

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 September 2017

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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OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

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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 model of 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. There is still the aim is to have a Specialist Teacher in every school in England. The workplace for many candidates values the currency of course requirements and the transferability of skills and knowledge to the work environment particularly with regard to assessment and teaching support.

Dissemination and cascading of knowledge to colleagues in the workplace is appreciated with many classrooms now reflecting a wide range of co-occurring difficulties and neurodiverse behaviours.

External Verifiers (EVs) have continued to work well to support a range of Centres. They encourage Assessors to engage in CPD (Continuing Professional Development) and regularly check on the records of this. They offer advice when new staff need to be recruited so that new assessors can be inducted and trained on the job. They also flag up when new recruitment is likely to be needed, for instance when numbers are rising or when it is clear that staff are nearing the end of their employment. Consideration of succession planning is encouraged; the deployment of new recruits should have an apprenticeship period where shadowing is recommended and double marking is carried out until it is felt that the new assessors can work independently. Another recommendation of good practice in inducting new assessors is the use of examples of feedback from other assessors to give them an idea of the level and detail of feedback required.

Quality of marking and the detail of feedback are almost universally appreciated and candidates on courses comment on this, as well as making reference to it in their evaluations (both formative and summative). External Verifiers try as much as possible to interview them at visits and by and large they comment on the support they have received as well as the impact on their work practices.

Sampling by Internal Verifiers (IVs) and EVs has been in line with national standards, and on the rare occasion when IV sampling had not been sufficient this had, on the recommendation of External Verifiers, been improved by the second visit. Detailed feedback is also recommended between Assessors and Internal Verifiers.

There is a sense of evolving improvement whether the Centre is relatively new or of long standing. New Centres in particular benefit from feedback on improving paperwork, providing realistic but flexible deadlines and ensuring the accessibility of evidence for audit trails. External Verifiers continue to be generous with their time and expertise.

External Verifiers encourage Centres by promoting and praising good practice. Feedback in reports is constructive and positive. Assessors have been commended for their dedication, their expertise and their experience, many of them working in other areas of teacher training in Centres with excellent reputations, enhancing their attractiveness to OCR candidates. Most assessors are practitioners, many with Assessment Practising Certificates. Liaison between External Verifiers and Senior Management in centres is positive and Centres are encouraged to follow up with candidates so that they can evaluate impact. This is also 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 the British Dyslexia website for details.

An equivalent recognition has now been granted to those without QTS which is APS (Approved Practitioner Status). Again, details can be found at the British Dyslexia website.

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).

Level 7 enables candidates to move on to full masters' degrees, as it is worth up to one third of the points needed for these. This Level 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 the PATOSS (Professional Association for teachers and assessors of students with specific learning difficulties) website for details.

Unit certification is available at both levels; this enables candidates to spread this course over a few years which may better suit their needs. It can also be used as an incentive for candidates who do not necessarily want to achieve the full course initially, for whatever reason.

There are many examples of career progression on the basis of these qualifications despite the fact that resources are increasingly scarce.

3 Comments on Individual Units

Level 5

Unit 1

The learning outcomes span national legislation and local implementation. This has been changing particularly over recent years 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. It is the consideration of this impact which demonstrates true understanding of the legislation. External Verifiers have in a number of cases advised Centres to concentrate on the Rose report and legislation and policy since then. There is a need to keep up to date with changes 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 the 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. In some cases extra guidance has been provided to Centres advising them that they should:

- provide reports which come from more than one type of professional (as stated in the requirements)
- ensure that the reports provided have analysis, interpretation and recommendations removed as this is what the candidate is required to do
- ensure that the reports are relatively straightforward and concentrate on dyslexia profiles rather than more complex cases involving other SpLDs such as autism, with which the candidates may not be so familiar
- 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 at 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 positive reasons for this; they may be required to do this in the workplace and again it gives them an excellent foundation for the psychometrics knowledge 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 current definition of dyslexia, in particular the Rose definition (2009); in some cases it was felt that phonological processing, for instance, had not received sufficient attention. Further feedback recommends that these questionnaires should be stand alone (i.e. comprehensive) as well as being used for gathering of information for learners to be taught. It is felt that the questionnaire produced is a good gauge of knowledge and understanding of dyslexia.

