This symposium considers recent research evidence from colleagues at the SEN Literacy and Assessment Unit at Stranmillis University College with implications for raising literacy standards at primary level education and improving quality assurance in teacher-based assessments for examination access arrangements in post-primary education. The first paper considers the need to teach phonics in judicious balance with orthography and morphology in order to develop fluent readers and spellers who can draw upon a range of strategies in order to navigate the complexities of the opaque orthography of the English language. The authors refer to research evidence of spelling standards in children aged 6-8 years arising from a large scale study of approximately 2000 children in 60 research schools across Northern Ireland in addition to case-studies over three time points from year 2 to year 4 from Dr McMurray’s PhD research to illustrate gains in spelling progress by children who presented with very different standardised scores at the outset of research. The authors warn that without an ability to make use of phonics, orthography and morphology in spelling, there may be a rise in the number of children presenting as surface dyslexics.

The second paper considers issues in the current JCQ regulations, particularly for post-primary school teachers conducting assessments for examination access arrangements who do not hold an Assessment Practicing Certificate. Drawing on evidence from the first cohort of teachers working towards a Master’s level (Level 7) examination access arrangements qualification in 2015, McMurray and O’Callaghan’s ongoing research highlights the extensive formative process required to build a high-level skill set required for competent assessment involving the use of high level tests which is fully compliant with the Level 7 study requirements of JCQ. Evidence-based recommendations for improvements in policy and for practitioners working in this area are made.

The need to consider orthography, morphology and phonology in children’s spelling development: evidence from Northern Ireland

Dr Sharon McMurray, Dr Claire McVeigh, Stranmillis University College

Emerging consensus within the field is that the development of phonological awareness should be supplemented with the development of other sources of linguistic knowledge (Adoniou, 2014; Devonshire, Morris and Flock, 2013; McMurray, 2004; 2006; McMurray and McVeigh, 2014).

**Objective** This positional paper outlines the need to consider three sources of linguistic knowledge in the teaching and learning of spelling; namely orthography, morphology and phonology from the very beginning.

**Design and Methods** The authors draw upon research evidence of spelling standards in children aged 6-8 years arising from a large scale study (2013-2015) of approximately 2000 children in 60 research schools across Northern Ireland. In addition to this large scale study, illustrative case studies arising from Dr McMurray’s PhD research (2004) conducted in Northern Ireland are examined. This research (McMurray, 2004) encompassed a programme for teaching spelling which integrates phonology, orthography and morphology from year 2 to year 4.

**Results** Large scale study data outlines recent spelling standards in Northern Ireland. Spelling errors are highlighted from case studies providing evidence that children, who learn implicitly from their reading experience, can draw on all three sources of knowledge to spell in year 2.

**Conclusions** This research provides robust evidence of the importance of an integrated approach for all children and particularly those who show no benefit from frequency sensitivity when reading. The types of errors made by children are examined over three time points and the implications for teaching and learning discussed.

Quality Assurance Issues in the Teacher-based Assessment of Students for Examination Access Arrangements

Dr Sharon McMurray¹, Dr Paul O’Callaghan², Dr Claire McVeigh¹

¹Stranmillis University College, ²Queen's University Belfast

Drawing on evidence from the first cohort of teachers studying at Master’s level (Level 7), McMurray and O’Callaghan’s ongoing research highlights the extensive formative process required to build a high-level skill set required for competent assessment involving the use of high-level tests fully compliant with the Level 7 Individual Specialist Assessor requirements of JCQ.

Longitudinal research examined submissions by each teacher working towards competence in test administration. Data on teacher’s administration and scoring of three high level tests over three time points from June 2015 to June 2016 is presented. Tests administered were the Wide Range Intelligence Test (2000), Turner’s Dyslexia Portfolio (2008) and either the Diagnostic Reading Analysis (2008) or the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT-II—UK-T; 2006). Teachers engaged with a formative process receiving extensive feedback on test administration.

At time one, the pass rate was between 0% - 26% depending on the test administered; and at time 3 the pass rate was between 83 - 100%. Even with extensive training and formative feedback, a small minority were unable to achieve the required Level 7 competence. Recommendations are provided both at policy and practice levels regarding the need for clarity and more extensive detail in these regulations in order to ensure that teachers have the necessary skills to carry out the role of individual specialist assessor and can fully comply with JCQ regulations, the Equality Act (2010) on which the JCQ regulations are underpinned and to ensure consistently high quality standards and thus reliable and valid results.