

## **Suitable Tests for the Assessment of Specific Learning Difficulties in Higher Education (Revised October 2009)**

This list of suitable tests for the assessment of specific learning difficulties (SpLD) in Higher Education is a key part of the National Assessment Framework for Applications for Disabled Student Allowances. The purpose of the list is to promote quality and consistency in the Disabled Student Allowances (DSA) process. The list of tests has been drawn up on the following principles:

- 1) Assessment of SpLD for the purposes of applying for DSA requires a **range** of tests, to investigate the cognitive profile of students as well as their attainments in literacy and (where appropriate) numeracy.
- 2) Wherever possible, tests should be **properly standardised on the adult population, with clear evidence of validity and reliability**. Tests not suitable for use with adults should be avoided.
- 3) It is recognised that there are various theoretical models, hence tests in the list do not reflect any particular school of thought. Nevertheless, the list is consistent with the current theory that SpLDs affect aspects of cognitive functioning. Therefore, tests of cognitive functioning are regarded as essential for a proper assessment.
- 4) In addition to the use of standardised measures of underlying ability, cognitive processing, and attainments in literacy (and numeracy), supplementary methods of information-gathering that inform the diagnostic process may be employed. These might include information concerning conditions such as dyspraxia/DCD and disorders of attention, drawn from qualitative evaluations of the student's functioning, from assessments carried out by other appropriate professionals (e.g. occupational therapists) and from recognised checklists.

The list has been prepared by a panel of experts in the field of SpLD. A sub-panel will review the list periodically and consider new tests for inclusion.

The list of tests includes both closed tests, which can be used by psychologists only, and open tests, suitable for use by specialist teachers. The guidance for suggested tests builds on the existing guidance in DfES documents and should be read in conjunction with guidance chapters on Disabled Student Allowances.

Diagnostic assessments conducted from the age of 16 would be appropriate for the purposes of DSA eligibility. If an assessment was conducted before the age of 16 years, an update of the student's skills in reading, writing and spelling, e.g. a top-up assessment, would be required.

Where applications for DSA are supported by appropriately reported evidence of SpLD from an approved assessor based on results of tests taken from this list, authorisation by LA Awards Officers should be straightforward. That does not preclude approved assessors from using alternative tests on occasions where these are deemed necessary, but in such cases a justification for their use should be provided in the report.

- The purpose of a diagnostic assessment is to provide adequate evidence of the student's functioning across the full range of cognitive abilities and skills, vital to studying at the Higher Education level.
- Under normal circumstances tests included in this list should be used in assessments for SpLD.
- Most cases will require use of a test taken from most, if not all, subcategories in the list.
- It is not expected that any given assessment will include **all** tests mentioned in the list.
- Assessors should use their professional judgement as to which tests to administer according to the requirements of the individual case.

## **Guidance on assessment of students for whom English is an additional language**

### **Background and rationale**

When assessing students for whom English is an additional language (EAL) assessors should be aware that most psychological and educational tests have been developed and standardised on populations that are predominantly English-speaking and/or situated within mainstream Western culture. The format of the test, the test content and the test norms will all reflect that background.

Assessment of EAL students presents special challenges because of the lack of alternative tests and because it is not known how robust existing tests are when used with EAL students or when the administration of such tests is modified to accommodate a lack of experience of English. Nevertheless, EAL students are still entitled to be assessed for possible SpLD so that, if appropriate, application can be made for Disabled Student Allowances in order to gain access to disability support in Higher Education.

Consequently, assessment of EAL students requires a compromise between the demands of normal good assessment practice, on the one hand, and the need for EAL students to be assessed fairly and sympathetically, on the other.

This section is not intended to be a comprehensive manual of how to assess EAL students. The aim is to highlight the important issues in this controversial field. Wherever possible, assessment of EAL students should be carried out by an assessor with appropriate experience in this area. In cases where this is not possible, assessors are encouraged to seek advice from more experienced colleagues. It is hoped that special training for assessors working with EAL students will become available in due course.

