

Gathering Qualitative Information for assessments and placements

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What we will look at

- Introduction
 - What is qualitative information?
 - Where do we gather it from?
 - Why is it important?
- Qualitative Information in a full diagnostic assessment
- How qualitative information can inform intervention – Form 8
- Examples from case studies
- Gain a better understanding of how qualitative information can be used within a report and to inform intervention

What is Qualitative Information?

- **Background information:** Questionnaires and interviews can be used to gather information about specific signs/symptoms and learning characteristics associated with dyslexia.
- **Observations** on an individual's performance on tests and to the testing environment - *do they find them easy/hard? Do they use any strategies to support their performance? Do they need time to think about and process information? Do instructions need repeating?*
- While standardised tests provide a quantitative measure of an individual's skills, qualitative data explores **how** the individual obtained the scores

Why is qualitative information important

- For full assessments – supplements test scores
- Intervention – understanding the specific challenges an examinee faces through qualitative analysis allows for more targeted and effective recommendations.
- **Reveals patterns and inconsistencies:** Qualitative observations can highlight patterns of errors or inconsistencies in performance that might not be evident from test scores alone. For example, miscue analysis can be a valuable tool in identifying the types of errors an examinee makes in reading and spelling tests.
- Dyslexia manifests differently in individuals. Qualitative data helps to create a more complete picture by considering the examinee's unique strengths, weaknesses, and experiences. Through qualitative methods such as questionnaires and interviews, assessors can learn about the examinee's experiences and perspectives.

The 2025 Report format

- For each area tested performance will be discussed, noting results that indicate areas of strength or challenge, and how these may impact on learning or other areas of life. It may be useful to compare sub-test results in one section with those in a preceding section. **If relevant and appropriate, relate the performance to the strengths or concerns reported by/about the individual.**
- Qualitative observation and analysis of strategies and approaches to tasks should be noted **e.g. verbalisation to support processing, any issues with word retrieval impacting on speed in verbal tasks, reliance on prompting to elicit more detail etc. Other issues such as forgetting instructions or needing them repeated, problems in maintaining sustained attention, distractibility, etc. should be reported alongside test outcomes for the specific test(s) affected.**

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Language and Reasoning

Language skills – informal, qualitative observations

- Take some time to talk to the individual you are assessing
- Helps to put them at their ease and gives you the opportunity to gain an impression of their language skills
- Consider:
 - ❖ do they listen, pay attention to, understand and remember what you say
 - ❖ do they respond appropriately – enter into conversation – think about the questions you may ask them
 - ❖ can they put words and sentences together in a way that makes sense – or just give short one-word answers
- Do your observations link with comments from parents/schools

Example - Maria

- Maria was 17 years of age and

‘referred for an assessment by her parents, on the advice of her School, following concerns from her teachers about Maria’s ability to demonstrate her excellent verbal skills and understanding in writing, particularly in timed conditions.’

- **Test results:** WRIT: Vocabulary: 122

CTOPP2 Phonological Awareness: 110

Example: Maria

- At school Maria is regarded as an able and hard-working pupil. She has made good progress until now, when concerns have been raised around the difference between her excellent verbal skills and understanding and her ability to demonstrate this in writing, particularly in timed conditions. During this assessment Maria presented as a young person of Above Average verbal ability and High Average Visual (Non-verbal) ability, suggesting that she has the underlying ability to do well academically. Maria demonstrated a particular strength in her knowledge of vocabulary and her ability to express this understanding verbally.
- Maria gained an overall Mid Average result (standard score: 110) for her untimed Phonological Awareness. Maria's performance here suggests that her skills in this area, are not automatic, but with time, and using her good knowledge of vocabulary, she is able to gain Mid Average results.

Example: Daniel

- Strong family incidence of dyslexia
- School SENDCo reported that: *‘At school, although he can be a quiet pupil, Daniel is considered to have strong expressive and receptive language skills for a person of his age. He has also been observed to have a good and broad general knowledge.’*
- Test results: Vocabulary: 135
- Daniel’s knowledge of vocabulary was examined by asking him to verbally define orally presented words. *Initially he needed to be asked to elaborate on some of his answers and* this enabled Daniel to learn the requirements of the test. He demonstrated an excellent knowledge of vocabulary *which was reflected in the language that he used during the assessment* and gained a Well Above Average result (standard score: 135).

