



Diagnostic Assessment Report for Specific Learning Difficulties

SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC) 2025

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Where can I find more information?

The Report Format documents can be downloaded from the SASC website at:
<https://www.sasc.org.uk/news/launch-of-the-2025-sasc-new-diagnostic-report-format/>

The handout from the Conference Presentation can be downloaded from the SASC website at: <https://www.sasc.org.uk/about-sasc/sasc-annual-conference/sasc-conference-2025/>

2. Who Should Use the Report Format?

Please see our guidance **AG 1: When should this report format be used.**

This report format is required for SpLD diagnostic assessment. The report format must be used for an assessment carried out at any age that might later be used as evidence for an application for the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA).

This diagnostic assessment report format does not preclude or exclude other types of formative or ongoing assessment, for similar or related purposes, used by a range of professionals working in or for schools, colleges, universities and in occupational settings. For example, educational psychologists and specialist teachers working in schools often carry out much shorter formative, reviewable assessments that may indicate areas for intervention. The purpose of these assessments is not to reach particular diagnostic conclusions.

3. Are Psychologists encouraged to use this report format too?

Please see our guidance **AG15: Use of the assessor statement**.

Diagnostic reports which could later be used by the recipient as evidence for application for the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) must only be signed by a specialist teacher assessor with a current APC or a psychologist with HCPC registration at the time the assessment report was produced.

We would encourage Practitioner Psychologists (HCPC registered) to use the format to ensure that reports are later accepted for DSA.

4. What Definition of Dyslexia Should be used?

Please see our guidance **AG93: Referencing definitions of SpLDs** for more information.

Any definition must be current (within the past 15 years) and quoted and referenced in full.

5. Can I assess a learner in multiple sessions?

Please see our guidance under '**Test Conditions**'.

State the duration of the assessment and whether it was a continuous session. If more than one assessment session was necessary, all assessment dates need to be reported on the cover sheet.

If there is more than one testing session, in either this section or in Appendix 2 Summary Table of Test Results, note the tests used in each assessment session.

It is recommended that the assessment sessions are contained within 4 weeks, unless there are unusual or extenuating circumstances.

6. How should the report be adapted for workplace assessments?

Guidance is given throughout the format when an assessment is going to be used for the workplace.

7. Is there a suggested length for a report?

We have not given a guideline for the overall length of an assessment report, but there are suggestions for how many pages certain parts of the report

should be. Consider the length of the report from the aspects of usability and readability. Being succinct supports readability.

8. What age range can an assessor assess?

Please see our guidance **AG 16: Training, mentoring and/or professional development**.

We ask that assessors work within their professional competencies. Assessors should have completed extended training, mentoring and/or professional development relevant to the areas of assessment and age range covered in an assessment.

9. What tests are suitable to be used in assessment?

Please see our guidance **AG 4: Greater flexibility is built into the format**.

Guidance for choosing tests in each area of testing is available from the SpLD Test Evaluation Committee (STEC) Test List and additional guidance is given in the Report Format document. <https://www.sasc.org.uk/assessment-guidance/assessment-test-guidance/>

10. How should we structure the report?

Please see our guidance **AG10: Formatting the report**.

The report format is presented in tabular form for guidance purposes only. This does not mean that the report must be written in boxes. Rather that the headings will be used by the assessor to provide structure in their own report template.

11. Can I use this report format to give the results of a combined Literacy and Maths focused Assessment?

Where assessors have appropriate training, both areas can be explored. If full assessments are to be completed in both areas, one would not expect them to be completed in one assessment session.

12. Should we include background information in the Diagnostic Decision?

Please see our guidance **AG22 Explaining key evidence**.

Draw together the key evidence from the assessment, alongside pertinent information from background history, which supports the diagnostic decision. It is important to use this section to draw together and summarise all key information and evidence that corresponds to a definition and supports the diagnostic conclusion.

13. Where would the Visual Difficulties Screening Protocol results be placed in the report?

Please see our guidance **AG30: The SASC Visual Difficulties Screening Protocol** and under 'Background Information' and 'Appendix 5: Further References'. The SASC Visual Difficulties Screening Protocol can be downloaded from <https://www.sasc.org.uk/sasc-downloads/>.

