

# Disabled Students' Allowances – Continuing DSA students

Higher Education Student Finance in England  
2018/19 Academic Year

Attached is revised guidance for the Academic Year (AY) 2018/19 'Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) for continuing DSA students'. This chapter contains guidance on DSA legislation and the administration of DSA applications from students who applied for DSAs for the first time in AY 2015/16 or before.

Guidance on the DSA legislation and administration of DSA applications for New DSA students is published separately and can be found at:

<http://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/policy-information/student-support-information-notice.aspx>

For descriptions of who is a new DSA student and who is a continuing DSA student in AY 2018/19 please see later paragraphs at the **introduction**.

The chapter provides guidance for '**continuing DSA students**' on full-time DSAs, DSAs for full-time distance learning students, part-time DSAs and DSAs for postgraduate students) as provided in **Education (Student Support) Regulations 2011 as amended by the Education (Student Fees, Awards and Support) (Amendment) Regulations 2012, The Education (Student Support and European University Institute) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, The Universal Credit (Consequential Supplementary, Incidental and Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 2013 and The National Treatment Agency (Abolition) and the Health and Social Care Act 2012 (Consequential, Transitional and Savings Provisions) Order 2013 and the Education (Student Support) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, The Education (Student Support) Regulations 2015, The Education (Student Support) (Amendments) Regulations 2016, the Education (Student Support) (Amendments) Regulations 2017 and the Education (Student Support) (Amendment) Regulations 2018**. Guidance on other grants for living and other costs payable under Part 5 of the Regulations is provided separately in the guidance chapters 'Assessing Financial Entitlement' and 'Grants for Dependants'. Also refer to the LA Portal User Guide for information on processing Non-Loan Products on the single system.

As the purpose of this guidance has changed over time, for example it is no longer used by local authorities, some of the text has been streamlined to reduce and improve the content. A change in text should not indicate a change in policy. Where changes to policy have been made, these have been indicated in blue.

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## INTRODUCTION

The guidance is for the administration of Disabled Students' Allowances for continuing DSA students. Continuing DSA students in AY 2018/19 are:

- Students who are continuing a higher education course in AY 2018/19, which they started before AY 2016/17, and having been awarded DSAs for a previous year/years of their course (before AY 2016/17);
- Students who are transferring to a higher education course in AY 2018/19 from a previous higher education course which started before AY 2016/17, where the student was awarded DSAs for a year/years of the previous course before AY 2016/17;
- Students who are starting a higher education course in AY 2018/19 immediately after (excluding an intervening vacation – maximum 5 months) completing a previous higher education course, where the student was awarded DSAs for a year/years of the previous course before AY 2016/17; or
- Students who started a higher education course before AY 2016/17, who suspended their studies with the agreement of their HEI and notified Student Finance England and are returning to their course in AY 2018/19, where the student was awarded DSAs for a year/years of the course before AY 2016/17.

**In addition to above students, this guidance covers the policy changes made in AY 2015/16 which apply to the following DSA students**

- Students who applied for DSA for the first time in AY 2015/16 including;
  - Students who are continuing a higher education course in AY 2015/16, having not been awarded DSAs for a previous year/years of their course.
  - Students who have withdrawn from their previous course or transferred from a previous course and who started a new course in AY 2015/16, applying for DSAs for the first time in AY 2015/16.
- Students who have ceased to undertake a previous course before AY 2015/16 (including withdrawal) and who commenced a new course in AY 2015/16 where the gap between the two courses is more than 5 months, (i.e. a longer period than the longest summer vacation) and where the student had been awarded DSAs for a year/years of the previous course.
- Students who completed a course before AY 2015/16 and following a gap of 5+ months start a new course and apply for DSAs (whether or not DSAs were awarded for the previously completed course).

Where anything in this guidance applies only to students who were deemed new students in AY 2015/16 the guidance will specify that this is the case.

Certain changes are being made to non-medical help support, and these will be applied to students who are recommended to receive a new type of NMH support after the new NMH quality assurance framework was launched in April 2016. The changes refer to the types of qualifications and professional body membership a support worker is expected to have, and does not impact on the type of support available to the student.

Separate guidance is provided for 'New DSA students' in AY 2018/19. These are students who are applying for DSAs for the first time in AY 2016/17 and beyond.

DSAs for full-time students are one of the grants for living and other costs payable under Part 5 of the Regulations. Guidance on the other grants payable under Part 5 can be found in the following guidance chapters:

- 'Assessing Financial Entitlement' (Maintenance Grant, Special Support Grant, Higher Education Grant and Travel Grant); and
- 'Grants for Dependants' (Adult Dependants' Grant, Childcare Grant and Parents' Learning Allowance).

## POLICY

### THE PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF DSAS

Disabled students' allowances are provided to students on an individual basis to help overcome the barriers that a disabled student may face, because of their disability, when accessing higher education. Support is provided to support the development of independent and autonomous learning.

SFE must be satisfied that the student is obliged by reason of their disability to incur additional expenditure to be able to attend or undertake their course. SFE must also be satisfied that all such expenditure is reasonably incurred and appropriate to the individual needs of the student. DSAs are not intended to assist with disability-related expenditure that the student would continue to incur if they were not following their course of study, nor are they intended to cover study costs that any student might have regardless of whether they are disabled. The local social services department may well continue to provide assistance towards personal care costs that will be incurred irrespective of whether or not the student is attending their course.

### GENERAL ELIGIBILITY FOR DSAS

The personal eligibility criteria for receiving full-time and part-time student support, including DSAs, are set out in regulations and are covered in the SLC's 'Assessing Eligibility Guidance' chapter.

**Please Note:** from AY 2017/18, serving Armed Forces Personnel (and their family members) who are continuing study on a distance learning course (UG PT/FT or PG) from outside of the UK as a result of an overseas posting are now eligible for student support, including DSAs. The Assessment of DSAs for these students should be considered under the same guidance as all other students. For more information please see the "Assessing Eligibility Guidance" chapter. Since AY 2014/15, a student is required to meet the definition outlined on page 11 below of disability in order to be eligible to receive DSAs.

DSAs are not subject to:

- an age limit;
- previous study rules; or
- income assessment.

A student can only receive support for a designated course. Where the eligible course does not appear on the institution database, it will not be possible to fully process the application. Information on what action should be taken in this situation is covered in the 'General Eligibility and Financial Assessment Administration' guidance.

Students are potentially eligible for DSAs whilst attending an overseas institution as part of their UK course, whether obligatory or optional.

Students who are personally eligible for student support under paragraph 9 of Schedule 1 of the student support regulations (i.e. nationals of member states of the European Union), but not under any other paragraph of that Schedule, are not eligible for DSAs.

DSAs are not available for:

- Disability related expenditure that the student would incur even if they were not attending a course of higher education;
- Costs that any student might have regardless of disability;
- Auxiliary aids and services which are provided by the student's local authority under a Care Plan;
- Auxiliary aids and services which are provided through other public funding e.g. mobility allowances, NHS support;
- Treatment for a disability;
- Diagnostic assessments for any type of disability or health condition;
- Temporary illness or injury – support from the institution or the NHS is appropriate here; or
- General learning difficulties – institution academic support is appropriate here.
- Support provided by the institution for all other students;
- Support, counselling or tutorial services which the institution makes available to all students;
- The costs of extra academic tuition or support in the main subject area(s) being studied. Institutions should meet these costs as part of providing the course;
- Where an institution makes special adaptations to course handouts or other course equipment for use by a disabled student during the delivery and assessment of the curriculum, it should meet any associated costs as part of providing the course;
- The cost of any special arrangements that institutions may need to make to enable a disabled student to take examinations (e.g. providing physical access to the examination hall or allowing the examinations to be taken and invigilated somewhere else) should not be set against DSAs. Additional costs which the disabled student themselves needs to incur in taking their examinations (for example, a helper or item of specialist equipment) would however fall within the scope of DSAs; and
- Study skills support, IAT support or IAT installation and training provided during the long vacation may be considered through DSAs, but only if SFE are satisfied that the support is reasonable and appropriate with regard to the circumstances of the student. Any such support undertaken outside term-time does not count as attendance and therefore would not trigger Loan Courses Loan or extra weeks' maintenance loan.

## TIME LIMITS FOR APPLYING FOR DSAS

The Student Support Regulations require that student support must be applied for on an annual basis. Generally a time limit for applications is set at nine months from the start of the academic year (Regulation 9). For disabled students this can be extended as long as the application has been made as soon as is reasonably practicable (Regulation 9(2)(d)). Students are advised to apply as soon as possible, to enable support to be put in place by the start of the academic year.

Students may apply outside the general time limit for a number of reasons for example, they are newly diagnosed with a disability or the need for support has only arisen later in the academic year or towards the end of their course. Students are permitted to apply for DSAs irrespective of the time left on the course. Students should continue to apply for support as and when the need arises. However, students applying outside the general time limit will need to provide details of why they have applied outside the general time limit to enable the Secretary of State to determine that they have applied as soon as reasonably practicable.

