

23 March 2020

Memo to Course Leaders/Providers of BDA Accredited Courses

Re: Coronavirus and school closures

Dear Colleagues,

Several course providers have requested guidance regarding the Specialist Teaching and or Assessment elements of BDA Accredited Courses in view of the closure of schools for what appears to be an indefinite period in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Below is what Gavin and I believe to be the best guidance we can give. We believe that, whilst being as flexible as possible, it is important to ensure that we maintain the Gold Standard of BDA professional awards for the sake of both the credibility of specialist teachers and the educational, even future life, opportunities of the learners with whom they work.

A. ATS/APS Courses

A short survey of school web sites, press reports and government statements indicate that many schools are going to offer some form of web-based learning/teaching. Schools will also be open for the children of Key Workers, vulnerable children and those with an EHCP. Some special schools and units also appear to be keeping open and, where this applies to participants on specialist dyslexia courses it may well be possible for course members to continue their Specialist Teaching and/or Assessment. This may also be the case for those teaching privately, subject to the agreement of the parent/carer and using seating arrangements allowing the maintenance of an appropriate separation distance. Some may also be able to teach using Facetime/Skype or some other video-conferencing platform (but **not** social media).

If a learner or teacher becomes ill or wishes/must self-isolate, a course provider will follow their own procedures, e.g. for lengthening the period of registration, submission of assignments etc.

However, most participants taking ATS/APS accredited courses work in mainstream schools which will be at least partially closing and therefore they are concerned about completing the 20 hours of Specialist Teaching of which two-hours are to be observed/assessed. Many of these will already have started their Specialist Teaching.

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Most course providers are already teaching and/or supporting/monitoring participants using virtual learning/Moodle/telephone/Skype etc. The following proposals assume this is so.

Guidance

1. Course Leaders should ask participants to let them know how the school (or that which is attended by their pupil) is responding to closure and what arrangements are proposed regarding the pupil continuing to receive their 1:1 Specialist Teaching (on-going or about to start).
2. The possibility of completing the 20-hours (or two 10-hour programmes) and the video recording of two hours can be discussed with the tutor.

Course participants may be able to teach 'virtually' using their course provider's/school's/other digital platform (again **not** social media) sending resources/materials to their learner by e-mail. It may be possible to record such sessions and send the relevant lesson plans/evaluations/recording to the tutor for evaluation 'as usual'.

Should video-recording not, however, be feasible **an audio recording** could be substituted as long as both teacher and learner are clearly audible.

It may, of course, be the wish of the course participant or their learner's parents/carers **not** to continue at this time and therefore the participant should be allowed to defer/suspend the practical element of the course, or the course as a whole, without prejudice, if this is their preferred option. The possibility of the specialist teacher or pupil becoming ill should be considered in the same way.

Under the current unprecedented conditions, the BDA will now accept a tutor's judgements based on any combination of the above suggestions (or an alternative suggested by the course leader) provided what is proposed has been discussed with and agreed by the BDA Course Liaison Team. A copy of what is agreed should be sent to the Accreditation Office for inclusion in the relevant file for that course.

B. AMBDA Courses

A short survey of school web sites, press reports and government statements indicate that many schools are going to offer some form of web-based learning/teaching. Schools will also be open for the children of Key Workers, vulnerable children and those with an EHCP. Some special schools and units also appear to be keeping open and, where this applies to participants on specialist dyslexia courses, it may well be possible for course members to continue their Specialist Teaching and/or Assessment. This may also be the case for those teaching privately, subject to the agreement of the parent/carer and using seating arrangements allowing the maintenance of an appropriate separation distance. Some may also be able to teach using Facetime/Skype or some other video-conferencing platform (but **not** social media).

If a learner or teacher becomes ill or wishes/must self-isolate, a course provider will follow their own procedures, e.g. for lengthening the period of registration, submission of assignments etc.

Guidance

Specialist Teaching

If the course member has ATS/APS but is unable to complete the 10-hours additional Specialist Teaching for AMBDA, this requirement can be waived at the discretion of the Course Leader. The Tutor Form should state the reason for not meeting the 30 hours requirement. However, if they have not successfully completed 20 hours of Specialist Teaching and been observed for two of those hours then the above guidance for ATS/APS should be adhered to.

Specialist Assessment

1. Assessed observation of test administration

A course member may seek a learner (or other individual) of appropriate age for whom there is some concern regarding literacy and obtain the 'usual' permissions to conduct a video-recorded assessment. Parents (if applicable) and learner must be made aware that the assessment and recording are for training purposes only and will be seen only by the relevant tutor and the recording will be deleted later. They will not receive a copy of the report although the conclusions and recommendations may be discussed with them, if they wish.

Where seating or other arrangements are 'adjusted' in order to comply with social distancing, the course member should comment on this in their self-evaluation to the tutor. Please ensure that good hygiene protocols are applied when administering testing and using testing materials. This must include checking in advance on the health status of all parties involved in the testing process, thorough hand washing and also cleaning of all test materials. Testees should bring their own equipment such as pencils, etc. to be used during testing.

2. Assessed scoring and reporting:

Where it is not possible to conduct three full diagnostic assessments, courses could provide case study material e.g. C.A.s of learners, raw scores, some qualitative information from testing, etc. that the student can use to demonstrate their ability to score accurately and write reports using the current SASC report format. The third report must still meet the SASC criteria for renewal of an APC. (i.e. the **difference** from current BDA requirements lies in the fact that perhaps only one report will be based on personally administering the tests and the other two on dummy data. The criteria for assessment are the same.)

3. It may, of course, be the wish of the course participant or parents/carers **not** to continue at this time and therefore the participant should be allowed to defer/suspend the practical element of the course, or the course as a whole, without prejudice, if this is their preferred option. The possibility of the specialist teacher or pupil becoming ill should be considered in the same way.

Again, what a course leader proposes must be discussed with and agreed to by the BDA Course Liaison Team and a copy of what is agreed sent to the Accreditation Office for inclusion in the relevant file for that Course.

If you have any comments or queries at any time regarding this guidance please contact me directly at mikejohnson1122@btinternet.com and copy in your BDA Liaison Team.

Kind regards,

Mike.