In the Background Information, under the heading 'Health and developmental history' report confirmation of administration of the Visual History and Visual Difficulties Questionnaires ideally in advance of the assessment. Report any indicators of visual discomfort and disturbance, which must be noted but not diagnosed. The assessor should describe routes to further assessment with a qualified vision practitioner, e.g. optometrist, in the recommendations section.

In Appendix 5, give details of any other references (for example, to the SASC Visual Difficulties Screening Questionnaire).

14. How should I detail reported attentional difficulties prior to assessment of a child aged under 16:00 years?

Please see SASC Guidance on the assessment and identification of the characteristics of an Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) at: <https://www.sasc.org.uk/sasc-downloads/> and under 'Background Information'.

All assessors should collect background information in advance of any assessment. They should question parents and/or carers carefully about attentional difficulties, as well as restless, overactive or impulsive behaviour which has been noted, before the date of the assessment. SpLD assessors and

psychologists may use school reports and information gathered through questionnaires from class teachers to support background information gathering. Practitioners can be guided by the types of questions used in screeners, but should not use these formally. If there is no pre-existing formal diagnosis of ADHD, the term ADHD should not be used. Information gathered prior to assessment will be reported under 'Background Information'.

15. How should I report an individual's own words in the Current Situation and Individual's Voice section?

Please see our guidance **AG40: Current situation and individual's voice** and under '**Current Situation and Individual's Voice**'.

The views of the individual on their perception of their strengths and needs, where appropriate and pertinent to the assessment, should be sought and reported. Assessors may choose the best way to report this.

16. Can Phonological Awareness be discussed within the cognitive area?

Please see our guidance **AG45: Test selection and reporting**.

In this report format tests of phonological awareness are included under language and reasoning skills because phonological awareness refers to the detection and manipulation of speech sounds that is an integral part of the process of language development. However, phonological awareness could justifiably be grouped under processing and retrieval in the cognitive presentation section of the report since it is part of a larger phonological system used for speaking and listening. Phonological awareness is also a key and reliable predictor of reading ability, so it could equally make sense to include it in the reading section of the report.

The most important issue is to select sufficient tests that explore the criteria that define the SpLDs being investigated. Assessors should report tests under the headings given in this format that seem most appropriate to the individual tested and the test batteries being used.

Advice is given for choosing tests in each section and test assessment areas that are considered core to the assessment of a suspected SpLD are indicated. Beyond these core test pathways, assessors are free to choose other tests as

suggested in this report format and as recommended in the updated 2025 STEC Test List. <https://www.sasc.org.uk/sasc-downloads/>

17. Would Phonological Awareness always be included in an assessment?

Please see our guidance **AG50: Testing Phonological Awareness**.

In a literacy focused assessment if not reported in the Language and Reasoning section of the report, phonological awareness must be reported in another suitable section of the report.

Please also see our guidance **AG51: Relationship between language, phonological awareness and mathematical skill development**.

In a mathematics-focused assessment, it may not be necessary to assess phonological awareness if there is not a concern around literacy.

18. What does 'unexpectedness' mean in the context of an assessment?

Please see our guidance **AG42: Factors that establish a history of literacy difficulties in children under the age of 16 and individuals aged 16 or over**, our guidance under 'Language and Reasoning Skills' and **AG1: When should this report format be used?**

Strengths in reasoning skills can indicate that specific identified difficulties in reading, spelling or mathematics attainment are unexpected. Such strengths may act as protective factors in the management of those difficulties.

Good receptive and expressive language skills in the context of poor reading or mathematics attainment can indicate that the specific identified difficulties are unexpected. Such strengths may act as protective factors in the management of those difficulties.

Where there are no, or insufficient indicators of unexpectedness, or where global learning difficulties are suspected, the Language and Reasoning section will include:

A measure of verbal reasoning to assess the capacity to make conceptual links and relationships and/or

A measure of non-verbal/visual reasoning/pattern or design recognition/construction which may assess grouping and ordering skills,

pattern recognition, abstract reasoning skill, logic, problem solving and deduction.