Welsh-speaking students form a special subgroup of EAL students in that although their cultural background is not necessarily different from that of most English-speaking students, their language background may be quite different and thus performance on tests administered in English may be affected. Currently, approximately 14% of secondary school students in Wales are taught through the medium of Welsh, and many of these students go on to use Welsh extensively in Higher Education.

### **Test administration**

When administering tests to EAL students, there should be careful consideration of linguistic and cultural variations that might affect test performance adversely. Such factors are likely to include limited English vocabulary – both spoken and written – and lack of experience of doing timed tests. Wherever possible, and when justifiable, allowances should be made for such variations. Particular care should be taken when preparing EAL students for assessment and in ensuring that test instructions are fully understood. Some EAL students may need more explanation and/or practice items than usual, in order to grasp test requirements.

Assessors should try to find out how long the student has been speaking English, and reading and writing in English, and the circumstances surrounding this. For example, was English spoken in the home? Was English the principal medium of education? The effects on test performance are likely to be roughly proportional to the number of years during which the student has been speaking and learning English. Where the student's overall experience of English has been less than seven years, some impact on syntax, vocabulary and comprehension is generally to be expected. Where first exposure to English was after the age of seven some impact on phonology and pronunciation is generally to be expected. However, much will depend on the quality and quantity of English experience during formative years. Where English has been spoken in the home, effects may be less marked than where the sole experience of English has been outside the home.

A balance must be struck between **adaptation** of test administration procedures and instructions to meet an EAL student's needs, and **maintenance** of the standardisation of the test, which supports interpretations of test performance. The greater that test administration procedures are varied, the less valid and reliable the test will become.

To some extent, non-verbal measures of intelligence will usually give better indicators of the general ability of EAL students than verbally-based measures of intelligence. However, assessors should be aware that in cases of dyspraxia/DCD, non-verbal intelligence may be depressed.

Measures of cognitive deficits in SpLD (e.g. in phonological processing and working memory) may be less susceptible to linguistic and cultural influences than literacy attainment and consequently should be provided wherever possible. However, measures of cognitive processing are unlikely to be valid or reliable where students carry out covert translation of material from English to another language for processing and then back into English again in order to make the response, because this imposes an additional cognitive processing load. When assessing EAL students it would therefore be appropriate to investigate this, e.g. by enquiring what strategies the student was employing to carry out the task.

### **Interpreting results**

As far as possible, interpretation of test results from EAL students should endeavour to take linguistic and cultural factors into account as well as any adjustments that were necessary in the process of test administration. The band of error around a score obtained by an EAL student will be greater than for students for whom English is the primary language, and will be affected by the degree of change in administration process, the ease and familiarity of the student with the test taking process and test content, and the appropriateness of the norms used.

As a general rule, where SpLD is suspected, it is likely that the student will have experienced similar problems (e.g. in reading and writing) in his/her other language(s)

and therefore information of this should be sought wherever possible. However, phonological differences between languages mean that conditions such as dyslexia can exhibit themselves differently. For instance, reading and spelling may be more accurate (but not necessarily more fluent) in a language with a more regular orthography. This is because dyslexia is usually due to an underlying problem in processing phonological information and irregular orthographies (such as English) make higher demands on phonological processing. Hence dyslexia may not have been detected in an EAL student in his/her primary language or before they were required to attain a high level of functioning in written English. Additionally, there may not have been sufficient professional awareness of SpLD in the country where the student was brought up or went to school, so any features of dyslexia may not have been formally recognised.

When preparing the report it is helpful for the assessor to state how long the student has been speaking, reading and writing in English, whether English is now his/her principal medium of spoken and written communication, and what experience they have of being educated in the medium of English. An impression of the student's oral skills in English may also be helpful to contrast with any observed literacy difficulties. However, it is important that evidence for SpLD is presented, as opposed to evidence only of difficulties in literacy. Where a diagnosis of SpLD is being made, the assessor should state why they believe that possible linguistic and cultural causes of the observed difficulties may be ruled out in this particular case, or – at the very least – that the impact of the dyslexic difficulties on test performance outweighs the impact of linguistic and cultural factors.