Applications for DSAs that are made after the end of the academic year will generally not be considered retrospectively for that year. The application will ordinarily be administered as being an application for the academic year within which the application has been received.

Students requiring support near the end of their course should contact their disability adviser in order for reasonable adjustments to be considered in the first instance. Disability Advisers may be able to arrange institutional support, such as exam support, study support or revision skills, and loan equipment.

## DEFINITION OF DISABILITY

Since AY 2014/15 a person is required to meet the Equality Act 2010 definition of disability in order to be eligible for DSAs. The Equality Act states that "A person has a disability for the purposes of the Act if he or she has a physical or mental impairment and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities (S6(1))."

Sometimes a student's disability does not substantially affect their normal day to day activities but does have a substantial effect on their ability to study. In the context of DSAs 'day-to-day activities' includes education. See guidance at:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/85010/disability-definition.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/85010/disability-definition.pdf) which is issued pursuant to section 6(5) of the Equality Act 2010.

Where a student assessed prior to AY 2014/15 is found to not meet the definition of disability under the Act, but has nevertheless been awarded DSAs prior to AY 2014/15 for a course, they will continue to receive the support put in place through their study needs assessment.

## EVIDENCE OF A DISABILITY

For most applicants, there should be little difficulty establishing their eligibility for DSAs. Their disability will have been identified and documented at an earlier stage, in many cases while they were at school. However, it is not essential for an applicant's disability to have been identified at school in order to be eligible for DSAs.

DSAs are not intended to provide assistance to members of the general student population who experience temporary illness or injury. Assisting such students would properly be the responsibility of institutions and the NHS, as appropriate. Nor are DSAs intended to provide assistance to students with general learning difficulties.

Students can become eligible for DSAs at any point during their course, not just at the start of their first year. Some students become disabled or have a disability identified after their course has started. Others may decide to disclose their disability only after their course has started. Additionally, equipment needs for some disabled students may only arise later in the course. Applications for support may be made outside the statutory time limit of nine months if the application is submitted as soon as is reasonably practicable (regulation 9(d)) – see time limits above.

A student wishing to apply for DSAs is required to submit medical/diagnostic evidence in order for eligibility to DSAs to be determined. Medical evidence can be in the form of a diagnostic assessment (for students with a SpLD), or evidence from a GP or consultant, or other qualified medical practitioner or appropriate specialist. Medical evidence should state the nature of the student's disability and ideally should also briefly explain how the student's disability impacts upon them. SFE will seek further information from the student/medical practitioner if it is not clear that the student meets the definition of disabled. Evidence included in an EHC plan can support the diagnosis, particularly in signaling areas where the student needs support.

Students with a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia will need to provide evidence of this by submitting a diagnostic assessment from a practitioner psychologist or suitably qualified specialist teacher (see Annex A for more information on diagnosing and assessing students with SpLD). The diagnostic assessment must have been carried out after the student's 16<sup>th</sup> birthday to be valid for DSAs purposes. DSAs funding is not available for diagnostic assessments for any type of disability or health condition, but HE providers may be able to offer assistance to students requiring a post-16 diagnostic assessment.

Cases may arise where the evidence that the student has a disability is deemed insufficient by SFE. In such cases, the student will be invited to provide further evidence, perhaps in the form of a diagnosis undertaken by a professional body or another acceptable person or their EHC Plan. In making such an invitation, it must be made clear to the student that they will normally be liable to meet the cost of providing the necessary evidence as this cost cannot be met through DSAs. Again, HE providers may consider providing help with these costs. Once satisfactory evidence is received, the student will be notified to book a DSAs study needs assessment to identify the

appropriate course-related support. The cost of the DSAs study needs assessment is met from the general allowance of the DSAs. Once the initial evidence of a disability has been accepted, in most cases there should be no need for students to provide updated evidence of their disability at a later stage in the course. An exception would be if the student's condition changes or if there is reason to believe that the student's condition may change later in the course. Sometimes an expert may also include recommendations for DSAs support with their medical evidence. Given that the expert is unlikely to be aware of course requirements and appropriate strategies and technologies, there is still a requirement for the student to receive a separate full DSAs study needs assessment of their course needs, and different recommendations may be made.

Any cost a student incurs obtaining the necessary expert evidence or opinion cannot be met from the DSAs. This is because such costs are not incurred by the student to determine the type of support they will need to attend or undertake their course; they are incurred to substantiate their eligibility for DSAs.

## **STUDENTS DIAGNOSED AFTER THE START OF THEIR HE COURSE**

Students who become disabled or are diagnosed with a disability after the start of their HE course of study may apply for DSAs once they have received their diagnosis, diagnostic assessment or have medical evidence confirming the presence of their disability. Students in these circumstances will be treated as a new DSAs claim - see the separate guidance 'DSAs (New Students).

## **SUPPORT FROM SOCIAL SERVICES**

Social Services may continue to provide assistance towards personal care costs that would be incurred in the UK, regardless of whether or not a student is attending a course. Support needs can be reassessed by Social Services when there is a change in a person's personal circumstances, such as leaving home to attend a course or a change in health. In the event of a student moving away from their home area to attend a course, funding responsibilities for personal care would continue to rest with the Social Services Department in the student's home area. Social Services receive money from Central Government to fund personal care support for disabled people and are responsible for deciding how their budget allocation is spent (see also **Non Medical Help paragraphs.**)

## **PRISONERS**

Full-time students who are prisoners and who began a designated course before 1<sup>st</sup> September 2012 are potentially eligible for DSAs but will not generally qualify for other grants for living and other costs under Part 5 of the Regulations (regulation 109(8) & (9)). See 'Grants for Dependents'

guidance chapter. No Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) (including DSAs for postgraduate courses) will be available to any prisoner who starts a course on or after 1 September 2012. The responsibility to provide assistance for disabled prisoners will lie with the Prison Service.

## MEANS-TESTED NHS BURSARIES

Under regulation 38(4)(a), students are not eligible for grants for living and other costs for any academic year during which they are eligible to apply for NHS means-tested bursaries or similar awards bestowed under section 63 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968, article 44 of the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 or sections 73(f) and 74(1) of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (if the latter is granted in respect of a course leading to a qualification in a healthcare profession other than as a medical doctor or a dentist). Students who are eligible to apply for an NHS bursary should be directed to the NHS Student Bursaries website at [www.nhsstudentgrants.co.uk](http://www.nhsstudentgrants.co.uk) for information about the financial support available through the NHS Bursary Scheme. Or they can phone the NHS Student Bursaries Helpline on 0845 358 6655.

## STUDENTS WHO BEGIN AN INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING (ITT) COURSE ON OR AFTER 1<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER 2010

Students on postgraduate ITT courses are potentially eligible for DSAs under the full-time or part-time scheme. They are not therefore eligible for the postgraduate DSA.

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## SANDWICH COURSES AND WORK PLACEMENTS

Students on part-year paid or unpaid placements where the periods of full-time study in the academic year are 10 weeks or more in aggregate are potentially eligible for DSAs. For example, DSAs could pay for additional disability related travel costs to and from the institution using the travel allowance and the additional support required for course work undertaken during the work placement. When a student is going on a work placement as part of their course, the DSA needs assessment should take this into account and, for example, consider the portability of equipment if students need to take it with them on the placement. Some adjustments will be made by the provider of the work placement and some courses provide separate funding towards costs e.g. social work courses may attract a bursary towards travel costs.

Under regulation 38(6) students are not eligible for grants for living and other costs, including DSAs, in any academic year of a sandwich course where the periods of full-time study are in

aggregate less than 10 weeks (unless the period of work experience is an unpaid placement of a type specified in regulation 38(7)). Students who do not qualify for grants for living and other costs under regulation 38(6) are eligible for a reduced rate maintenance loan which is not subject to income assessment (regulation 80(1)(b) & 80(2)(b)).

Under regulation 38(7) students undertaking certain types of unpaid work experience in the public or voluntary sectors are potentially eligible for grants for living and other costs, including DSAs (even where the periods of full-time study in the academic year are less than 10 weeks in aggregate). See 'Assessing Eligibility Guidance'.

## STUDENTS WHO BECOME ELIGIBLE DURING THE COURSE

Under regulation 38(8) & 38(9), a student **may qualify** for DSAs from and including the academic year during which:

- the student's course becomes designated;
- the student, their spouse, civil partner or their parent is recognised as a refugee or is granted Humanitarian Protection (in this context 'spouse' or 'civil partner' does not include a co-habiting partner of the student - also refer to the 'Assessing Eligibility' guidance);
- the state of which the student is a national accedes to the European Union and where the student has been ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom and Islands throughout the three-year period immediately preceding the first day of the first academic year of the course;
- the student acquires the right of permanent residence;
- the student becomes the child of a Turkish Worker;
- the student becomes a person described in paragraph 6(1)(a) of Schedule 1; or
- the student becomes the child of a Swiss national.

