

Common pitfalls to avoid when submitting a report for APC renewal aka the **dos** and **don'ts**

A Diagnostic Assessment Report (DAR) submitted in support of the renewal of (or application for) an Assessment Practising Certificate (APC) is reviewed in accordance with the SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC) structure for the review of an APC - Revised October 2015 (included in this pack and available to download from the SASC website). The points outlined here follow the SASC structure and are ones which are routinely made by APC reviewers. It would be useful to check the report you are intending to submit for review against this list, thereby helping to ensure these common pitfalls are avoided.

Level 1

Confidentiality maintained throughout the report

- **Do** remove any details which mean that the reviewer could potentially identify the student, including names (learner/parents/teaching staff etc), address, name of educational establishment etc. Remember to check headers and footers and any labels on charts and tables.
- **Do** leave in the date of the assessment and the learner's date of birth, as these form part of the score checking process.
- If appropriate, **do** leave in details of the learner's course, as this can help us to place the assessment in context.

100% accurate calculation and conversion of test scores

- **Do** check and double check all scores; it is all too easy to slip a line in a manual or, when tests have parallel forms, to use the tables for the wrong form.
- **Do** ensure that scores match across the report, e.g. in the body, summary table and any graphical representation of scores.
- Some tests provide SEMs as scaled scores; **do** remember to convert these to standard scores when calculating confidence intervals.

Tests are age appropriate and evidence suggests that they were administered within standardisation guidelines

- When an individual is above the ceiling age of a test and it has been used qualitatively, **do not** report standard scores and level descriptors.
- In order to maintain standardisation, **do** follow the test administration instructions exactly as given in the manual. Descriptive passages within the report which indicate otherwise will result in a comment at this level.

Diagnosis / conclusion supported by evidence

- **Do** draw together the different assessment areas and match the evidence to the diagnostic conclusion.
- If co-occurring difficulties are diagnosed/suspected **do** make sure they are fully evidenced at this point.

All core components should be included in the report as outlined in DfES guidelines (SpLD Working Group 2005, DfES Guidelines, The recommended format for a diagnostic assessment report for SpLD, pp.23-35)

- **Do** include all the core components which are expected to feature in a diagnostic assessment report, as specified in the SASC guidance and which applies to all reports submitted in support of an APC renewal.

For example, **do** include the assessment of phonological memory, visual processing speed and comprehension of *continuous* prose; these are the most frequently omitted components.

Level 2

Understanding the nature of SpLD, especially the role of cognitive processing

- **Do** ascribe the correct area of cognitive processing to a test, e.g. SDMT is not a test of visual memory and WRIT is not designed to assess processing or word retrieval issues.

Unexpected differences within and between tests are investigated and discussed

- **Do** identify unexpected differences between tests but **do not** overstate these.
- **Do not** ascribe “statistically significant” differences to tests which are not co-normed.

Correct interpretation of scores in relation to average

- **Do** include and use just one guide to level descriptors within a report.
- **Do** describe standard scores consistently with reference to the chosen guide.

Confidence intervals (CIs) used to inform analysis as appropriate

- **Do** report all CIs at the same level; 95% is recommended.
- **Do** include CIs for all composite scores.
- **Do** make sure that you fully understand the definition of CIs and how they relate to the reliability of the test. They do not relate to the student and/or factors occurring on the day of testing.
- As well as including CIs in the report, **do** demonstrate that they have been used to support the analysis.

Qualitative analysis and observation of skills and strategies across all assessment areas are included

- **Do** include detailed observations for all tests and subtests, including the WRIT.

Appropriate range of tests are chosen to cover all core component test areas

- For example, **do** administer all core subtests of CTOPP-2, or all 5 subtests that make up the TOMAL-2 ACI.
- **Do** use a test of continuous prose to assess reading comprehension; the WRAT-4/5 Sentence Comprehension test is not sufficient in this respect.
- For DSA, **do** sample oral and silent reading of continuous prose and calculate wpm for both. Relate these wpm figures to SASC/STEC guidelines.

- **Do** include a suitably challenging free writing task for a post-16 report.
- **Do** include a copying task for a post-16 report.
- To avoid over-testing, **do** choose tests wisely. For example, the essential index from the TOMAL-2 when considering SpLD is the ACI; from the WRAML2 it is the WMI.