### **Guidance on the assessment of free writing and reading speeds**

#### **Free writing**

There is an expectation that undergraduates should be able to write at 25 words per minute.

#### **Oral reading**

There is an expectation that undergraduates should be able to read aloud at 150 words per minute

#### **Silent reading**

There is an expectation that undergraduates should be able to read silently at 250 words per minute.

### **Guidance on the assessment of dyspraxic-type difficulties**

To diagnose the very special co-ordination difficulty that often characterises dyspraxia requires tests only available to medical professionals. However, when it is clear that people have difficulties with handwriting and other non-verbal tasks that involve co-ordination which cannot be attributable to other physical difficulties, it is appropriate to describe such people as having dyspraxic tendencies.

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Categories	Name of Test	Closed/ Open	Age Range	Components	Comments	Publisher
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**ATTAINMENTS IN LITERACY**

**Reading:**

Single word recognition	Wide Range Achievement Test 3 (WRAT3)	Open	5-75 years	Reading. Two parallel forms	Co-normed with WRIT (The manual is no longer available).	Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., USA
	Wide Range Achievement Test 4 (WRAT4)	Open	5-94 years	Word Reading. Two parallel forms.	This is the latest version of the Wide Range Achievement Test. Not co-normed with WRIT.	Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., USA
	Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests (WRMT-R)	Open	5-75+ years	Word Identification		Pearson Assessment
	Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE)	Open	6-24.11 years	Sight Word Efficiency. Two parallel forms.	This is a timed test that provides a measure of fluency reading real words. Together with the TOWRE Phonemic Decoding Efficiency test it will yield an overall Reading Efficiency measure. Can be used qualitatively for ages over 24.11 years.	Pro-Ed, USA/
	Wechsler Individual Achievement Test - Second UK Edition (WIAT-II UK) (For Psychologists)	Closed	4-85.11 years	Word Reading No parallel form.		Pearson Assessment

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	<b>Wechsler Individual Achievement Test Second UK Edition for Teachers (WIAT-II UK -T)</b>	Open	4-85.11 years	Word Reading No parallel form.	The Word Reading subtest is the same as the Psychologist's subtest.	Pearson Assessment
<b>Continuous text reading Oral Reading</b>	<b>Spadafore Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT)</b>	Open	6-Adult		An appropriate passage can be used for miscue analysis purposes.	Academic Therapy Publications, USA
	<b>The Adult Reading Test (ART)</b>	Open	16-55 years		Reading is assessed by reading aloud only. Memory, factual and inferential comprehension questions. It is advisable in the case of dyslexia to carry out a piece of free writing over a longer time than 2 minutes.	Pearson Assessment
	<b>Gray Oral Reading Test Fourth Edition (GORT-4)</b>	Open	6-18.11 years	Two parallel forms; 14 paragraphs; 5 comprehension questions per paragraph.	Rate; Accuracy; Fluency; Comprehension; Oral Reading Quotient. Student is not allowed to refer back to the passage for answers to comprehension questions. Can be used qualitatively for ages over 18.11 years.	Pro-Ed, USA/

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	<b>Wide Range Achievement Test 4 (WRAT4)</b>	Open	5-94 years	Sentence Completion. Two parallel forms.	This is the latest version of the Wide Range Achievement Test. Not co-normed with WRIT. This subtest only measures reading comprehension through sentence completion.	Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., USA
Silent Reading	<b>Gray Silent Reading Test (GSRT)</b>	Open	7-25 years	Two parallel forms; 13 paragraphs; 5 comprehension questions per paragraph.	Different types of comprehension questions; can be administered as group test. Multiple-choice format.	Pro-Ed, USA/
	<b>Spadafore Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT)</b>	Open	6-Adult		An appropriate passage can be used. Literal recall and inference comprehension questions. Student is not allowed to refer back to the passage for answers to comprehension questions. Comment on reading speed.	Academic Therapy Publications, USA
	<b>Advanced Reading Comprehension Test (ARC)</b>	Open	Adult	Two parallel forms (C and M), each having a 1,250 words passage and 20 comprehension questions (5 literal and 15 inferential).	Designed for university level. Can be done under timed (20 mins. per passage) or untimed conditions. Current norms based on small sample of university students; more	Dr Chris Singleton, University of Hull. <a href="mailto:c.singleton@hull.ac.uk">c.singleton@hull.ac.uk</a>