However, such a student is not eligible retrospectively. With the exception of the allowance for major items of specialist equipment, a student is not eligible for DSAs for quarters falling before, or in which, the date eligibility was acquired due to an event listed above. A student is not eligible for DSAs for academic years of the course falling **before** the academic year in which the events listed above occur.

## FULL-TIME DISTANCE LEARNING COURSES

Disabled students undertaking a full-time course by distance learning are eligible for DSAs at the full-time rate. They may potentially be eligible for the other elements of the full-time student support package (except travel grant) depending on whether or not they are compelled to undertake distance learning because of their disability. There is further guidance about full-time distance learning courses in the 'Assessing Eligibility Guidance AY 2018/19'.

**FULL-TIME UNDERGRADUATE DSAS (REGULATIONS 40 & 41)**

Under regulation 40 & 41, an eligible student qualifies for DSAs to assist with the additional expenditure that the Secretary of State is satisfied the student is obliged to incur to attend and undertake a designated course because of a disability. There are four elements to the full-time undergraduate DSAs and they are available to help with the extra costs that a student incurs because of a disability (including a long-term health condition, mental health condition or specific learning difficulty).

**TYPES OF DISABLED STUDENTS' ALLOWANCES – FULL-TIME UNDERGRADUATE**

There are four allowances for students attending full-time courses. The maximum allowances that such students may receive in AY 2018/19 are given in the table below.

Allowance	Maximum payable
	Full-time
Non-medical helper allowance (each academic year)	£21,987
Specialist equipment allowance (for the duration of the course)	£5,529
Travel allowance	Uncapped
General allowance (each academic year)	£1,847

There is no provision to pay more than the maximum allowances set out in the Regulations. It is not possible, therefore, to use unspent DSAs from a previous academic year or anticipate grant entitlement for a future academic year to pay more than the maximum allowances in the current academic year. Moreover, only the general allowance may be used to supplement expenditure on specialist equipment and non-medical helpers should the student's needs exceed the maximum allowances under the Regulations. The specialist equipment allowance, non-medical helper allowance and the travel allowance should be used for the sole purpose as named and should not be used to supplement other DSAs.

## NON-MEDICAL HELPER ALLOWANCE

The non-medical helper allowance (regulation 41(2)(a)) is to provide funding for helpers such as readers, note-takers, laboratory assistants etc. for the student to undertake the course on an equal basis to other students and where the study needs assessor is satisfied that they are needed because of the student's disability. This allowance also provides for assistive technology (AT) training. **Students already in receipt of a particular type of NMH before 28<sup>th</sup> April 2016 can continue to receive that support with their current support worker until the end of their current course. Any continuing student who is awarded a new type of NMH support from the date the new NMH quality assurance framework is launched in April will only be able to receive support from an appropriately qualified support worker.**

In addition, where students continue from an undergraduate course to a postgraduate course without a break and continue at the same HEP, their current NMH provider can continue to provide support if they remain unregistered. However, where students break their study between postgraduate and undergraduate courses, or change their HEP, new DSA-QAG registered NMH providers must be engaged.

**Please see Annex 1 for more detail on the NMH roles, the descriptors and the cost maxima which apply to NEW NMH support.**

Where the student has to make regular or frequent payments for a non-medical helper, it may be helpful to arrange for some of their grant payments to be made in corresponding instalments. If grant payments are made in instalments, inform the student, or their institution, how such transactions should be recorded and verified for audit purposes.

The provision for the non-medical helper allowance does not remove the duty of local social services to provide assistance towards personal care costs that would have been incurred irrespective of a student's attendance on a course. However, in some circumstances a personal carer may also provide course-related help for a student. In such cases it may be appropriate to share the cost of the course-related help provided by the carer with the social services. The non-medical helper allowance should not be used to pay for support that should properly be funded by social services.

## SPECIALIST EQUIPMENT ALLOWANCE

The specialist equipment allowance (regulation 41(2)(b)) is to provide funding for additional major items of specialist equipment which the student will need, because of a disability, to undertake their course on an equal basis to other students. It may also be reasonable to meet associated insurance, extended warranty, repair and modification costs from the equipment allowance. Where students do not take out insurance and their equipment is stolen, the cost of replacing the stolen equipment will not normally be met from the DSAs. Students should therefore be advised to take out insurance cover for their DSA equipment. The insurance premiums can be paid from the DSA.

**Please note the specialist equipment allowance is for the duration of the course. New arrangements apply for students applying for DSAs for the first time for academic year 2015/16 or later with regard to the provision of computers.**

**Please see Annex 2 for details of the type of support available through the Specialist Equipment Allowance.**

## COURSE TRANSFERS AND SPECIALIST EQUIPMENT ALLOWANCE

It should be made clear to students that the specialist equipment allowance covers the whole course duration. If a student transfers their eligibility to another course, any amount awarded for specialist equipment in relation to the first course would still need to be taken into account as the period of eligibility has not been broken. For example, a student receives £3,000 from the specialist equipment allowance but then transfers their eligibility to another course. Their specialist equipment entitlement for the second course should not exceed **£2,529**, as £3,000 has already been awarded for specialist equipment and given that **£5,529** for AY 2018/19 is the maximum specialist equipment allowance.

All equipment purchased with the help of this allowance is and usually remains the property of the student.

## TRAVEL ALLOWANCE

The travel allowance (regulation 41(2)(c)) may be used to pay the additional costs of travel to and from the institution which are incurred because of a disability.

For example, if a student needs to travel by taxi rather than by public transport because of mobility or visual difficulties, then the DSAs can cover the additional expenditure that represents. In this instance, the amount of travel allowance should be any excess between public transport costs and taxi costs for the journey. Public transport costs are deemed to be those incurred by the general student population, not those that the individual student would have incurred, had they been able to use the public transport. Therefore the availability of concessionary fares in specific circumstances (e.g. a free bus pass) will not reduce the amount taken into account as public transport costs.

Some students may be required as a result of a disability to use a private car to travel to and from the institution. In this instance, the amount of travel allowance should be any excess between public transport costs and the cost of the same journey by car. The cost of a journey by car is calculated by using the mid-point range of AA motoring costs which includes an element for wear and tear on the car. This is currently (financial year 2015-16) **24p per mile**. Suitable parking facilities should be arranged by the HEI.

Generally, where the student has opted to use a mobility element of their Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) to lease a Motability car, they will be expected to use that car to attend their institution and travel costs will be calculated using the AA motoring costs of 24p per mile (as above). Suitable parking facilities should be arranged by the HEI.

The study needs assessor will need to be satisfied that the travel expenditure arises in each case solely by reason of a disability to which the student is subject. The travel allowance should not be used to meet non-disability related travel expenditure incurred by a disabled student. For example, it is unlikely that a dyslexic student will incur additional travel expenditure as a result of their specific learning difficulty. A disabled student may still qualify for Travel Grant (regulations 48 - 55) in the same way as any other student (see the 'Assessing Financial Entitlement' guidance chapter AY 2018/19).

The travel allowance is available for:

- The cost of the student's travel to and from an institution
- The cost of the student's travel to and from a work placement
- The cost of the student's travel to and from a field trip

## **GENERAL ALLOWANCE**

The general allowance (regulation 41(2)(d)) may be used both for miscellaneous expenditure not covered by the other allowances and to supplement the specialist equipment allowance and non-medical helper allowance, if necessary. The cost of a study needs assessment, or any subsequent reviews, is drawn from the general allowance.

## **PROCESSING DSAS**

An individual payment limit is set for each of the DSAs up to the maximum for each allowance, including top ups from the general allowance. Once the payment limits have been set in accordance with the needs assessment recommendations, payments will only be made against those limits.

## **PART-TIME UNDERGRADUATE DSAS (REGULATION 147)**

Under regulation 147 an eligible part-time student qualifies for DSAs to assist with the additional expenditure that the SoS is satisfied the student is obliged to incur to undertake (i.e. to attend or study by distance learning) a designated part-time course because of a disability. DSAs for students undertaking a part-time course which they commenced prior to 1<sup>st</sup> September 2012 with the Open University are currently administered by the Open University and will continue to be until the course is completed. From AY 2014/15 onwards DSAs for students undertaking a part-time course with the Open University which commenced on or after 1 September 2012 will be administered by SLC.

The part-time DSA scheme closely follows that for full-time students. However there are some differences and these are explained below.

## ELIGIBILITY

For details of the personal eligibility criteria for receiving part-time support, including part-time DSAs, please refer to the guidance chapter 'Support for part-time students'.

Students who begin part time courses on or after 1<sup>st</sup> September 2012 must be studying at a minimum intensity of 25% FTE during the academic year to be eligible for PT DSAs (Regulation 147(4)).

## DESIGNATED PART-TIME COURSES

To be eligible for support, including DSAs, a student must be undertaking a designated part-time course. The criteria for course designation in respect of part-time support, including part-time DSAs, are set out in the 'Support for part-time students' guidance chapter.

