



Guidelines for Professional Bodies Approved to Issue Practising Certificates to Specialist Teachers

The SpLD Assessment Standards Committee [hereafter SASC] wishes to encourage a spirit of cooperation and help to forge links with a range of institutions to support and embed good practice. SASC aims to support and advance standards in SpLD assessment, training and practice and encourage improvements in best practice in the assessment of specific learning difficulties in an educational setting. The SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate underpins these aims. SASC has a responsibility for providing guidance on training and implementation of standards and for overseeing and approving processes of awarding SpLD Assessment Practising Certificates.

Professional bodies may apply to SASC for approval to issue SpLD Assessment Practising Certificates. To secure SASC approval any such body must adhere to the following guidelines.

- A. A professional body which issues practising certificates to its members must gain approval from the [SASC] if it wishes to claim that those certificates are appropriate for the purposes of recognising competence in carrying out diagnostic assessments for specific learning difficulties, under the terms of the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines.
- B. Professional bodies may seek such approval formally by contacting SASC and providing relevant information to enable a decision to be taken at the next appropriate Committee meeting.
- C. Omission of a particular professional body from a list of recognized bodies does not necessarily imply that SASC considers it inappropriate. It may mean that the professional body has not applied for SASC approval, or that the approval has not yet been granted.
- D. SASC would be unlikely to recognise a professional body as being appropriate unless it offered:
 - a. A regular journal providing articles and sources of information in relation to developments in theory and practice in the nature and assessment of specific learning difficulties.
 - b. Regular conferences and other events to provide opportunities to learn of and discuss developments in the theory and practice of assessments for specific learning difficulties
 - c. Evidence of adherence to nationally recognised standards of practice in relation to issues such as equal opportunities and data protection.

SASC approval of a professional body as appropriate to issue Practising Certificates, under the terms of the SpLD Working Group 2005/DfES Guidelines, would normally be granted on the basis that:

- 1) Members of the professional body issued with certificates (henceforth practitioners) have completed appropriate professional training in the diagnostic assessment of specific learning difficulties. Appropriate training consists of either
 - a) completion of courses which include modules in diagnostic assessment and the nature, understanding and management of specific learning difficulties, that have been accepted by SASC as appropriate; or
 - b) prior learning and experience judged by the professional body to be equivalent to approved courses, subject to approval of the SASC Moderation Group ¹
- 2) The professional body shall have a Code of Conduct to which members must subscribe, covering fundamental principles governing professional practice including duty of care, confidentiality, data-protection, conflict of interest, recognition of limits of expertise (e.g. assessments limited to a specific age group.)
- 3) The professional body must have a published procedure for managing complaints which might be made against practitioners, including a mechanism to apply sanctions to the practitioner which might, in extreme cases, result in withdrawal of the practising certificate.
- 4) The professional body must have a recognised procedure for ensuring the continuing professional development (CPD) of its members.
- 5) The professional body must have a system for monitoring CPD activities, for example through a log, with the provision for not renewing a practising certificate in cases where there is insufficient evidence of appropriate activity.
- 6) Moderation. The professional body would be expected to have in place a system for ensuring that its practice conforms to relevant professional standards and for ensuring that there is consistency in its decisions in relation to the issuing of practising certificates. This might be done through a professional affairs board on which there would be at least one recognised expert who is external to the organisation; it might be done through the appointment of an external examiner who would oversee an internal moderation process.
- 7) National Coverage. Certificates issued by a professional body should not be limited to practitioners in any one geographical area and should not be limited to employees of any one organisation.
- 8) The professional body must agree to support the recommendations of SASC and seek reapproval from SASC after a period of 4 years.

¹ The judgement of the suitability of an individual's qualifications as meeting the requirements for membership of the professional body is, properly, a matter for the professional body and not for SASC. However, to ensure consistency of standards, SASC has a moderation group who would have the right to review previous decisions or comment on pending decisions regarding the equivalence of prior experience/qualifications and qualifications gained through approved training courses.