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Categories	Name of Test	Closed/ Open	Age Range	Components	Comments	Publisher
					extensive norms being collected.	
	<b>WRAT-Expanded Group Assessment (Form G) Reading Comprehension Test</b>	Open	7-18.11 years		Multiple-choice; can be used individually. Can be used qualitatively for ages over 18.11 years.	Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., USA
	<b>WRAT-Expanded Individual Assessment (Form I) Reading Comprehension Test</b>	Open	7-24.11 years		Multiple-choice; can be used individually. Can be used qualitatively for ages over 24.11 years.	Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., USA
	<b>Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests (WRMT-R)</b>	Open	5-75+ years	Passage Comprehension	Modified cloze procedure	Pearson Assessment
	<b>Wechsler Individual Achievement Test - Second UK Edition (WIAT-II UK) (For Psychologists)</b>	Closed	4-85.11 years	Reading Comprehension	A mixture of sentences to be read aloud and passages to be read either silently or aloud. Comprehension questions based on both. Comprehension score is calculated using all questions. Reading speed is calculated as words/minute for passages only.	Pearson Assessment
	<b>Wechsler Individual Achievement Test Second UK Edition for Teachers (WIAT-II UK -T)</b>	Open	4-85.11 years	Reading Comprehension	A mixture of sentences to be read aloud and passages to be read either silently or aloud. Comprehension questions based on both.	Pearson Assessment

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					Comprehension score is calculated using all questions. Reading speed is calculated as words/minute for passages only. The Reading Comprehension subtest is the same as the Psychologist's subtest.	
<b>Non-word reading</b>	<b>Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE)</b>	Open	6-24.11 years	Phonemic Decoding Efficiency. Two parallel forms.	This is a timed test that provides a measure of fluency of reading nonwords. Together with the TOWRE Sight Word Efficiency test it will give an overall Reading Efficiency measure. It can be used qualitatively for ages over 24.11 years.	Pro-Ed, USA
	<b>Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests (WRMT-R)</b>	Open	5-75+ years	Word Attack		
	<b>Wechsler Individual Achievement Test - Second UK Edition (WIAT-II UK) (For Psychologists)</b>	Closed	4-85.11 years	Pseudoword Decoding. No parallel form.		Pearson Assessment
<b>Listening Comprehension</b>	<b>Spadafore Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT)</b>	Open	6-Adult		An appropriate passage can be used.	Academic Therapy Publications, USA

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<b>Spelling:</b>						
Single word	<b>Wide Range Achievement Test 3 (WRAT3)</b>	Open	5-75 years	Spelling. Two parallel forms	Co-normed with WRIT. (The manual is no longer available)	Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., USA
	<b>Wide Range Achievement Test 4 (WRAT4)</b>	Open	5-94 years	Spelling. Two parallel forms	This is the latest version of the Wide range Achievement Test. Not co-normed with WRIT.	Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., USA
	<b>Helen Arkell Spelling Test (HAST)</b>	Open	5-19+ years	Includes high and low frequency, and regular and irregular words.	Standardised on UK population. Can be used for group or one-to-one testing.	Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre
	<b>British Spelling Test Series (BSTS)</b>	Open	15.6-24+ years	Series 5 (X/Y forms)	Can give information about dictation abilities and proof reading abilities.	GL Assessment
	<b>Wechsler Individual Achievement Test - Second UK Edition (WIAT-II UK) (For Psychologists)</b>	Closed	4-85.11 years	Spelling. No parallel form.		Pearson Assessment
	<b>Wechsler Individual Achievement Test Second UK Edition for Teachers (WIAT-II UK -T)</b>	Open	4-85.11 years	Spelling. No parallel form.	The Spelling subtest is the same as the Psychologist's subtest.	Pearson Assessment

