition for Centres.

EVs continue to be generous with their time and expertise. They are also keen to encourage Centres by promoting and praising good practice. Feedback in reports is constructive and positive. Liaison between EVs and Senior Management in Centres is positive and Centres are encouraged to follow up candidates so that they can evaluate impact. This is useful for marketing subsequent courses.

2 General Comments

Level 5

There are four units in Level 5. Together they form the basis of excellent training for Specialist Teachers combining knowledge of policy and context. The completion of this course allows candidates who have QTS (Qualified Teacher Status) to apply to the British Dyslexia Association for ATS recognition (Approved Teacher Status). See British Dyslexia website for details.

More recently an equivalent recognition has been granted to those without QTS which is APS (Approved Practitioner Status). See British Dyslexia website for details.

Level 7

The completion of this course allows candidates who have QTS (Qualified Teacher Status) to apply to the British Dyslexia Association for AMBDA (Associate Member of the BDA). See British Dyslexia website for details.

It also gives candidates the right to apply for an APC (Assessment Practising Certificate). The APC is a requirement for specialist teachers who carry out assessments for eligibility for the Disabled Student Allowances. It is also considered good practice for Specialist Teachers who assess at other levels. See Patoss website for details.

3 Comments on Individual Units

Level 5

Unit 1

The learning outcomes span national legislation and local implementation. This has been changing particularly recently and so in a number of cases Centres have been advised to reduce the number of policies they are considering and focus on those that have the greatest impact on the learners they are considering. There is a need to keep abreast of ongoing change in exam arrangements and in the National Curriculum. There is emphasis on working within a professional and ethical framework which is becoming increasingly relevant particularly with regard to that Data Protection Act.

Understanding reports from specialists is a demanding section of this unit and is one that probably is not dealt with as the first unit in the course even though it is called Unit One. It certainly equips candidates within their workplace situations and roles post training as it is a requirement of their day to day jobs. Centres have been advised to ensure that candidates make recommendation for learners assessed in the specialist reports which are specific to the individual rather than generic.

Unit 2

This unit requires candidates to be able to assess learners' literacy and numeracy skills and make referrals when necessary. This is excellent preparation for the more extensive assessment that makes up Level 7. While standardised testing is not a requirement for this unit, as candidates have to understand at least some basic psychometrics for Unit 1, many Centres do use standardised tests at Level 5. There are two sound reasons for this; they may be required to do this in the workplace and again it gives them an excellent foundation for the psychometrics, which are required at Level 7. One evidence requirement of this unit is to produce questionnaire(s) for learner(s) for which they must provide a rationale. Centres have been reminded by External Verifiers to ensure that this rationale should include a current definition of dyslexia, in particular the Rose definition (2009).

Unit 3

Planning and delivery of teaching is the key requirement of this unit as well as demonstrating good communication skills whilst working in a team. The methodology is based on the best practice for those with Dyslexia /SpLDs with SMART targets and regular review. Centres have been encouraged where necessary to update resources and refer to Greg Brooks "What Works" (referred to in Section 4).

EVs have encouraged some Centres to include some training on metacognition in line with the 4th Learning Outcome, which is to encourage individuals to learn independently by the introduction of techniques for self-evaluation.

Unit 4

This unit, which is about reflective practice of candidates including evaluation of own performance, teaching methods and teaching resources, allows candidates to consider their development from the beginning of the course. It is on satisfying the criteria in this unit that candidates know they can work independently of their assessors. Self-evaluation is key to specialist teachers being able to match their methods to learners' needs through the teaching relationship. Many Centres have been using the Professional Development Framework (see Section 4) to facilitate this process.

Level 7

Unit 1

This unit requires candidates to demonstrate understanding of current theoretical concepts underlying Dyslexia/Specific Learning Difficulties and link this knowledge and understanding to personal practice. This requires extensive reading of the up to date literature. To facilitate this Assessors and Centres need to have ongoing CPD and subscribe to peer-reviewed research. This is in evidence in most Centres and in the best, multidisciplinary teams contribute to the course giving a breadth as well as depth of expertise. EVs have advised Centres to use recognised referencing systems such as the Harvard System. Candidates are also advised that they may formulate their own essay titles and are sometimes encouraged to link Unit 1 and Unit 6 where appropriate and engage in Action Research.

The presentation which is required for LO3 provides the opportunity for candidates to disseminate and cascade their knowledge into their workplace settings. This often contributes to the impact of the training on their professional competency.