19. Does expressive language have to be assessed separately from receptive language?

Please see our guidance **AG46: Choosing tests in this section: language and reasoning skills** and under ‘**Language and Reasoning Skills**’.

The Language and Reasoning Skills section will include a standardised measure of receptive and/or expressive language skills to assess vocabulary knowledge, language structure and the ability to put thoughts into words and sentences in ways that make sense.

Normally assessors will test both receptive and expressive language skills. There may be situations where assessors, after drawing on the background information supplied, and/or their informal impressions of the verbal skills of an individual being assessed, may decide that a full range of language tests is not needed. In some instances, there may already be in place, for example, a recent, comprehensive speech and language assessment. Additionally, if assessors have used tests, for example, of listening comprehension and oral skills which they feel have fully covered either language or verbal reasoning abilities, there is no need to add in further separate tests.

20. Do I need to assess RAN in a Maths focused assessment?

Please see our guidance at **AG 65: RAN tests, automaticity and mathematics attainment** and under ‘**Speed of processing and retrieval**’.

Whilst it could be relevant to test RAN in an assessment focusing primarily on mathematics, assessors may use their discretion as to whether to include it.

21. Do I have to assess Maths in a Literacy focused assessment?

Please see our guidance **AG60: Choosing tests in this section: mathematics** and under ‘**Mathematics**’. Assessors should also refer to the SASC Guidance on assessing specific mathematics difficulties and dyscalculia 2025 at: <https://www.sasc.org.uk/sasc-downloads/>. The most recent STEC Guidance Documents on SpLD Assessment Tests should always be followed. This can be

found at: <https://www.sasc.org.uk/assessment-guidance/assessment-test-guidance/>

Assessors should be alert to the fact that literacy difficulties can impact aspects of mathematics. An assessment primarily focusing on literacy would not usually include all assessment areas of mathematics, but it might explore specific areas of impact with the goal of making recommendations for support. If there are no recorded or, at assessment, emerging concerns about the individual's mathematics attainment, testing in this section can be omitted as deemed appropriate and justified by the background information or unfolding test outcomes.

22. How do I cover phonological memory in the report?

Please see our guidance **AG 66: Memory – Terminology**, **AG 68: Choosing tests in this section: memory and attention** and under 'Memory and Attention'.

Where concerns are literacy based, phonological short term memory (the ability to identify accurately, retain briefly, and repeat sequences of speech sound) should be assessed, using for example, digits forwards, letters forwards, non-word repetition tasks.

23. How do difficulties with visual-spatial processing affect literacy attainment?

Please see our guidance **AG73: Choosing tests in this section: visual-spatial processing**.

It can be useful (especially in assessments primarily focused on mathematics or motor/writing difficulties or where spelling difficulties seem not to be related to underlying phonological difficulties) to explore other elements of visual-spatial perception and processing.

24. What is meant by symbolic magnitude comparison?

Please see our guidance: SASC Guidance on Assessment of Mathematics Difficulties at: <https://www.sasc.org.uk/sasc-downloads/> and under 'Numerical Cognition' in the Report Format document.

Symbolic magnitude comparison can be described as comparing the value of numbers expressed as digits.

25. Can I use test names within the main body of the report?

As a rule test names would not be used within the main body of the report. Assessors should take care that they describe the purpose of the test in a way that it can be clearly linked to the test listed in the Appendix. Test names may be used within the '**Test Conditions**' section, if more than one assessment session was necessary, assessors should note the tests used in each assessment session. Test names will also be used in **Appendix 2: Summary Table of Results** where assessment scores should be reported under the name of each test battery used (All subtests used should be reported and relevant/useful composites/indexes). They will also be used in **Appendix 4: Test References and Descriptors**, where, in an accessible format, fully referenced and presented in the same order as the Summary Table of Test Results each test and subtest used will be briefly described, alongside the age-range of the test and the forms used.