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**Writing:**

	<b>Free Writing</b>	Open	Non-standardised		Timed – up to 15 minutes. Writing speed score can be obtained; comparison of spelling usage and single word spelling. Comment on: structure, punctuation, spelling in context, organisation, legibility & use of vocabulary. Student can either: (1) choose a topic to write about, (2) write about a topic in his/her area of study or (3) write about a passage he/she has read, putting in the key points. (1) & (2) can be used for the Speed of Writing Prose Task.	
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**UNDERLYING ABILITY**

	<b>Wide Range Intelligence Test (WRIT)</b>	Open	4-85 years	Verbal (Vocabulary & Verbal Analogies); Visual (Matrices & Diamonds).	High correlation with WAIS-III & WISC-III; conormed with WRAT3. Published 2000.	Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., USA
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Categories	Name of Test	Closed/ Open	Age Range	Components	Comments	Publisher
	<b>Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale, 3rd Edition UK version (WAIS-IIIUK)</b>	Closed	16-89 years	Indices: Verbal Comprehension (Vocabulary, Similarities, Information); Perceptual Organisation (Picture Completion, Block Design, Matrix Reasoning); Working Memory (Arithmetic, Digit Span, Letter-Number Sequencing); Processing Speed (Digit Symbol Coding, Symbol Search).	Published 1999 (superseded WAIS-R).	Pearson Assessment
	<b>Wechsler Abbreviated Scale of Intelligence (WASI)</b>	Closed	6-89 years	Verbal Scale (Vocabulary, Similarities); Performance Scale (Block Design, Matrix Reasoning).	Published 1999.	Pearson Assessment

**COGNITIVE PROCESSING**

<b>Working Memory</b>	<b>Wechsler Memory Scale, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition UK version (WMS-III)</b>	Closed	16-89 years	Immediate Memory (Auditory & Visual); General Memory (delayed) (Logical memory; Verbal Paired associates, Faces, Family Pictures); Working Memory (Spatial Span; Letter-Number Sequencing).	Published 1999.	Pearson Assessment
	<b>Wide Range Assessment of Memory and Learning Second Edition (WRAML2)</b>	Open	5-90 years	6 core tests; 2 optional delay recall tests; 4 optional recognition tests; 3 optional memory tests	The factor structure contains verbal memory, visual memory and attention/concentration	Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., USA

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Categories	Name of Test	Closed/ Open	Age Range	Components	Comments	Publisher
					information. Wide range of memory tests.	
	<b>Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale, 3rd Edition UK version (WAIS-IIIUK)</b>	Closed	16-89 years	Digit Span; Letter-Number Sequencing		Pearson Assessment
	<b>The Test of Memory and Learning 2nd edition (TOMAL2)</b>	Open	5-59.11 years	8 core subtests; 6 supplementary subtests; 2 delayed recall tasks.	3 Core Indexes - Verbal Memory, Nonverbal Memory & Composite Memory; 6 Supplementary Indexes - Verbal Delayed Recall; Learning; Attention/Concentration; Sequential Memory; Free Recall; Associated Recall. Wide range of visual memory and verbal memory tests.	Pro-Ed, USA/
	<b>The Digit Memory Test</b>	Open	6-Adult	Digit Span forward and backward		Dyslexia Action
<b>Phonological Processing</b>	<b>Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP)</b>	Open	5-24.11 years	Phonological Awareness Quotient; Phonological Memory Quotient; Rapid Naming Quotient; Alternative Phonological Awareness Quotient; Alternative Rapid Naming Quotient.	Can be used qualitatively for ages over 24.11 years.	Pro-Ed, USA/