## TYPES OF DISABLED STUDENTS' ALLOWANCES – PART-TIME UNDERGRADUATE

There are four allowances for students undertaking part-time courses. These mirror those available to full-time students, but have different maximum amounts. The maximum allowances that part-time students may receive in AY 2018/19 are given in the table below. The maximum amount of the non-medical helper allowance and general allowance are calculated as a percentage of the full-time rates, based on the actual intensity of study. Some examples of the maximum amounts available are given below.

Allowance	Maximum payable	
Non-medical helper allowance (each academic year) – Reg 147(6)(a)	£16,489	75% of a FT course = £16,489 60% of a FT course = £12,192 50% of a FT course = £10,992 25% of a FT course = £5,496

Specialist equipment allowance (for the duration of the course) – reg 147(6)(b)	£5,529	
Travel allowance – Reg 147(6)(c)	Uncapped	
General allowance (each academic year) – reg 147(6)(d)	£1,385	75% of a FT course = £1,385 60% of a FT course = £1,108 50% of a FT course = £924 25% of a FT course = £462

There are no provisions within the Regulations to pay more than the maximum allowances for the academic year. Please refer to the guidance in respect of full-time DSAs at **DSAs for Full Time students**.

### STUDENTS WHOSE STATUS AS AN ELIGIBLE (FULL-TIME) STUDENT IS CONVERTED TO THAT OF AN ELIGIBLE PART-TIME STUDENT (REGULATION 152(1)-(4))

When a student transfers from a full-time to a part-time course, their status must be converted from an eligible full-time student to that of an eligible part-time student. Where a student transfers from a full-time to a part-time course part way through the academic year:

- no instalment of **full-time** DSAs is payable after the student becomes an eligible part-time student;
- the maximum amounts of part-time DSAs are reduced by one third where the student becomes an eligible part-time student during the second quarter of the academic year and by two thirds where they become an eligible part-time student in a later quarter of that year; and
- where full-time DSAs have been paid to the student in a single instalment, the maximum amount of the corresponding part-time DSAs payable to them are reduced by the amount of full-time DSAs already paid (or further reduced if paragraph (b) above applies). If the resulting amount is nil or a negative amount, the part-time DSA is not payable.

## STUDENTS WHOSE STATUS AS AN ELIGIBLE PART-TIME STUDENT IS CONVERTED TO THAT OF AN ELIGIBLE (FULL-TIME) STUDENT (REGULATION 152(12)-(13))

When a student transfers from a part-time to a full-time course, their status must be converted from an eligible part-time student to that of an eligible full-time student. Where a student transfers from a part-time to a full-time course part way through the academic year:

- no instalment of **part-time** DSAs is payable after the student becomes an eligible full-time student;
- the maximum amounts of any full-time DSAs are reduced by one third where the student becomes an eligible full-time student during the second quarter of the academic year and by two thirds where they become an eligible full-time student in a later quarter of that year; and
- where part-time DSAs have been paid to the student in a single instalment, the maximum amount of the corresponding full-time DSAs payable to them is reduced by the amount of part-time DSAs already paid (or further reduced if paragraph (b) above applies). If the resulting amount is nil or a negative amount, the full-time DSA is not payable.

## DSAS FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS (FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME)

### ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for the postgraduate DSA students must meet the personal eligibility criteria set out in Schedule 1 of the Regulations and undertake a designated postgraduate course (see paragraphs below)

Postgraduate students studying by distance learning are eligible for DSAs, but only if the course is undertaken in the United Kingdom (regulation 159(11)). Students undertaking courses on a distance learning basis are deemed to be studying at their home address. Therefore, to receive DSAs postgraduate distance learners must remain living in the United Kingdom whilst undertaking their course.

Under regulation 159(4), a postgraduate student is not eligible for DSAs if they:

- a) are eligible to apply for a –
  - NHS bursary or award under section 63 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968 or article 44 of the Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1972;

- allowance under the Nursing and Midwifery Student Allowances (Scotland) Regulations 1992;
  - allowance, bursary or award of similar description made by a Research Council (a list of the relevant Research Councils is provided at Annex 1);
  - allowance, bursary or award of similar description made by their institution which includes a payment for meeting additional expenditure incurred because of a disability
  - the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) bursary for students on postgraduate social-work courses which includes a payment for meeting additional expenditure incurred because of a disability;
- b) are in breach of an obligation to repay a student loan;
- c) have not ratified an agreement for a student loan made with them when they were under the age of 18; or
- d) have shown themselves by their conduct to be unfitted to receive support.

Under regulation 159(18) an eligible postgraduate student is not eligible for support for more than one designated course at a time.

Under part 12 of the Regulations an eligible postgraduate student qualifies for DSAs to assist with the additional expenditure that the SoS is satisfied the student is obliged to incur to undertake (i.e. to attend or study by distance learning) a designated full- or part-time postgraduate course because of a disability. DSAs for students undertaking a postgraduate course with the Open University, where the course commenced before 1<sup>st</sup> September 2012 are currently administered by the Open University and will continue to be until the course ends, From AY 2014/15 onwards, DSAs for students undertaking a postgraduate course with the Open University, where the course commenced on or after 1<sup>st</sup> September 2012 will be administered by SLC.

The postgraduate DSA scheme differs from that for undergraduate students in that one single allowance is available.

Regulation 166 provides for a DSA of up to **£10,993** for the academic year 2018/19 to be paid to eligible postgraduate students undertaking designated full- and part-time postgraduate courses. There is no statutory provision to pay a postgraduate student in excess of **£10,993** during academic year AY 2018/19. There are no specific limits within the maximum **£10,993** on particular items or type of help on which the grant can be spent. The allowance is awarded depending on the recommendations of the needs assessment carried out by the study needs assessment centre. The cost of the needs assessment is payable from the postgraduate DSA, but, as with undergraduate DSAs, it cannot be used to pay for establishing a student's disability. The postgraduate DSA may be spent on specialist equipment, non-medical helpers, other general support or additional travel costs, or a combination of the above, up to the maximum amount for the academic year.

## DESIGNATED POSTGRADUATE COURSES FOR DSAS

Regulation 161(1) provides the criteria for course designation in respect of postgraduate DSAs. The requirements are:

- a first degree or higher qualification should be an entry requirement to the course;
- a course duration of at least one academic year;
- where the course commences on or after 1<sup>st</sup> September 2012, if the course is part-time, it must be of a minimum intensity of 25% FTE during the academic year and ordinarily possible to complete the course in not more than four times the time ordinarily required to complete an equivalent full-time course;
- where the course commences before 1<sup>st</sup> September 2012, if the course is part-time, it must be ordinarily possible to complete the course in not more than twice the time ordinarily required to complete an equivalent full-time course;
- the course is wholly provided by an authority-funded<sup>1</sup> institution in the UK; provided by a publicly funded institution in the UK on behalf of an authority-funded educational institution or by an authority funded institution in conjunction with an overseas institution;
- the course is not an initial teacher training course or a course taken as part of an employment-based teacher training scheme.

Full and part-time Legal Practice courses and Bar Vocational courses provided by authority funded institutions are designated postgraduate courses under the Regulations as the entry requirement to such courses is a first degree or higher.

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<sup>1</sup> "authority-funded" means—

(a)

in relation to educational institutions in England, maintained or assisted by recurrent grants from the Higher Education Funding Council for England;

(b)

in relation to educational institutions in Wales, maintained or assisted by recurrent grants from the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales;

(c)

in relation to educational institutions in Scotland, maintained or assisted by recurrent grants from the Scottish Funding Council; and

(d)

in relation to educational institutions in Northern Ireland, maintained or assisted by recurrent grants from the Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland or the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development in Northern Ireland.”;

The Secretary of State may specifically designate courses for the award of postgraduate DSA that are not automatically designated under the Regulations. Details of the specific designation process along with an application form can be found on the HEFCE's website <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/reg/desig/apply/>

The HEFCE website also includes links to the latest Department of Education (DfE) guidance on the new process. The arrangements apply to all new specific course designation applications for AY 2013/14 onwards. From AY 2014/15 onwards there will be two application windows, in August and February, and the process will take up to four months to complete (subject to the provider submitting the necessary information).

The current list of specifically designated courses is on the Student Finance England website at:

<http://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/policy-information/designated-courses.aspx>

Eligible students on courses that are designated during the academic year will only be eligible for DSAs for the quarters following the award of designation, with the exception of the specialist equipment allowance.

### Postgraduate ITT courses

Students on postgraduate ITT courses are potentially eligible for DSAs under the full-time or part-time scheme. They are not therefore eligible for the postgraduate DSA.