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) and other on-line sites such as the Education Endowment Foundation. Centres have been advised to ensure that candidates are equipped with knowledge of teaching groups as often this will be reality in the workplace rather than one to one tuition.

Evidence of planning lessons prior to teaching is important and subsequent lessons should build on an evaluation of previous learning, thus lesson plans should be seen regularly by assessors and feedback provided.

External Verifiers have encouraged some Centres to include some training on metacognition in line with the LO4 which is to encourage individuals to learn independently by the introduction of techniques for self-evaluation. The Professional Development Framework (see Section 4) is a useful tool for this.

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 own 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. Some Centres have access to university libraries which offers a greater choice to candidates but as there is an increasing amount of literature available on line this is becoming less of an issue. The CPD of Assessors and Internal Verifiers is in evidence in most Centres and in some of the best Centres' multidisciplinary teams contribute to the courses giving a breadth as well as depth of expertise. EVs have advised Centres to use recognised referencing systems such as the Harvard System. They have also advised in some Centres that candidates may need support with academic writing and using referencing systems, and this has been implemented. 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 to promote the aims of 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 and has been noted in evaluations from candidates.

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 them 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. External Verifiers have drawn attention to when candidates need to demonstrate more fully their understanding of psychometric testing and to be more critical in terms of analysis of psychometric test.

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. The need for anonymity is emphasised when necessary by External Verifiers.

Centres must have up to date and sufficient tests available for use. Specific advice is given about this when required.

Unit 3

This unit which 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. Some consider that the credit value does not reflect this. 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 assessments, gathering background information to administering correctly including putting the person being tested at ease, recording fully all responses, scoring interpreting and analysing data, making recommendations for support, writing a report suitable for parents, teachers, employers for those post education and communicating findings to relevant personnel. Candidates also have to demonstrate that they can do this independently. This is the unit that is of extreme importance in upholding the highest of standards as it contributes to the candidate's preparedness for being awarded an APC (Assessment Practising Certificate). Reports written need to meet all the criteria that the Awarding Bodies for APCs will demand. This Unit links closely with the knowledge and understanding required for Unit 2.

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 from their 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. It allows them to pursue their own particular specialisms. Candidates 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 and rewarding work continues to emerge from this unit which extends the knowledge, skills and understanding of candidates.

4 Sector Update

It continues to be a time of great change and challenge in education. These changes involve school policy, the curriculum, vocational education and SEN support. Consultation continues 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 as well doing away with course work for some public examinations. Lobbying continues for a greater emphasis on SEN in Initial Teacher Training but the impact of this is negligible.

Indeed, the teaching of reading is often limited to teachers working in Key Stage 1 only, although the reality is that by Key Stage 2 and beyond there are significant numbers whose literacy skills ill-equip them for accessing the curriculum. Those working in the post-16 sector are also being challenged by changes in funding arrangements, in apprenticeship requirements as well as cuts in the Disabled Students' Allowance for those entering Higher Education.

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

The Dyslexia Trust, not currently funded by the government, continues to promote and update the online resources that were set up some years ago.

- Guidance notes on legislation and funding reforms is 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.
- The fifth edition of Greg Brooks '**What Works for Children and Young People with Literacy Difficulties?**', mainly features schemes intended to improve the reading and/or spelling and/or writing attainment of children aged 5-14, but with 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 training 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 and is being constantly updated.

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 courses continue to hold their own against those offering ELearning, Distance Learning and Blended Learning opportunities, as OCR customers appreciate not just face to face interaction with tutors but an opportunity to learn alongside their peer groups from whom they also learn a lot.

The standards of both 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 available for those who do not have Qualified Teacher Status. Details can be found on the BDA website. Candidates from both levels may also have membership of PATOSS, an organisation that offers ongoing CPD and issues APCs (Assessment Practising Certificates) to applicants who are eligible.

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