Sensitive and professional communication of findings are written in an accessible manner

- **Do** explain abbreviations, acronyms and/or concepts on first use.
- **Do not** include potentially sensitive and/or inappropriate information about the learner, their family or for example, teaching staff. This may include health issues.

Appropriate recommendations, clearly linked to assessment findings

- **Do** note that examination access arrangements (EAAs) are at the discretion of the school or higher education institution, whilst acknowledging the Equality Act.
- **Do** ensure that all key recommendations for EAAs are included e.g. a reader.
- **Do** not recommend a specific EAA without the supporting evidence.
- **Do** include personalised, rather than generic, recommendations.

The report must be appropriate for purpose

- For a DSA report, **do not** alter the SASC proforma cover sheet.
- For a non-DSA / Pre-16 report, **do** appropriately modify the assessor statement by omitting reference to Higher Education.
- **Do** include all key background information.
- **Do** use an appropriate format for the Summary and Conclusion.
- When prefacing all tests, **do** include the purpose of the test and its requirements for the student in the body of the report (a glossary is not sufficient).
- **Do** calculate all composite scores. The only exception might be the WRIT, when statistically significant score differences exist.
- **Do** include all the recommended technical information in a Guide to Interpretation of Scores.
- For a dual purpose report, to be used for JCQ EAAs, **do** state that Form 8 section A was obtained from the school prior to the assessment and that the Form 8 will be used by the school when applying for EAAs, not the DAR.
- **Do not** document scores and/or provide level descriptors when the student is above the ceiling age of a test.

Level 3

Accurate spelling and grammar is maintained throughout

- **Do** proof read the report thoroughly.

Appropriate presentation and format, including relevant details to explain report features (test editions, explanation of scores etc.)

- Test names:
 - **do** give them in full upon first use, if applicable with their acronym
 - **do** report test names as given in the manual, including capitalisation
 - **do** report test editions accurately and consistently
 - where parallel test forms are available, **do** report the form used

- Summary Table of Scores:
 - **do** include this in an Appendix, rather than the body of the report
 - **do** not include wpm rates in the standard score column
 - **do** try to contain the summary table to one page
- Graph of standard scores: **do not** begin the standard score scale at zero.
- **Do not** include scaled scores in the report; it is expected that these are always converted to standard scores.
- **Do** include subtest scores in the report (in the body and/or the Summary Table).
- **Do** include a Reading Summary.
- **Do** include STEC wpm references for reading and writing speed.

Reference to and inclusion of a current and relevant definition of identified SpLD is given

- **Do** include a referenced definition in either the Conclusion or an Appendix.

Additional comments

The following are offered in support of current best practice:

- Scores/data:
 - **do** use the WRIT composite score CIs given on pp 174-176, as opposed to the SEMs given on p100 of the manual.
 - WRAT 4/5: **do** use the All Ages tables, as opposed to the All Grades tables.
 - percentiles are not mandatory
 - **do** include subtest CIs if they have particular diagnostic significance
 - if scoring software is used, **do** note this in the report
- When average SEMs are provided on the record form, **do** use these in preference to age-related SEMs provided in a test manual. This promotes consistency across assessors.
- Recommendations
 - **do** include the main recommendations in the Summary
 - **do** include specific guidance relating to DSA application (i.e. website link)
 - **do** consider the use of the word 'should'
- Report sections
 - **do** include a sufficiently detailed description of test conditions
 - **do** include the WRAT 4/5 Word Reading and Spelling test time limits; i.e. they are not, strictly speaking, untimed
 - **do** include formal referencing of tests/ STEC wpm guidance/research statements
 - **do** use the term underlying ability in preference to intelligence / IQ
- General points
 - **do not** use the first person
 - **do not** breach the confidentiality of family members (this may include their relationship to the assessee, health issues, learning difficulties etc.)
 - **do not** breach test confidentiality through the inclusion of test items
 - **do** use the term visual difficulty, as opposed to visual stress/visual disturbance etc.
 - **do** allow the report to 'unfold' like a story, i.e. **do not** discuss tests in advance of their appearance in the report