## TRANSFER OF ELIGIBILITY

Regulation 163 provides for eligible postgraduate students to transfer their eligibility to another postgraduate course. A transfer is permitted provided that the period of eligibility for the first course has not expired or been terminated and a request to transfer eligibility is made by the student. It is also a requirement that the exporting institution recommends a transfer in writing and that the importing institution agrees to the transfer. If a student transfers their eligibility to another course, any DSA amount awarded for the first course is taken into account for the second course as the period of eligibility has not been broken. For example, a student receives support of £3,000 but transfers to another course. For the remainder of the academic year, the student has **£7,993** remaining (**£10,993** maximum grant available less £3,000 already received for the first course). Students transferring courses may continue to receive support without the necessity of a further needs assessment unless their disability has changed in some way or the course is substantially different.

## STUDENTS MOVING DIRECTLY FROM UNDERGRADUATE TO POSTGRADUATE STUDY

See Annex 3 for details of the availability of study needs assessment reviews for students moving from undergraduate study to postgraduate study.

## POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS COMPLETING DISSERTATIONS AFTER THEIR COURSE ENDS

A student retains their status as an eligible postgraduate for a period equal to that which is ordinarily required to complete the relevant designated postgraduate course. If the ordinary duration of the course includes a period to complete a dissertation or thesis, the Regulations provide for the student to be eligible to receive a postgraduate DSA for the period spent completing their dissertation or thesis. For example, if a course ordinarily takes two years to complete and the second year of the course is writing up the thesis, the postgraduate student will qualify for support during the writing up period.

Generally the period of eligibility is limited to the ordinary duration of the course. However, regulation 162(9) provides some discretion to extend or renew a student's eligibility for such further periods as may be considered appropriate after the expiry of the period ordinarily required to complete the course. Such discretion will be considered on a case by case basis, taking into consideration the reasons for the request to extend the course after the expiry of the period ordinarily required to complete the course.

Where the part-time postgraduate course begins on or after 1<sup>st</sup> September 2012, if the additional period of writing up a thesis or dissertation would mean the overall duration of the part-time course will be more than four times the time needed to complete the full-time equivalent course, the part time course will cease to be designated and the student will not qualify for further DSA support.

In the case of part-time postgraduate designated courses regulation 159(9) provides that where the course begins on or after 1<sup>st</sup> September 2012, an eligible student will not qualify for postgraduate DSAs where the course intensity of study in the academic year for which the support is requested is less than 25%.

## ADMINISTRATION OF DSAS

### ASSESSMENT OF COURSE-RELATED NEEDS

Once the student's personal and course eligibility has been established and they have provided satisfactory evidence of their disability, they are eligible at that stage for DSAs and should be invited to arrange a needs assessment as soon as possible. The needs assessment will help determine what support the student might require, if any, and the amount of DSA grant for which

the student is entitled. During the DSA needs assessment interview, needs assessors are requested to explain the role of Disability Adviser. Given that the assessment may be carried out some months before the start of the course, some students may subsequently attend a different institution or course. In such cases, SFE may seek further information via a further assessment or disability advisor as appropriate. Students should not be advised to attend a second study needs assessment without prior approval from SFE.

A DSA needs assessment report will contain information about the student's disability which is classed as sensitive personal data under the Data Protection Act. This means that the written consent of the student should always be obtained before releasing the DSA needs assessment report or any other disability-related information to a third party. A copy of the needs assessment report should be sent to the Disability Adviser and SLC by the assessment centre once agreed. Where the student gives consent, a copy of the DSA2 letter can be provided to the study needs assessor which sets out the agreed DSA support. This allows the study needs assessor to see any recommendations which are deemed to be outside the scope of the Regulations and may also help reduce instances of similar recommendations in the future. There are two DSA application forms; both entitled 'Disabled Students' Allowances AY 2015/16 Application Form'. The full form - DSA1F - is aimed at students who have not applied for other student support and the slim form - DSASL - is aimed at those students who have already completed an application for student support and therefore do not need to provide some information again. Both forms ask students to give their consent to the release of information about their DSA application to third parties such as disability advisers and DSA assessors.

The cost of the DSA needs assessment is met from the general allowance. The general allowance may also be used to pay the student's travel costs to the needs assessment. Where students do not subsequently start a course, they are not required to repay the needs assessment fee. If they reapply for a higher education course the following year, the needs assessment already carried out should be sufficient to process their new DSA application. SFE should determine if a further study needs assessment is needed and inform the student whether or not to attend a further assessment. Since AY 2013/14, the cost of the study needs assessment for part-time students will be taken from the general allowance, before the general allowance is pro-rated according to the intensity of study. Please see the **part time section** for information regarding the part-time maxima.

When notifying students that they will need to undergo a DSA needs assessment, SFE inform the student what is involved in the assessment and that if they do not attend an assessment they will not be able to receive the additional support they may require. Students should use DSA-QAG registered or accredited assessment centres (**see following paragraphs**) Students should be directed to the DSA Quality Assurance Group (DSA-QAG) website, which holds an up-to-date list of assessment centres and allows students to select their nearest centre.

The DSA covers the cost of only one study needs assessment, other than in such circumstances as SFE deem a further assessment is needed. Students should be advised that they cannot have a second assessment without prior permission from SFE.

Providing that students have granted permission, a copy of the needs assessment and awards letter (DSA2 letter) should be sent to the Disability Adviser at their institution once they have received confirmation of a place. This will help ensure that the support the student requires is put in place.

## **DSA QUALITY ASSURANCE GROUP (DSA-QAG)**

DSA-QAG is a non-profit making company with charitable status. Its Board consists of Chairman, two NUS trustees and two independent trustees. Institutions, assessment centres and equipment suppliers are 'associate members' of DSA-QAG, with observers from DfE and the SLC. A central administrative unit supports this work. DSA-QAG has responsibility for a quality assurance framework against which levels of service for DSAs assessment centres, equipment suppliers and non-medical help providers are audited.

Since AY 2015/16, only DSA-QAG registered assessment centres can provide DSAs-funded study needs assessments in England and Wales.

Assistive technology provision in England and Wales, including assistive software, is expected to be provided and installed by DSA QAG registered assistive technology service providers. Providers in Scotland and Northern Ireland also have to be registered appropriately. Students may opt to source only their computer from the open market, all other equipment should be sourced from a registered provider.

More information on DSA-QAG and a list of registered and accredited assessment centres and assistive technology and NMH suppliers is available at the following website: <http://www.dsa-qag.org.uk/>.

DSA-QAG organisations that are accredited to deliver DSAs-funded services are required to comply with the standards set out in the DSA-QAG Quality Assurance Frameworks in order to retain accreditation to deliver DSAs related services <http://www.dsa-qag.org.uk/Framework-Documents/framework-documents.html>

Assessment Centres, assistive technology service providers and non-medical help providers are required to be registered with DSA-QAG in order to deliver DSAs services for English-funded students. Scottish assessment centres should be validated by the Scottish Government's Disabled Student Advisory Group in order to provide services for English-funded students. Assessment centres in Northern Ireland do not currently require accreditation.

## DISABILITY SERVICES

Those working in disability services within institutions will have a well contextualised understanding of their disabled student body and have a key role in ensuring support is delivered effectively. Students may contact disability advisers before making an application for DSAs. However, many students will choose to apply for DSAs without speaking to a disability adviser, particularly those who are applying early and have not had their institution confirmed.

The starting point for the disability adviser, if contacted, is the effective provision of reasonable adjustments, both for students who may claim DSAs and for those who don't (for example overseas students). The student should be advised to claim DSAs if it appears that an identified need may not be met through provision of a reasonable adjustment and where funding through DSAs is available. Disability advisers will also be an important point of liaison during the study needs assessment process, when the details of DSAs support packages are being established.

Disability advisers have an understanding of the institutional environment and will have access to academic teaching staff and to detailed course information. They should have an up-to-date knowledge of the level and type of support offered by their institution as reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act, or more generally as part of the institution's support for disabled students or students in general, to help inform the student about any barriers they might face, and provision they can access to reduce barriers. Institutions should also be working towards making this information readily accessible to relevant stakeholders, including students and Assessment Centres.

If contacted by a student, disability advisers must not advise the student to purchase equipment or services on the assumption that funding through DSAs will be made available. Eligibility for DSAs can only be determined by Student Finance England (SFE) and entitlement to funding through DSAs will be based on the recommendations of a DSAs study needs assessor.

## THE EQUALITY ACT 2010

The Equality Act 2010 came into force from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010. The Equality Act generally carries forward the protection that the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 provided for disabled people.

It is for SFE, HEPs and FE colleges to take their own advice on how the Equality Act and related legislation applies to them.

## **THE EQUALITY ACT 2010 AND WORK PLACEMENTS**

Work placements are currently included in the Equality Act 2010 which means that college and university staff must also take into account a person's disability when arranging work placements and liaise with the work placement providers to implement the support. This includes people who are on a work placement as part of a vocational training programme. A vocational training programme is likely to include most students who are undertaking a work placement as an integral part of a further or higher education course. The providers of work placements are now required to ensure that they do not have discriminatory practices and also to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people on a work placement. The length of the work placement may be a factor when determining whether an adjustment is reasonable.