On rare occasions, (for example where the report is commissioned as part of a formal funding process), a test name could be included in brackets in the main body of the report after a description of what the test was used for. If an assessor chooses to do this, they must do so consistently throughout the report; the emphasis remains to give a description of what the test was used for in a succinct and readable fashion.

26. How do I identify possible attentional difficulties?

Please see our guidance: SASC Guidance on the assessment and identification of the characteristics of an Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) at: <https://www.sasc.org.uk/sasc-downloads/> and our guidance **AG7: Onward referral for children under the age of 16 years** and **AG43: Reporting planning, memory and attentional difficulties**.

Individual is aged below 16:00 years

If the assessment you are carrying out is for a child under the age of 16 and you suspect possible attentional difficulties, the young person should be referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) so that a full multi-disciplinary assessment can make a detailed evaluation. A referral letter template is included in our guidance. Assessors may make observations throughout the report which will support onward referral, and should not use the Extended Investigation section to explore attentional difficulties.

Assessors should not use screeners or structured interview schedules for this age group without specific training and as a part of a multi-disciplinary team. The term ADHD should not be used.

Individual is aged between 16:00 and 17:11 years

If the assessment is with an individual between the ages of 16 years 0 months and 17 years 11 months who is displaying the characteristic features of ADHD during your assessment, there should still be a referral to CAMHS. As part of your full diagnostic assessment report, you should also detail the observations you have made which led you to decide upon the referral. Please also see our guidance at **AG76: The Extended Investigation**. For individuals aged 16 years and over, the views of the person assessed can be very briefly summarised in the background information section but if these issues are considered central to the assessment, they are best explored through structured interview schedules and screeners and reported in the Extended Investigation section of the report. It is expected that any assessor utilising these additional tools will have taken part in additional training in their use. Individuals aged between 16.0 years and 17.11 years cannot be diagnosed by a specialist teacher assessor as having the characteristics of ADHD as a specific learning difficulty. Instead the assessor should detail the attentional difficulties that support the need for educational interventions. The term ADHD should not be used.

Individual is aged over 18:00 years

If the assessment is with an individual aged 18 years or over, a specialist teacher assessor still cannot make a formal diagnosis of ADHD. Instead, the assessor identifies characteristics of ADHD which will need support in education or the workplace during the assessment within the Extended Investigation section of the report through the use of structured interview schedules and screeners as detailed in our June 2021 guidance. Assessors may state that the individual displays the characteristics of ADHD as a specific learning difficulty. The key is the need to provide support due to learning difficulties arising from ADHD. The assessor should advise the individual can request a medical diagnosis of ADHD via their GP. A template letter is provided in our guidance.

27. How do I use the Extended Investigation Section?

Please see our guidance **AG76: The Extended Investigation**, **AG77: Motor coordination investigation**, **AG78: Template referral letters** and under 'Extended investigation'.

28. Can I use the Extended Investigation Section on its own?

No. The Extended Investigation section is part of a diagnostic report, not a stand-alone section. Please also see FAQ 27.

29. Can I use standardised tests qualitatively if the individual is not in the age range?

Where standardised tests are available for the age range of the individual being assessed, they should always be used. It is recommended that assessors' test batteries should reflect the individuals they work with. Grace periods to allow assessors to make changes to their assessment batteries are typically agreed. The grace period for updating test batteries so that they reflect the age of the individuals assessors work with will be from June 2025 (the issue date of the new STEC list) and run for 2 years. Assessors should update their batteries by 31st May 2027.

The most recent STEC Guidance Documents on SpLD Assessment Tests should always be followed. This can be found at:

<https://www.sasc.org.uk/assessment-guidance/assessment-test-guidance/>

30. Where do we need to provide information about the tests used in the report appendices?

Please see our guidance **AG94: Describing tests** and under 'Appendix 4: Test References and Descriptors'.

In an accessible format, fully referenced, presented in the same order as the Summary Table of Test Results. Describe briefly each test and subtest used and what it measures, give the age-range of the test standardisation and the form(s) used.

31. Do we need to reference supporting resources in the report?

Links relating to recommendations will be placed in the Recommendations section.