

BDA Diagnostic Assessments for Dyslexia Post-16s and Adults

The BDA offers diagnostic assessment for dyslexia for individuals of all ages; both children and adults.

This document provides information on the assessment process which aims to answer some of the more frequently asked questions and help you to decide if a diagnostic assessment is needed.

What is a diagnostic assessment?

A diagnostic assessment is intended to confirm whether an individual has dyslexia or not. It provides a confirmed diagnosis of dyslexia, as well as a clearer picture of the person's strengths and weaknesses and their individual cognitive profile.

In some cases, other Specific Learning Difficulties can be identified but not all assessors will carry out these assessments so this may limit the availability of assessors. This needs to be clearly identified on your booking form to help us to match you to the most appropriate assessor.

Why do people have diagnostic assessments?

A diagnostic assessment may be beneficial where an individual is experiencing significant difficulties in their study, in the workplace, or in day-to-day life and who does not already have a diagnosis of dyslexia or another specific learning difficulty (SpLD).

Individuals may request a diagnostic assessment because:

- Students require a diagnostic report in order to apply for funded support at university (DSA).
- Students of any age who are at college, university or who are studying for professional qualifications may require a diagnostic report as evidence for exam access arrangements.
- If this assessment is required to potentially be used as part of an application for exam access arrangements, under JCQ regulations, then you must discuss this with the individual's school or college prior to the assessment. This is so that the school/college can complete Part A of the Form 8 (application for exam access arrangements) which supplies information about the individual's normal way of working within this environment. This will ensure that any recommendations for support in exams reflect this. Assessors cannot provide or complete a form 8 without Part A being completed in advance.

- Employers have requested more information so that they can make reasonable adjustments for an employee with specific difficulties.
- They recognise that they are better at some skills than others and would like to know why.
- They would like to understand why they find aspects of learning, particularly reading, writing and or spelling difficult.
- They find aspects of remembering and organisation for study and/or work particularly difficult.
- They have previously had an assessment and/or extra help at school and would like a fuller or updated assessment in order to have a better understanding of their difficulties.
- Adults would like to know how they can improve their literacy skills

How quickly can I get an assessment?

We can usually arrange assessments within four weeks of receiving a completed booking form, dependant on demand and whether we have assessors based in that area. Assessment reports can take up to 15 working days after the assessment to arrive.

For assessments that are going to be used to apply for exam access arrangements we would recommend that these are booked at the start of the programme of study as applications for access arrangements have to be submitted to the examinations body well before the exams start.

How long does an assessment take?

A diagnostic assessment will usually take up to three hours to complete, depending on the circumstances (for example, the type and level of difficulties, and whether an individual has ever had another diagnostic assessment at any point).

A “top-up” assessment is where a diagnostic assessment has taken place within the last two years but more up to date information is required. These are usually only requested where an individual is studying for exams and more information is required in order to request appropriate access arrangements for exams.

A Workplace Needs Assessment provides more job-specific information and guidance on reasonable adjustments that can be made for the individual in their specific role and working environment. This can be booked to take place alongside, or after, a diagnostic assessment.

What happens during an assessment?

BDA diagnostic assessments take place in a private room at the location where the assessment has been booked (e.g.: at the individual's normal place of work, at the assessors' office, etc.). If the assessment is taking place at your place of work or other premises, then a quiet room free from disturbances needs to be available for the duration of the assessment. A writing surface/table will also be required.

If the assessment is taking place at the assessor's premises, please make sure you know where you are going and how to get there. Allow enough time to arrive on time for your appointment. Assessors often have more than one assessment booked each day and delays can cause great inconvenience for other clients.

The format of the assessment is usually the assessor will have an initial informal chat with you to gather some background information and then carry out the assessment. After the assessment they may well give you some initial conclusions, but this will not include results or diagnosis. This information will be contained in the report.

All BDA assessors are fully checked, qualified and have DBS clearance.

Given the length of the assessment it may be helpful to bring a drink with you, if the assessor notices that you are getting tired they will facilitate appropriate breaks.

You will not need to bring any equipment with you for your assessment.

The aim is:

- To assess performance on a range of items, allowing the assessor to consider strengths and weaknesses. This isn't an exam so there is no "pass" or "fail" - the intention is to help highlight the person's individual style of learning or working and what does/doesn't work for them.
- To collect information about reading, spelling and writing skills.
- To identify whether there is a clear discrepancy between general level of ability and reading and writing attainment.
- To consider other factors which may be affecting learning.
- To identify whether any reasonable adjustments will need to be made in order for a person to fully access the curriculum and its assessment.

Up-to-date tests are used which explore aspects of underlying ability, reading, writing and spelling, handwriting and fine motor skills, underlying learning skills such as phonological awareness, speed of processing and memory, speech and language and auditory processing.

Please note that the assessor will not be able to provide any diagnostic feedback immediately after the assessment as they will need to calculate the scores that are generated by the tests and analyse the overall profile of performance.

What happens after an assessment?

The diagnostic assessment will be followed by a written report. This report will provide evidence of the individual's dyslexic profile (if the individual has been confirmed as having dyslexia), signposting to other organisations or further assessments for specific learning difficulties (if required), and will include some recommendations about how to support the individual in the context of their study, the workplace or day-to-day life. Any recommendations of how an individual can be supported in the workplace are likely to be generic and **not job-specific**.