## ARRANGEMENTS FOR ENGAGING NON-MEDICAL HELPERS

### STUDENTS EMPLOYING THEIR OWN NON-MEDICAL HELPERS

Students in receipt of DSA for non-medical help will in the vast majority of cases utilise helpers who are employed by their institution, employed by an outside organisation, or are self-employed. A small number of students may choose to employ their own non-medical helper (i.e. to act as the non-medical helper's direct employer), but as the rules regulating employment are complex DfE and SFE do not recommend that students directly employ non-medical helpers.

DSA funding will not be available for individuals without an appropriate employment status i.e. they must be registered with HMRC to pay tax and national insurance on their earnings.

Students who do wish to employ their own non-medical help should seek independent advice before so doing, but the following gives an outline of some areas for consideration and where further advice may be found. DSAs NMH services should be provided by support workers who have the appropriate employed or self-employed status.

**Minimum wage** - Students will need to ensure that they comply with legislation regarding the minimum wage. Further information can be found on the Gov website at <https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates>.

**Tax and National Insurance Contributions (NICs)** - The employers of non-medical helpers are responsible for calculating the amount of tax and NICs, deducting it from the employee's wages and making payments to HMRC. Employers may also be required to pay Employer's National Insurance contributions. Further information on tax and national insurance is available from HMRC.

**Employment rights** - Employees have certain other employment rights. Some examples of these are itemised pay statements, time off for public duties, maternity and paternity leave, paid holiday entitlements, and so on. Further information is available at <https://www.gov.uk/browse/working>.

**Insurance** - It is also the employer's responsibility to take out insurance against liability for bodily injury or disease sustained by their employees during the course of employment. More information about employer's liability insurance is available from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

### USING NON-MEDICAL HELPERS EMPLOYED BY HEPS

Many universities already employ non-medical helpers on behalf of disabled students or administer a register of non-medical helpers who are self-employed. This involves advertising, recruiting, training, organising and paying the non-medical helpers. Some universities operate a register of support workers and have formal contracts or agreements with the non-medical helpers. In such arrangements, as well as paying the non-medical helper's wages, the DSA could

also pay for the non-medical helpers' tax, national insurance contributions and other employer-related costs.

## USING SELF EMPLOYED NON-MEDICAL HELPERS

Non-medical helpers who are self-employed are responsible for their own tax and national insurance contributions etc. Using a self-employed non-medical helper would mean that students, or any other body, are not the employer of the non-medical helper. **For the purpose of tax and National Insurance contributions it is the engager's responsibility to decide whether someone is an employee or self-employed.** HMRC can provide advice and, in deciding whether to approve a non-medical helper as self-employed, HMRC would look at what the job involves. If a person negotiates their own fees, runs their own business and works for a number of people it is more likely they would be classed as self-employed. If the non-medical helper has regular payments from the student and works under the student's direction this would indicate that they are more likely to be employed.

DSAs funding will not be available for individuals without an appropriate employment status, i.e. they must be registered with HMRC to pay tax and national insurance on their earnings. DSAs funding will not be provided for family members or friends to provide NMH unless they are appropriately registered with DSA-QAG and comply with the quality assurance framework and audit arrangements. Evidence of appropriate qualifications and employment status will be required.

## ADMINISTRATION CHARGES FOR ARRANGING NON-MEDICAL HELPERS

In the context of DSAs, many HEIs arrange and administer non-medical helper support; and HEIs may incur extra costs in providing this service. Such costs might include recruiting potential non-medical helpers, advertising for helpers, selecting suitable candidates, training unqualified non-medical helpers and maintaining records of their personal and financial details. The Department accepts that it is legitimate for HEIs to add the relevant element of these administration costs into their charges for non-medical helper support. Furthermore the Department accepts that such charges, as an integral part of the provision of non-medical helper support, constitute a cost that a student requiring non-medical helper support is obliged to incur and can therefore be met from the student's DSA.

However, although it is permissible for HEIs to recover administrative costs associated with the provision of non-medical helpers funded through DSAs, DSAs cannot be used as a contribution towards the infrastructure, general administration and pastoral costs of the HEI. That is, DSAs must not be used to cross-subsidise the infrastructure of HEIs' disability services.

HEI governing bodies are responsible for the proper stewardship and value for money of public funds, and the amount HEIs claim for DSA administration needs to be relevant and proportionate,

and to have been incurred by the HEI specifically in providing the DSA service. Fixed percentages without an evidence base do not provide a sound basis for the calculation and award of relevant administration costs. Finding the clearly calculated cost of activity is a more transparent and sustainable means of funding than arbitrary fixed percentages.

Costs should be based on actual delivery and not assessed delivery. It is reasonable for students or SFE to ask for evidence that the support for which they are invoiced by HEIs or other providers was delivered. Administration charges and associated overheads should be claimed only once: the same activity should not be claimed twice. A reasonable level of actually-incurred *MARGINAL* costs should be the *MAXIMUM*. HEIs should clearly distinguish the types of services and their costs on the invoices submitted. SFE will need to assure themselves about the amounts claimed by individual providers and might, for example, ask providers to submit details of how their administrative costs have been calculated with the first claims each year.

A fundamental review of costs should be undertaken by HEIs periodically to ensure that the service continues to provide value for money (for example, that efficiency improvements are effectively managed, to avoid a "last year plus x per cent" approach, and to assess whether the level of resources used to provide the service remain appropriate in the light of changing demand and other factors) and to avoid double-counting.

SLC should be satisfied that claims for DSAs are made in accordance with guidance and should challenge costs which do not appear to them to be reasonable.

### **CANCELLATION CHARGES WHEN STUDENTS FAIL TO ATTEND A PRE-ARRANGED SESSION WITH A NON-MEDICAL HELPER**

As a general rule NMH provision will only be paid for through DSAs if the student has booked their support sessions with their NMH provider and attended the sessions. 'Booked' means that the student and NMH provider have agreed the date, time, location and support role in advance of the session. Please see below how sessions that are not attended by the student will be treated for funding purposes.

DSAs will not generally be provided to meet the cost of cancelled support sessions if the cancellation is made with more than 24 hours' notice.

There will be occasions where a student does not attend a booked support session and/or does not give more than 24 hours' notice of cancellation, for example, because they were ill or had a personal emergency or unforeseen circumstances. In these cases the student is engaging with their support provider and only cancelled at short notice, or did not attend, due to a reason outside of their control. When this occurs it is understood that the NMH provider has arranged for a Non-medical Helper to attend the support session and so has incurred a cost for arranging the support. The cost of these booked support sessions will be met from the student's DSAs as it is understood that the student booked the session expecting to attend (subject to the repeated missed sessions rule below).

There may be occasions where a student does not attend a session and could have cancelled the session with more than 24 hours' notice. The cost of such sessions may still be met through the student's DSAs where the NMH provider has incurred a cost for arranging the support and paying the support worker for those sessions (subject to the repeated missed session rule below).

However, in all scenarios, DSAs funding will not be provided for NMH provision that is repeatedly not being used once booked, or cancelled with less than 24 hours' notice, or where students indicate that they no longer need or want NMH support. For the purposes of DSAs funding, repeatedly is considered to be more than two sessions which have been missed per term. DfE consider that it is unlikely that most students would need to cancel their NMH session with less than 24 hours' notice more than twice per term.

DSAs funding will not be provided where the institution is responsible for cancelling the lecture/tutorial etc. that the session was booked for. The institution must take responsibility for notifying the student that the lecture/tutorial etc is cancelled to enable the student to cancel the session with the NMH provider.

All missed sessions will be carefully considered by SFE before payment and where more than two sessions have been missed per term, to ensure that all parties understand their responsibilities and reasons for missed sessions are being investigated and documented. In cases like this, DSAs funding may be suspended.

## NMH 'SESSIONS'

A 'session' will be deemed to be the entire day.

Therefore a provider who has been booked to provide a support role at any point during that day will have an equal status. For each support role, that day will be deemed the first missed session. Similarly, where repeat sessions are booked during the day, all sessions for that support role will be deemed as a single session, but charges should not be made where the support provider is able to make alternative arrangements for the remainder of the day.

Any support that was not scheduled for that day will remain unaffected. No 'missed sessions' will be counted against unscheduled support for that day.

Example: A student has four booked sessions during the day:

Booked session 1 BSL + notetaker

Booked session 2 BSL + notetaker + library assistant

Booked session 3 BSL + mentoring

Booked session 4 notetaker + study skills support.

All the BSL support booked for that day will be counted as one missed session for the purposes of DSAs-funding.

All the notetaking support booked for that day will be classed as one missed session for the purposes of DSAs-funding.

The same will apply for the library assistant, mentoring and study skills support.

The student has been also recommended to have workshop assistant support, but none was booked on this particular day, therefore any allocation of workshop assistant support remains unaffected.