Example: Daniel

- **Test Result:** Phonological Awareness:96
- Daniel's initial responses, and whilst he received feedback, were automatic. However, once this reassurance was removed Daniel found it difficult to remove individual sounds from the middle of words and from blends, and his response time was increasingly slow. Nevertheless, Daniel tried hard, and with perseverance was able to gain a Mid Average result
- By listening carefully and taking his time, by asking for some items to be repeated and by using his good vocabulary knowledge Daniel was able to gain a Mid Average result
- Daniel put a great deal of effort into this test and benefitted from the modelling of items and feedback that occurred at various points, as well as counting sounds on his fingers.
- Daniel's performance here suggests that his skills in this area are not as automatic as we might expect. His performance was supported by his ability to listen and focus well, his perseverance, and very good knowledge of vocabulary.

Attainment: Reading (Maria)

These were Maria's test results:

- Reading Comprehension: 113
- Word Reading: 97
- Oral Reading Fluency: 87
- Oral Reading Accuracy: 92
- Oral Reading Speed: 88

- Sight-Word Efficiency: 87
- Phonemic Decoding Efficiency: 89
- **Total Word Reading Efficiency: 87**

Reading: Qualitative comments for Maria



- Maria took longer than 3 seconds for many words as she attempted to use word building skills to identify them, making self-corrections based on how the word sounded, **using her good vocabulary knowledge** to help her identify them.
- Maria read slowly making a few self-corrections and one visual error.... . Maria again read slowly with 11% of the words that she attempted read incorrectly. This was due to difficulties with the pronunciation of the vowel sound
- Maria needed to reread to locate the answers for most of the questions as she had not been able to absorb the meaning as she read. This meant that her response time was slow/very slow for many of the questions but by taking her time she was able to provide good answers. At the beginning of this assessment Maria had reported that she needs to do this.
- Maria read more slowly than expected in order to pace paying attention to punctuation and to her reading accuracy. Some words/phrases were repeated as she tried to make sense of what she was reading and there were slight hesitations throughout each passage.

Attainment: Reading (Daniel)

These were Daniel's test results:

- Reading Comprehension: 126
- Word Reading: 86
- Oral Reading Fluency: 89
- Oral Reading Accuracy: 86
- Oral Reading Speed: 91

- Sight-Word Efficiency: 89
- Phonemic Decoding Efficiency: 84
- **Total Word Reading Efficiency: 86**

Reading: Qualitative comments for Daniel

- Daniel read at a slow but steady pace, immediately recognising most of the words that he was able to read but taking a little longer to recognize some of the earlier words and making some self-corrections. Once words became less familiar Daniel did try to decode them by attempting to break them down and sound them out, but these efforts were largely unsuccessful despite his excellent language skills.
- Daniel read slowly but accurately despite making a few self-corrections again read slowly and had an error rate of 42% demonstrating a weak phonological knowledge. He omitted/added sounds to words and found it hard to pronounce others correctly.

Reading: Qualitative comments for Daniel

- Daniel tried hard, referring back to the passages to find/check information and gained an Above Average result (standard score: 126) when required to just give an oral response to comprehension questions. His performance here suggests that Daniel can use his very good language skills, his good deductive reasoning skills and contextual cues to support his reading when he only has to give a verbal answer.
- As he read Daniel paid attention to punctuation. However, he either omitted, changed or added many small words which affected the accuracy of his reading. Examples of small words include 'the', 'and', 'of'. Small words are important as they provide the slant of the passage and so misreading them may affect comprehension. In addition, Daniel could not decode and pronounce some of the less familiar and more challenging words and made errors with suffixes at the end of some words.

Attainment: Spelling (Maria)

- Spelling: 95
- Maria wrote each word carefully, thinking of the sounds as she wrote the word, sounding the word out, checking it and then writing it again if it did not look right. Maria did this for around 12% of the words that she attempted, in some cases writing them out 4 times.
- In Maria's free writing she used vocabulary that was appropriate for the subject and had a go at spelling words that she wanted to use. Maria made similar errors to those she made in the spelling test, e.g.Maria had a spelling error rate of around 12%.
- Maria's English exercise book also highlighted the underlying difficulties that she has with spelling, and again the types of errors she makes are similar in type to those she made in the spelling test and in the free writing exercise: errors with the spelling of the vowel sound in words, with silent letters and with her auditory perception of the sounds in words e.g.....