The assessment report will be sent directly to the individual, usually by email, within around 15 working days of the completed assessment.

If the individual being assessed has given their permission, a summary report (which does not refer to test scores) will be sent to the individual's employer / line manager if the employer has paid for the assessment.

If the report is for a specific purpose such as application for Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) at university, the assessor will explain how to proceed.

We aim for the report to be a document that the individual is happy to share with family, teachers, tutors, other professionals and employees if they wish, as this will give them information on how they can help to provide support.

The BDA quality assures its diagnostic assessment reports in line with guidelines set by the SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC). A copy of the assessment report will be held at the BDA according to Data Protection principles.

After receiving the report, you may like to speak to someone to discuss its findings so that you can develop a greater understanding of the results. The BDA can offer a telephone consultation with a dyslexia expert but there may be an additional charge for this.

Can assessors diagnose any other conditions?

Some of our assessors are also able to diagnose some closely associated conditions such as dyspraxia and dyscalculia, although different tests are needed for these. If the diagnostic assessment that has been booked is for dyslexia, then the assessor may not have the right

resources with them to do this on the day. A pre-assessment questionnaire, which must be returned to us before the assessment takes place, should alert the assessor to any co-occurring difficulties which may be present. Please make sure you note this clearly on the questionnaire. Also, in some cases this may limit the availability of assessors.

Assessor will always refer the individual on for further testing if they feel that there are indicators of conditions other than dyslexia.

Assessors are **not** able to diagnose learning difficulties such as autism or ADHD, as these are medical rather than educational difficulties and so require a different type of assessment.

Can I be assessed if English isn't my first language?

To be assessed you will need to have lived in an English-speaking country and to have been regularly speaking English for a minimum of seven years. This is because the tests used are heavily influenced by an English-speaking culture. In addition, you need to be able to read, write and spell in English. If an assessment is carried out before then the assessor can't make a definitive diagnosis which would mean a re-test may be needed at a later date.

How should you prepare for a diagnostic assessment?

- Individuals and their employers or those who support them may like to look at the British Dyslexia Association website for some background information.
<http://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/>
- It is a requirement that the individual being assessed has had a sight test within the last two years, prior to the assessment.
- It is helpful, if this has not been recently done, to arrange an up to date check of hearing
- Individuals (and often their line manager or employer) are asked to complete our pre-assessment questionnaires to gain background information in order to enable assessors to plan appropriate assessment activities.
- It is important that assessors have information about any previous assessments and / or study support. It is important for them to see relevant past specialist reports to avoid repetition of tests within too short a time, which may make results invalid.

Who are our assessors?

We have a team of experienced diagnostic assessors who work with the BDA; some are Specialist Teachers who have also trained to become diagnostic assessors (are AMBDA qualified), and others are Educational Psychologists.

All of our assessors must have prior experience in assessing and teaching/working with individuals

who have dyslexia and associated specific learning difficulties. In addition, they are required to hold a current Assessment Practicing Certificate (APC) if they are a Specialist Teacher and assessor, or to be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) if they are an Educational Psychologist.

What is the difference between an assessment with a Chartered Psychologist and an assessment with a Specialist Teacher?

Both Specialist Teachers (who are AMBDA qualified) and Chartered (or Occupational) Psychologists are able to accurately assess for dyslexia; there is very little difference between the two.

Psychologists have access to a different type of test that Specialist Teachers are not able to use, and which has a slightly higher number of “sub-tests”.

Both Specialist Teachers and Educational Psychologists can make recommendations about how the individual can best be supported.

There may be some instances where an Educational Psychologist needs to be used instead of a Specialist Teacher, but these are often specified at the time of the assessment being requested.

Where are we based?

The BDA can carry out diagnostic assessments in most areas of England, however there are some restrictions on this and availability will change depending on how busy our assessors are. It is important that you indicate your preferred location on the form in the booking pack. Our assessors are usually happy to travel up to a radius of 40 miles from the locations listed. Or you may prefer/need to travel to them.

Alternatively, if an assessor is not available within the area required, the BDA may be able to arrange a diagnostic assessment to take place in London, at our Headquarters in Bracknell, or at a mutually convenient location (e.g.: another branch of the organisation that the individual works for) if you are prepared to travel to this location.

How much does it cost?

Assessment with a specialist teacher: £450.00 + VAT

Assessment with an Educational Psychologist: £600.00 + VAT

The Assessment Booking Process:

- 1 • Download an Assessment Booking Pack.
- 2 • Complete the assessment booking form (Please indicate preference for a Specialist Teacher or Psychologist assessment).
- 3 • Complete the Assessor/Psychologist Locations form.
- 4 • Complete Pre-Assessment Questionnaire.
- 5 • Identify any dates that you are not available.
- 6 • Complete payment details. **Please note we cannot book assessments without all of the necessary documents being received.**
- 7 • Email all completed forms together to: assessments@bdadyslexia.org.uk
- 8 • Payment will be taken. **Please note bookings will not be confirmed without payment.**
- 9 • You will receive confirmation of your appointment by email.
- 10 • Attend your appointment.
- 11 • You will receive your report approx. 15 working days after your assessment.
- 12 • Post-assessment: If you require a post assessment consultation then please contact us to arrange this. These are usually done by telephone and may incur a charge.

If the report is for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) it then needs to be sent to Student Finance England.