### **What action should the support worker or service provider take when a session is missed?**

At the first missed session, the support worker or service provider should make all reasonable efforts to contact the student to find out the reason for the student missing the session and confirm arrangements for the next session booked. The support worker should not attend the next session until the arrangement is confirmed with the student. If the student states they no longer require the support, support should be terminated and SFE informed.

The same process should be followed for the second missed session.

The support worker should not suspend the student's support if the student wishes to book a future session. If the support worker no longer wishes to continue providing the support, they should notify SFE immediately so that another support worker can be identified. Alternatively they should contact the disability adviser to discuss ongoing support.

### **What is deemed to be a term when considering missed sessions?**

Generally the academic year falls into 3 terms/semesters. However, some courses have non-standard delivery models that do not fall into 3 periods.

For ease we will refer to terms. This refers to the study periods that run either side of the standard holidays i.e. September – December, January to April, and May to July/August. The start of the academic year is not relevant for this purpose.

DSAs-funding is payable on a first come, first served basis. Therefore where a student is nearing the statutory cap and a number of support workers are requiring payment this will still be managed on a first-come, first served basis. Providers are encouraged to submit invoices in a timely and regular manner to ensure payment can be made.

Whilst DfE acknowledges that exceptions may need to be considered, it is expected that providers and students are working together to minimise the number of missed sessions and that exceptions will only be considered rarely.

## **NMH SUPPORT FOLLOWING MISSED SESSIONS**

SFE will not suspend support after two missed sessions. It is assumed that the need for support continues and that sessions are being managed by the support worker and the student. However, payment will not be made for any missed sessions occurring beyond the first two, other than in exceptional circumstances.

## **THE ROLE OF THE HEI DISABILITY ADVISER IN MANAGING MISSED SESSIONS**

Where there is consent to share information with the institution, support workers may wish to liaise with the disability adviser if it appears that the student is not managing their sessions effectively and sessions are regularly being cancelled or missed without cancellation. This may indicate other problems or may indicate that the student does not require, or is not satisfied with the support they have been recommended. Early intervention in such cases may result in different support being offered.

DfE/SLC will separately consider what action might be taken if the nature of the student's disability is such that they might regularly need to miss booked sessions without warning. Study needs assessors should indicate on the needs assessment report if they identify that this is likely to occur.

## **PAYMENTS OF DSAS**

Regulation 108 (full time DSAs), 127 (full-time distance learning DSAs) 147 (part-time DSAs) and 167 (postgraduate DSAs) provide discretion as to the timing of DSA payments and also whether payments should be paid in instalments. Where high costs in respect of a non-medical personal helper's allowance are incurred, consideration should be given to the practical implications for the student who may have to make frequent payments to support workers. However, it is not appropriate to provide payment of the full allowance available to the student in advance of the services being carried out. SFE will decide whether provisional monthly or termly payments can be paid, basing this on an estimate, where appropriate. SFE would need to be satisfied that the student had attended the sessions for which provisional payments had been made.

## **TIMING OF PAYMENTS FOR SPECIALIST EQUIPMENT**

There is no bar under the Regulations to making such payments in advance of the student's actual attendance on their course. In some cases, it may be necessary or desirable for students to purchase items of specialist equipment before the start of their courses, so that they may make use of them from the very beginning of their studies. Once it has been established that a student

who meets the criteria of an eligible student under the Regulations is eligible specifically for DSAs, and the type and level of support required has been determined, the purchase and supply of equipment may be arranged shortly before the start of the course, once the student's place is unconditional. In particular, students with severe disabilities, such as blind students, may need longer time for training in the use of their DSA equipment and software. Needs Assessors may recommend that equipment is supplied before the start of the course to allow time for training in the use of the equipment. However, it is not expected that payments of DSAs are made well in advance of the start of the course, particularly where the student is still at school.

### **STUDENT LEAVES A COURSE AFTER RECEIVING EQUIPMENT**

If a student receives DSA equipment whilst on their course and then withdraws from or abandons the course, there is no provision within the Regulations for recovery of the equipment, regardless of the length of time the student spent on the course. This is because the award was made with statutory authority and the purpose for which the equipment was supplied had already materialised.

### **EQUIPMENT SUPPLIED BEFORE THE STUDENT STARTS THE COURSE / DELIVERED AFTER THE STUDENT HAS LEFT THE COURSE**

A DSA assessment may be provided before a student has started their course to ensure that any equipment or other support they need can be arranged and delivered for the beginning of term. In some cases it may be appropriate to supply DSA equipment before the start of term where training on the equipment is necessary before the student starts their course. However, if the student subsequently does not start the course, this will constitute an overpayment for the purposes of regulation 117 (full-time students), regulation 135 (full-time distance learning students) regulation 156 (part-time students) and regulation 159 (postgraduate students).

Similarly, a student may start their course, then abandon it and then receive DSA payments or equipment after they have abandoned the course (possibly because SLC had not been notified that the student had left the course). This will constitute an overpayment for the purposes of regulation 117(7) (full-time students), regulation 135(8) (full-time distance learning students), regulation 156(7) (part-time students) and regulation 168(6) (postgraduate students).

SFE can accept the return of the equipment to the supplier, a monetary repayment or a combination of both against the overpayment. For example, where the student has received two items of equipment through the DSA and it is possible to return one item to the supplier and secure a full refund but it is not possible to return the other item, the student should only have to pay for the second item of equipment.

It should be clearly explained to students who are supplied with equipment before the start of their course that they may be liable for the cost of the equipment if they do not subsequently begin the course.

## **VAT AND DISABLED STUDENTS' ALLOWANCES**

Neither DfE nor the Student Loans Company can give advice on VAT matters. Any queries regarding the charging of VAT should be directed to HMRC.

## **DSA EQUIPMENT ORDERED AND PAID DIRECT BY SLC**

DSA funds belong to the student and items purchased with these funds remain the property of the student. If SFE orders and pays for the equipment on behalf of the student, VAT relief may be available where all the relevant conditions are met. VAT relief, if appropriate, is applied at the time of purchase by the supplier. Where VAT is charged, it cannot be reclaimed from HMRC by SFE or the student.

Further advice and help on VAT relief for disabled people can be obtained from VAT Notice 701/7/2002: VAT reliefs for disabled people. A copy of this notice and further advice may be obtained from the HMRC Charities Helpline, that also deals with VAT relief's for disabled people, on 0845 3020203 or by visiting the HMRC website at:

[http://customs.hmrc.gov.uk/channelsPortalWebApp/channelsPortalWebApp.portal?\\_nfpb=true&\\_pageLabel=pageVAT\\_ShowContent&id=HMCE\\_CL\\_000184&propertyType=document](http://customs.hmrc.gov.uk/channelsPortalWebApp/channelsPortalWebApp.portal?_nfpb=true&_pageLabel=pageVAT_ShowContent&id=HMCE_CL_000184&propertyType=document)

## **INFORMATION TO HELP WITH FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **INTERNET CONNECTION**

For new DSA students from AY 2014/15 onwards, internet connection will no longer be covered by DSAs, other than in exceptional circumstances. The wide availability of internet access through institutions, student accommodation and other venues has removed the necessity of providing individual personal internet access. Exceptions will be considered on a case by case basis.

### **NON-RECOMMENDED SUPPLIERS AND UPGRADES**

A student is free to use a different supplier from that recommended in the DSA needs assessment report, to purchase their computer only, all other DSA equipment must be sourced by a supplier registered with DSA-QAG. Students are advised to discuss potential changes of supplier ahead of putting arrangements in place. SLC will need to be satisfied that the expenditure is reasonable. Purchases made directly by students should always be supported by receipts which SLC may request under the provisions of Schedule 3 of the Student Support Regulations. If a student wishes to purchase equipment of a higher specification than that recommended, they must use their own funds to meet the extra costs. Students will not be reimbursed for any equipment or services that are not recommended in a study needs assessment, or were purchased ahead of the study needs assessment.

### **ELECTRICALLY POWERED WHEELCHAIRS AND SCOOTERS**

The responsibility for providing wheelchairs and mobility scooters rests with the National Health Service (NHS) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (e.g. through Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP)). The need for a wheelchair or mobility scooter is unlikely to be a solely study related need.

### **STUDENTS IN RECEIPT OF HELP TOWARDS TRAVEL COSTS FROM OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES OR LOCAL AUTHORITY**

Students may be receiving funding for travel assistance from other Government agencies as well as help with travel costs through DSAs. It is the Department's view that to duplicate this provision may in some circumstances constitute double funding. From AY 2014/15 onwards, SFE will ask DSA students to indicate on their DSA application form whether they are in receipt of any form of support towards travel costs from other government agencies or their local authority. This information would then be used by the needs assessor and SFE in order to assess what additional

help towards travel costs the student needs. Receipt of another means of support does not preclude a student from receiving DSAs, however it informs the decision as to what additional help the student might require. **(See paragraphs on travel allowance)**

### **USING DSAS TO SUPPORT PARTICIPATION IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

The Regulations allow for the DSAs to be used for additional expenditure which SLC is satisfied the student is *obliged* to incur in connection with their attendance on (or their undertaking) a designated course. This would not allow the DSAs to be used to support a student when participating in Freshers' week or other extra-curricular activities where there is *no link* with the course of study. However, in the event that the extra-curricular activity is a course requirement, the payment of DSA to enable the student to participate in that activity may be considered. Examples might be a music student participating in a choral society, or a drama student involved in a drama group. It is recommended that the DSAs can be used to provide support for students during induction meetings they might have with their course tutors during Freshers' week (as well as during other parts of their course) as long as this is course-related.