Attainment: Writing

•The 4 Ps:

- posture
- paper position
- pen grip
- pressure

•The 7 Ss:

- shape/letter formation
- size
- spacing
- slant/slope
- stringing together/joining
- sitting on the line
- shakiness

(Feifer Assessment of Writing)

Attainment: Writing

Stuart, N. & Barnett, A. L. (2024). Writing Quality Scale (WQS) Administration and scoring guide. Oxford, England: Oxford Brookes University.

- Content and Development
- Structure and Organisation
- Vocabulary
- Sentence structure
- Punctuation

Attainment: Writing (Daniel)

Close examination of Daniel's handwriting revealed that the vocabulary that he used was age and subject appropriate, but also reflective of his very good verbal ability. He wrote at a steady pace during the test using an irregularly and awkwardly formed cursive script that was harder to read than when he was asked to copy sentences. Spaces between words were not clear or of an even size so it appeared that some words ran into each other. Letter formation was irregular and poor with letters being only partially formed and joins between letters making many words difficult to read. Indeed, around 21% of the words that Daniel wrote could be considered illegible, and this then affected comprehension of the remainder of Daniel's writing. Daniel used simple and more complex sentences with a range of punctuation, but this was only clear with careful examination. Despite the difficulties with legibility, Daniel's writing had a good flow and was interesting. Overall, Daniel wrote at a Mid Average speed (standard score: 90) but much of this was very challenging or impossible to read.

Cognitive Presentation: Speed of Processing and Retrieval

- **Phonological Awareness: 110 (95% CI: 102- 118)**

Maria's performance here suggests that **her skills in this area, are not automatic, but with time, and using her good knowledge of vocabulary,** she is able to gain a Mid Average result.

- **Rapid Symbolic Naming: 70 (95% CI: 62 – 78)**

Cognitive Presentation: Speed of Processing and Retrieval

Maria accurately named both the digits and the letters but did so **hesitantly and slowly**. She gained a Below Average result for digits (standard score: 80) and a Below Average result for letters (standard score: 70); with an overall Below Average result (standard score: 70). Maria's performance suggests that she is **much slower** than we would expect when retrieving phonological information from long term memory and this is likely to impact on her reading speed. This is highlighted by the lack of overlap of the confidence interval she gained for this test and that which examined phonological awareness. This will mean that Maria will need to give more thought to the processes of reading, spelling and of recording her thoughts in writing than her peers; mental effort that would be better directed at understanding the content of what she is reading.

Cognitive Presentation: Memory

- Evidence of verbal rehearsal – both audible during assessment and reported by examinee
- Appeared unsure about some responses given
- Some letters recalled out of sequence
- Some letters omitted
- Confusion with some similar sounding letters e.g. p/b
- Not able to provide full response for final item
- Reported using chunking and a semantic strategy of linking some words
- Pausing before giving some responses
- Some words recalled out of sequence
- Some words omitted
- Substituted some similar sounding words eg nail/tail, fish/dish
- Some responses quite quick to avoid memory delay

Cognitive Presentation: Memory (Maria)



TOMAL 2 Results

Digits Forward: 100

Letters Forward: 90

Manual Imitation: 125

Digits Backwards: 100

Letters Backwards: 90

Attention/Concentration Index: 101

Cognitive Presentation: Memory (Maria)



- When required to recall letters in backwards order her response time was slow. She was observed to subvocalise the sequence in an attempt to remember it before trying to reverse it. This was successful with shorter sequences but despite trying her best as sequences became longer Maria found them too difficult to remember. She was able to remember the first few letters but confused the order of others.
- When asked if she was able to use any strategies to support her performance Maria answered that she had been unable to. She had found all of the auditory tests really hard but particularly the backwards tests.
- Maria tried hard in all the tests but found the auditory tests much more challenging than the visual one, which was an area of relative strength. This is highlighted by the lack of overlap of the confidence intervals she gained for the 4 auditory tests with the visual one.

