

Patoss 2021 Annual Report

Our mission is to help people with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) succeed in their education and workplace by nourishing the professionals who teach, assess and support them support them.

Chair's Report

During 2021 we became more adept at meeting the ongoing demands and challenges brought about by the pandemic. Our resourceful members continued to show their determination to adapt and learn from the situations they found themselves in and as a result have acquired new skills. Although many became more used to working with learners online, the return of face-to-face contact was welcomed.

Part of my role as Chair is to determine the composition and structure of the Patoss Board. A broad range of expertise and experience is essential, both for our members and from a business perspective. Due to increasing work demands, regrettably Julian Brown stepped down from the Board in September. We will miss him and would like to thank him for his valuable contributions and commitment to Patoss.

Patoss' Articles of Association state that only members with voting rights (Full Members) are eligible to be Board Directors. As Full Membership is only open to qualified specialist teacher/assessors we have not been able to recruit others who may have additional expertise and experience that would be of benefit to Patoss. Therefore, we are proposing changes to the Articles of Association as set out in the information provided in preparation for the AGM. The proposal is that any Member of Patoss other than a Student Member would be eligible to be a Board Director – as an example, a Retired Member or a Supporting Member could then be a Director. Supporting membership is open to individuals who do not have an SpLD or allied qualification but have an interest in SpLD and wish to support the aims and activities of Patoss. To ensure our professional members are appropriately represented, we are proposing that the Articles of Association are amended to state that 75% of the Board must be Full Members and therefore qualified SpLD professionals.

We are delighted to welcome Professor Julia Carroll to the Board, currently as an Observer but, we hope, as a Board Director if the proposed changes to the Articles are approved. Julia is currently working at Coventry University as a Reader in Child Development and Education. Julia's research concerns language and literacy development. Her most recent research concerns the phonological and morphological skills of children with dyslexia and children with hearing impairments. She hopes her work can provide a research basis for more effective literacy support for children in schools.

We are acutely aware of the financial challenges the pandemic has brought and therefore the decision was made not to increase our membership charges. As you may be aware, our charges have not increased since January 2019. Patoss Membership offers many benefits: the Mentoring scheme, Professional Helpline, DBS check and access to a Legal Helpline are some of the less usual benefits offered to SpLD professionals.

Inevitably members retire and for some perhaps, the unanticipated demands of the pandemic caused them to make that decision earlier than planned. We are sorry when any member makes the decision to leave but fortunately new members continue to join, and the overall number of members continues to grow. For those considering retirement, do bear in mind our Retired Member category. It offers the opportunity to stay in touch with what is happening in the SpLD world and to support Patoss.

One other relatively new advantage of being a member of Patoss is access to our bank of On Demand training at a reduced cost. Our On Demand training has been one of the unforeseen benefits of the pandemic. It is a tremendous resource which will continue to develop and grow. It is open to all – do spread the word.

My thanks to the Patoss staff for their unswerving devotion to Patoss, their high professional standards and sheer hard work. Thanks too must go to the Directors for the time, effort and thought they put in to supporting and working for the organisation.

Last, but in no way least, on behalf of the Board, I would like to thank you all for your continued support of Patoss.

Patoss Support

‘I honestly couldn’t have asked for more from my course tutor - the support was exemplary’

‘My tutor was excellent throughout’

‘Please pass on my appreciation to the APC Review Team for their understanding and consideration’

‘Thank you so very much for your helpful responses to my questions’

Chief Executive Report 2021

Supporting Professional Practice and the Wider Community

Schools

In the past year we, representing both Patoss and SASC, have met with the DfE Schools White Paper and SEN teams to share issues and concerns we would wish to be acknowledged and addressed in the long-awaited SEND Review and Schools White Paper.

Among them we noted the need to improve the Graduated Response within the SEN Code of Practice. Proper, consistent application of the Graduated Response must be a priority – as this approach recognises that something different is needed – not more of the same. The Graduated Response is very variably implemented throughout the country. We are still failing a significant number of our children with their leaving primary school unable to read sufficiently well to access the secondary curriculum. More timely identification of struggling

readers with implementation of effective additional support is needed with more intensive and supported teaching, overlearning, and exposure to print. Children benefit when a range of approaches to teaching reading, spelling and writing skills are used alongside and in addition to phonics.

We pointed out there is currently a lack of local 'literacy leaders' to develop and lead coherent programmes across local authorities. A new National Professional Qualification (NPQ) in Literacy Leading, available from Autumn 2022, (Ambition Institute) could support pedagogical changes if it included issues around the assessment and support of students with specific learning difficulties. The proposed content framework for this qualification includes 'promoting the assessment of reading and writing where students are struggling with these skills', but there is, currently, no mention of specific learning difficulties/dyslexia. It does not acknowledge the key danger points where new approaches must be implemented – once again it focuses on phonics instruction and has little to say about supporting the development of reading in secondary pupils who cannot read well enough to access the curriculum – it just says teach more phonics. There is nothing to differentiate and ensure secondary settings are properly addressed to improve literacy teaching in these schools, as the stated purpose indicated.