Unit 2

This unit is the underpinning of theoretical knowledge required for the diagnostic assessment practical work of Unit 3. It covers concepts of intelligence and the profiles associated with dyslexia and other SpLDs. This knowledge prepares the candidate for the psychometric tests required for a full dyslexia report. They need to understand statistical terms and their use as well as have an ability to interpret standardised tests. This unit also requires them to evaluate tests so that they can continue to use this expertise when they are working independently as new tests arrive on the market.

Professional ethics is an important focus in Unit 2 so candidates learn the necessity for confidentiality as well as the need for professional liability/insurance.

Centres must have up to date and sufficient tests available for use.

Unit 3

This unit that comprises the preparation for and the administration of a number of assessments as well as the writing of formal reports is generally deemed to be the toughest in the Level 7 suite. In general, the emphasis has to be on the production of reports for learners which must be fit for purpose in terms of accessing further support and possibly exam arrangements on the basis of the evidence produced and the analysis of this evidence being in line with current arrangements which change on an annual basis. Candidates need to formulate recommendations for teachers, parents, specialists, or employers if the learner is post education. They need to be up to date with the latest technology when that is the kind of support needed.

The demands are high and encompassing; from planning an assessment and gathering background information to administering. This includes putting the testee at ease; fully recording all responses; scoring interpreting and analysing data; making recommendations for support; writing a report suitable for parents, teachers and employers for those post education, and communicating findings to relevant personnel. Candidates also have to demonstrate that they can do this independently.

Units 4 and 5

These units are the same as Units 3 and 4 in Level 5.

Unit 6

Unit 6 offers candidates the opportunity to engage in further research and link theory to practice in a context that is different in previous practice. This could be with a different SpLD such as autism or ADHD, a different subject area such as Music or foreign languages, in a different age range or in a different setting such as a pupil referral unit or penal institution. They are encouraged to engage in their own Action Research as they plan, implement and critically evaluate appropriate support in this new context. Some very interesting work has emerged from this unit which extends the knowledge, skills and understanding of candidates.

4 Sector Update

This is a time of great change in education. These changes involve school policy, the curriculum, vocational education and SEN support. Consultation is taking place regarding changes in testing through the primary and secondary sectors. This is particularly relevant to learners with dyslexia/SpLD as there is an increased emphasis on spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Basically we need to be aware of SEN reform; youth justice reform; primary school accountability; and vocational education. **The Carter Report** was published in January 2015. Although this report focuses on Initial Teacher Training there are several messages pertinent to this sector. The importance of Continuing Professional Development is stressed and Carter affirms that “good teaching for SEND is good teaching for all children.

Embedded in the current course is a requirement for candidates to disseminate their learning in the workplace and this has ensured that schools benefit from the cascading of this information into the workplace.

The Dyslexia Trust funded by the government continues to be an excellent resource for Centres.

- Guidance notes to the new legislation are available on the Dyslexia Trust website. The Dyslexia Trust has published free online guidance to equip professionals in Local Authorities, schools, colleges and settings to deliver good practice in line with the Special Educational Needs Reforms, particularly for children and young people with literacy difficulties, specific learning difficulties and dyslexia. The guidance includes information on: Effective Practice, School Funding Reforms, Graduated Approach and the Local Offer.
- Greg Brooks has been commissioned by the Dyslexia-SpLD Trust to produce a fifth edition of his report on **What Works for Children and Young People with Literacy Difficulties?** The new edition will, as before, mainly feature schemes intended to improve the reading and/or spelling and/or writing attainment of children aged 5-14, but (as in the 4th edition) will have some coverage of 14- to 18-year-olds (including those who have offended). The 4th edition is on the Dyslexia Trust website.

- The Literacy and Dyslexia/SpLD Professional Development Framework is an easy to use online tool. It encompasses the levels of knowledge and skills required across the education workforce to support all learners with dyslexia/SpLD. Many Centres use it as pre and post train check for candidates. It is regularly updated and is being used by schools and teachers across England for CPD and INSET. It also houses a vast number of resources and articles.

Funding continues to be very erratic and available to only a few lucky applicants but OCR courses continue to be eligible for this. There would be many more customers if funding was less of an issue.

OCR can hold its head high among competitors particularly those who offered ELearning, Distance Learning and Blended Learning opportunities as OCR customers appreciate not just face to face with tutors but an opportunity to learn alongside their peer group from whom they also learn a lot.

The standards of the courses are in line with the Dyslexia SpLD Trust Framework which is being used in a number of the Centres across the country for both assessors and candidates.

Both Level 5 and level 7 satisfy the criteria for accreditation from the British Dyslexia Association and both levels of accreditation are now available for those who do not have Qualified Teacher Status. Details can be found on the BDA website.

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