Intervention

Good intervention is based on:

- Good relationships – with the school and with the parents
- The 2025 new report format states:

When assessing children, information from the child's school should be routinely sought not only to ensure recommendations are more likely to be acted upon but because without such information little may be understood about the type of instruction/additional support offered to the child and the child's response to that provision.

(AG35)

- Relevance

Intervention (Daniel)

- Vocabulary: 135
- Non-verbal Reasoning: 116
- Phonological Awareness: 96
- Reading Comprehension: 126
- Word Reading: 86
- Oral Reading Fluency: 89
- Oral Reading Accuracy: 86
- Oral Reading Speed: 91
- Sight-Word Efficiency: 89
- Phonemic Decoding Efficiency: 84
- **Total Word Reading Efficiency: 86**
- Spelling: 84
- Free Writing: 90
- Short-term and Working Memory: 101
- Phonological Memory: 85
- Rapid Automatic Naming: 80

Intervention (Daniel)

- Daniel would benefit from a structured and multi-sensory literacy program delivered by a specialist teacher of dyslexia. Daniel's parents may find a private tutor helpful who can focus on this, as well as liaising with the school to make this programme as relevant and helpful as possible.
- Continue to build up the accuracy and automaticity of his spelling skills; learning spelling rules, looking at how words are structured and learning how to use syllables and the different types of syllable division may be helpful. This should also have a positive impact on Daniel's reading

Intervention (Daniel)

- Daniel's teachers need to be aware of his underlying difficulties as well as his strengths so that they are better able to support his academic progress and to maintain his self-confidence in himself as a learner. During this assessment it was observed that Daniel could do some of the phonological tasks with feedback but when this was withdrawn, he experienced difficulties.
- Daniel should also be allowed to use a **word processor** for extended pieces of work and tests/examinations should he learn to touch type and this becomes his normal way of working. This will be useful when taking notes and will help Daniel keep up with the pace of lessons, check the accuracy of his spelling as well as adding information that he may have forgotten; However, this may be more useful during the next stage of his education.
- In subjects that Daniel cannot use a word processor in he should take a little more time to set his work out clearly and ensure that letters/numbers are formed as clearly as possible. In a subject such as Maths which is often completed on squared paper, he may benefit from recording his work on paper with larger squares.
- Daniel may benefit from the provision of a Pupil Profile/IEP to support his difficulties

Intervention: Maria

- Vocabulary: 122
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- Word Reading: 97
- Oral Reading Fluency: 87
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- Oral Reading Speed: 88
- Sight-Word Efficiency: 87
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Intervention: Maria

- Continue to build up the accuracy and automaticity of her spelling skills; revising spelling rules and how to use syllables and the different types of syllable division may be helpful. This should be made relevant for Maria and focused on subject specific vocabulary and vocabulary that she will need in her A level subjects. Learning how words are structured should also have a positive impact upon Maria's reading skills.
- Reading comprehension strategies to help Maria to locate information quickly. Developing skills of skimming and scanning for information may also be helpful here.
- Study and revision skills focusing on encouraging Maria to learn in an active way that includes as many senses as possible – this will be particularly useful for revision.

Intervention: Maria

- Pupil Profile/IEP
- Maria's teachers need to be aware of her underlying difficulties as well as her strengths so that they are better able to support her academic progress and to maintain her self-confidence in herself as a learner.
- 25% extra time was recommended with the use of a word processor for any extended note taking in the classroom
- Form 8
- Maria can use this report to apply for the Disabled Student's Allowance (DSA) when she applies to university (further details about this can be found on-line). Once her university is known, Maria should make an appointment to see a Disability Advisor in the Disability and Dyslexia Support Service at her University in order to arrange any further support/mentoring and examination access arrangements. Maria should be proactive in arranging this as, particularly in the initial stages of university, she will benefit with support to learn the good organisational and time management skills needed to underpin her university studies.

So that's why!

Qualitative comments are important as they:

- Help to **link** the findings of the report together in a way that provides a logical and unfolding story of the individual
- **Individualise** a report, enabling the individual to shine through
- Signpost the way for **appropriate and effective intervention**
- Enable the individual and/or their parents to **recognise** them and **understand** their profile and their difficulties more