Furthermore, there appears to be no coherent vision in the government's strategy post-COVID of how best to employ the skills of specialist teachers, educational psychologists, other psychologists and teaching support staff working both in and for schools. We pointed out if specialists are to be employed as mainstream 'literacy leaders' and assessment specialists, either directly or as a contracted service, there is an urgent need to provide schools with adequate, ring-fenced budgets for this purpose.

Higher education

With other stakeholders, we have formed an Alliance on Quality Provision for Disabled Students and Inclusivity, to provide an independent group of experienced sector professionals, inclusive of disabled student voice representation, with a focus on quality from user and practitioner perspectives, on all elements that impact the disabled student journey, through influencing of government policy development, and sector implementation.

The Alliance is formed as a clear and consistent contact point for government departments that relate to sector changes and reform of the disabled student journey in higher education. It is intended to reflect the sector and the disabled student journey fully in the process. Patoss currently chairs the Alliance.

Patoss supporting you

Once again, I have been incredibly impressed with the ingenuity and dedication I have seen exhibited by our members and our wonderful Patoss staff to assure we support each other, maintain and grow our skills to reach those who need us. My thanks to our wonderful Patoss team and the Patoss Board for all their support and to our members in making us stronger to build an even better future.

I am delighted to share some comments we have received and our year in numbers.

What our members/delegates say about Patoss Admin . . .

‘Claire was a lovely woman to speak with! Very helpful.’

‘I wanted to touch base to let you know that I have just passed the MA SpLD (dyslexia) at UCL (with distinction!). Dr Valerie Muter continues to be a great inspiration to me - but one I would not have experienced if it wasn't for your support in 2019 (which now seems such a very long time ago!)’

‘I'd like to thank you for all the support you have given me and my team in the past and for being so patient with all my queries! It's been lovely knowing you and seeing you in the 'old days' at trainings – always so well run. Honestly you may underestimate how good you and your team are with bookings as I've recently had a disastrous experience with **** trying to get one of my team a copy of their virtual dyscalculia conference from last year – what a palaver – honestly it was so complicated!’

What our delegates say about Patoss CPD

‘Really excellent course. Jen took us through the information, tables etc very clearly and systematically. I learnt how to use the tables and particularly valued using the Ipsative profile.’

‘Thank you very much for such information and useful training. I particularly like the handouts which will provide a clear analysis when assessing future students' underlying ability.’

‘An excellent webinar – so informative, brilliant handouts for further support. Thank you PATOSS for these webinars – please keep them coming as they are very much appreciated.’

‘A very thought provoking and interesting webinar. It will definitely change my practice going forward. The presenter was very clear and it was easy to follow her explanations/discussions.’

What our delegates say about the Patoss APC Team . . .

‘I just wanted to email to say ‘thank you’ for the amazing report feedback I received after my first application to renew my APC’

‘The feedback was completely brilliant, kind and constructive. I have absolutely no issue with it, as the process is designed to improve my practice as an assessor which is important both to me and to the learners I work with.’

‘I was initially a bit deflated when I read the outcome on the website, but when I read and re-read the feedback and went back to the report, it was so detailed and positive and clear

that I have just gone into 'raise the bar mode' to improve it and do what I've been asked to do!

What our AAA Delegates say . . .

'I have had an absolutely brilliant experience in completing this course. I wish I had done it sooner! It has already had a significant impact on my work in school. I am seriously considering progressing to the specialist assessor training in the next year or two'

'The support that I felt from the course leaders, my tutor and my cohort exceeded my expectations. In the remote learning environment, it never felt that I was far away from others experiencing the same difficulties that I was. And the help/answers/support was so easily found in the Forums, through my tutor or through the WhatsApp group'

'I wouldn't hesitate to recommend this course to anyone thinking about becoming an AA Assessor. The content was consistently engaging and informative, the tutors were supportive and friendly, and the assignments, although challenging, were well conceived and clearly linked with the professional practice requirements'

'Very well thought out course. I really enjoyed the reading for unit 1 and the possible reasons behind a child's difficulties. The course not only informed psychometric testing but also my practise as a SENDCO'

'This course is definitely not for the faint - hearted. It's a commitment. I enjoyed every minute of it! I felt that the structure of the course is solid and very organised. Moodle resources complemented the online tuition. Liz and Sarah provided us with all the necessary information and guidance. Both teachers extremely knowledgeable. I cannot thank enough Dolores, my personal tutor, for her professionalism. Always prompt with her feedback which has been informative, thorough and clear. She guided me throughout and encouraged me to have high standards as an AA assessor. Whilst I am pleased to complete the course, I would happily do it again if I could!'

What our PPAR delegates say . . .

'It has given me confidence in doing a diagnostic assessment and encouraged me to become an assessor.'

'My tutor was and is most helpful and supportive in advising me.'

What our Understanding and Supporting Learners with Dyslexia delegates say . . .

This course is well designed, and I enjoyed the interactive aspects of it.'

'An incredibly thorough and informative course, very well delivered and guaranteed to increase knowledge base regardless of starting-level for applicants.'

'Training and subject matters were clear and concise. All areas were broken down and explained fully.'

The Patoss year in numbers

19 Active Local Groups

27,762 website users

2,974 members

13,250 CPD Hours

Patoss – Devoted to developing human potential