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Categories	Name of Test	Closed/ Open	Age Range	Components	Comments	Publisher
<b>Speed of Processing</b>	<b>Symbol Digit Modalities Test (SDMT)</b>	Open	8-Adult	Matching number with symbol	Similar to Digit-Symbol Coding sub-test of WAIS III; administered as written and/or oral test; measure of speed of processing.	Western Psychological Services, USA
	<b>Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP)</b>	Open	5-24.11 years	All Rapid Naming subtests & Quotients.		Pro-Ed, USA/
	<b>Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale, 3rd Edition UK version (WAIS-IIIUK)</b>	Closed	16-89 years	Processing speed index (Digit-symbol coding & Symbol search).		Pearson Assessment
	<b>Speed of Writing Prose Task</b>	Open	Adult		Timed - up to 15 mins. Student can choose topic to write about. Provides words per minutes and indicates speed of processing. Can also be used for the Free-Writing Task.	
<b>Attainments in numeracy (where appropriate)</b>	<b>Wide Range Achievement Test 3 (WRAT3)</b>	Open	5-75 years	Arithmetic. Two parallel forms.	Co-normed with WRIT. (The manual is no longer available). Timed test (15 minutes); quick to administer; only tests arithmetic skills; presentation of items is in an American format	Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., USA

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	<b>Wide Range Achievement Test 4 (WRAT4)</b>	Open	5-94 years	Math Computation	This is the latest version of the Wide Range Achievement Test. Not co-normed with WRIT. Timed test (15 minutes); quick to administer; only tests arithmetic skills.	Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., USA
	<b>WRAT-Expanded Group Assessment (Form G) Mathematics Test</b>	Open	7-18.11 years	45 mins	Wide Range Inc, USA/ Harcourt Assessment/Dyslexia Action	Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., USA
	<b>WRAT-Expanded Individual Assessment (Form I) Mathematics Test</b>	Open	7-24.11 years		Multiple-choice; assesses understanding of concepts, computation and problem solving. Can be used qualitatively for ages over 24.11 years.	Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., USA
	<b>Mathematics Competency Test</b>	Open	11.6 - Adult	Using & Applying Mathematics; Number & Algebra; Space & Shape; Handling Data	Useful for students who have difficulty with mathematics; gives percentile scores only; can be used qualitatively	Hodder & Stoughton
	<b>Wechsler Individual Achievement Test - Second UK Edition (WIAT-II UK) (For Psychologists)</b>	Closed	4-85.11 years	Untimed. Two subtests- Mathematical Reasoning and Numerical operations (Maths computations). No parallel form.		Pearson Assessment

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<b>Motor control and visual perceptual skills.</b>	<b>Morrisby Manual Dexterity Test</b>	Open	14-49 years		Fine motor control indicators for dyspraxic-type difficulties	The Morrisby Organisation
	<b>The Beery-Butenica Developmental Test of Visual-Motor Integration, 5<sup>th</sup>. Edition (Beery VMI)</b>	Open	2-99.11 years	Visual-Motor Integration Test with optional tests of Visual Perception and Motor Coordination	The 5 <sup>th</sup> Edition manual has adult norms (19-99.11 years). The optional tests provide evidence that relates to visual perceptual and motor coordination deficits. For dyspraxic-type difficulties.	Pearson Assessment

**Test Source Contact Websites:**

**Ann Arbor: [www.annarbor.co.uk](http://www.annarbor.co.uk)**

**Dyslexia Action: [www.hoddertests.co.uk](http://www.hoddertests.co.uk)**

**GL Assessment: [www.gl-assessment.co.uk](http://www.gl-assessment.co.uk)**

**Helen Arkell Dyslexia Centre: [www.arkellcentre.org.uk](http://www.arkellcentre.org.uk)**

**Hodder Tests: [www.hoddertests.co.uk](http://www.hoddertests.co.uk)**

**Hogrefe Ltd: [www.hogrefe.co.uk](http://www.hogrefe.co.uk)**

**Morrisby http: [www.morrisby.com](http://www.morrisby.com)**

**PAR Inc: [www3.parinc.com](http://www3.parinc.com)**

**Pearson Assessment: [www.psychcorp.co.uk](http://www.psychcorp.co.uk)**

**Pro-Ed: [www.proedinc.com](http://www.proedinc.com)**

**Taskmaster http: [www.taskmasteronline.co.uk](http://www.taskmasteronline.co.uk)**

**Western Psychological Services: [www.wpspublish.com](http://www.wpspublish.com)**