### **REIMBURSING HEPs OR STUDENTS FOR SUPPORT OR EQUIPMENT PROVIDED BEFORE A DSA ASSESSMENT WAS CARRIED OUT OR SLC APPROVAL HAS BEEN PROVIDED**

Students will not be reimbursed for items bought before SLC has approved support. HEPs can claim reimbursement for NMH support that they have provided in advance of the study needs assessment; on condition that the type and level of support is subsequently recommended by the study needs assessor. Travel costs will only be considered from the date the application for DSAs is received by SFE. **Accommodation costs will be considered from the start of the academic year, but only where the need for specialist accommodation is evidenced and justified in the study needs assessment report.**

### **STUDENT FAILS TO PAY AN ASSESSMENT CENTRE OR SUPPLIER**

Although it is recommended to obtain the consent of the student to make payments direct to suppliers and other service providers, some students have insisted on exercising their rights to receive their DSA funding and make payments direct. In some cases, the DSA assessment has been undertaken but the student has not paid for the assessment. This would not constitute an overpayment and is a matter between the assessment centre and the student. There are no provisions in the Regulations which would enable, in such circumstances to set the student's debt to the provider against future grants or to make other arrangements for recovery. The same advice would apply if a student failed to pay a supplier for equipment.

## **SUPPLIER OF EQUIPMENT BECOMES BANKRUPT**

Where DSA funding has been paid to a supplier of specialist equipment (paid either by SFE or the student) and the supplier has gone bankrupt before supplying the equipment, under insolvency law, the student could become a creditor of the bankrupt's estate and potentially recover the monies subject to prior creditor's claims or receive the equipment already paid for, assuming the supplier still has the equipment. Students in this position may need to seek legal advice. If the student is unable to obtain their equipment or recover their monies, a further grant could be paid, but subject to the statutory maxima.

## **THE DSA APPLICATION PROCESS**

### **APPLICATION PROCEDURES FOR STUDENTS APPLYING FOR DSAS IN RESPECT OF FULL-TIME COURSES**

It is important that applications for DSA are dealt with quickly, to ensure students are properly equipped to embark on their course.

Students are asked on the PN1 and the PR1 if they wish to apply for DSAs. Continuing students applying for the non-income assessed element of the student loan are asked on the PR1a if they wish to apply for DSAs. These questions allow DSA applications to be prioritised. Where a student answers 'yes' to these questions, the SLC user at data entry is prompted to raise an 'Issue Information Pack

SFE have introduced a DSA returning application form, DSA1R in order to simplify the application process for returning students and to comply with regulation 8(1). This application will be sent to DSA only customers who do not have the opportunity to apply for other core support and therefore cannot indicate their intention to reapply for DSA in the new academic year.

## INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

It is important that students are provided with sufficient information on the stages in the DSA process, the DSA support awarded to them, the arrangements for delivering and paying for support, the importance of the DSA assessment and the support available from Disability Advisers at their institutions.

Letters issued to students should include the following.

- Information on the evidence of disability required from students together with a brief outline of the DSA process. This letter should be issued with 'Bridging the Gap' when students enquire about DSAs or have indicated on their application forms that they wish to apply for DSAs (samples available in the DSA letter catalogue). The DSA application form for AY 2018/19 should also be sent at this stage. (DSA1F for students who have not yet submitted a student support application or DSASL, which can be requested via the correspondence screen in the student's account, for those who have.)
- A brief outline of the DSA assessment process and its importance. This letter would confirm that SLC accepts the evidence of disability provided by the student and clearly sets out the arrangements for obtaining a DSA assessment.
- Full details of the DSA support awarded, delivery arrangements and method of paying for DSA support. This letter would be issued once SLC has agreed the DSA support to be awarded.
- A reference to Disability Advisers at HE institutions as a source of further assistance for the student. Whenever possible it would be helpful to include the name and contact details of the Disability Adviser at the student's institution.

Continuing students who received a DSA earlier in the course are not required to resubmit evidence of their disability unless their condition has changed and they are seeking reassessment. In order to minimise: a) an increased demand on assessment centres for needs assessments over a shorter period of time; and b) delays in general DSA processing. To minimise the risk of delays in the DSA application process the following action is taken.

- identify students wishing to apply for DSAs by checking the PN1, PR1 or PR1a and the accompanying evidence of a disability (if supplied) immediately on receipt of applications;
- determine eligibility for student support from potential DSA applicants as a priority, if necessary fast tracking such applicants;
- Once established that a student is eligible for support and if the student has provided acceptable evidence of their disability with their application forms, contact the student with a view to arranging an assessment of course needs (see sample letters in the catalogue);

- If a student has indicated they wish to apply for DSAs on their application form but not included evidence of a disability, establish eligibility for support and then issue a DSA application pack, consisting of the booklet 'Bridging the Gap', 'Application for Disabled Students' Allowances AY 2018/19 (form DSA1F or DSASL) and a covering letter, requesting the student returns evidence of their disability.

The DSA application form for AY 2018/19 (either DSA1F for students who have not yet submitted a student support application or DSASL for those who have) will ask the student to agree that SLC can:

- release information about their application to the Disability Adviser at their institution and to their DSA needs assessors;
- discuss the application with the supplier; and
- pay suppliers of equipment and support direct.

Where an application for DSAs is rejected or allows only part of the application, it should provide clear reasons to the applicant for the decision. This rejection should not delay the student's application for other types of student finance provided all the relevant eligibility criteria have been met. The student should be sent information on appeals policies and procedures. SLC should make full use of the notes facility on the student's record on the system to detail information that may assist with enquiries from students.

## **APPLICATION PROCEDURES FOR STUDENTS APPLYING FOR DSAS IN RESPECT OF FULL-TIME DISTANCE LEARNING COURSES, PART-TIME COURSES AND POSTGRADUATE COURSES**

Students wishing to apply for DSAs in respect of a full-time distance learning course or a part-time undergraduate course are requested to complete the DSASL if they have already completed a PTG1. (From AY 2012/13 New FTDL students apply for their tuition fee loan only on the PN1, however still complete the DSASL for their DSA support) Postgraduate students will be required to complete the DSA1F. In order to expedite the application process it is recommended to issue a cover letter with the DSA application forms, requesting that students provide evidence of their disability with their completed application form.

The DSA application process for students undertaking full-time distance learning, part-time and postgraduate courses involves completion of the DSA1F / DSASL form by the student and endorsement of course details by institutions (DSA1F only). Under the Equality Act 2010, disabled students have the right to confidentiality which means that they are not required to reveal their disability to their institution. We expect that most students will not object to asking their institutions to endorse their application form. However, some disabled students may object to asking their institution to complete the form because this would disclose that they are disabled and deny their rights to confidentiality under the Act.

In the event that a disabled student does object to their institution seeing their application form on the grounds that this breaches their right under the Equality Act, we recommend the following action:

- the student completes all parts of the DSA1F application form except Section 5 and returns the form to SLC;
  - the student obtains a letter from SLC requesting information from the HEI about their course and the student's study pattern;
  - the student passes the letter to the HEI; and
  - the information is returned by the HEI to SLC via the student.
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**ANNEX 1 NMH****THE DSAS NON-MEDICAL HELP ALLOWANCE**

From AY 2016/17 certain types of non-medical help are expected to be provided by the institution under their legal duty to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled students. Exceptions may be considered on a case by case basis.

**THE NON-MEDICAL HELP SERVICES FRAMEWORK**

The various support activities which may be funded through DSAs have been grouped into four bands, based on type of activity. Within the bands, individual support activities are set out and include a brief description of the support activity, the skills and qualifications required to deliver that support, the applicable cost range and maximum cost, and where the primary responsibility for providing the support lies. A list of mandatory qualifications and professional body membership is published by DSA-QAG.

**Students wishing to change NMH provider**

Requests to change provider must be submitted by the student. Students must have accessed or tried to access the support from their provider, and Student Finance England will only allow students to change their NMH Provider if:

- The student has expressed dissatisfaction with their current provider and has been unable to resolve the issues with the provider, or
- The current provider is unable to meet the students requirements to deliver the support e.g. date and time / format of delivery of support.

**Non-medical help costs**

DSAs funding will not generally be payable for more than the maximum amount of the cost range (+ VAT where applicable). The cost ranges set out in this document are exclusive of VAT. These cost ranges apply to DSAs-funded support only.

**Using the Non-medical help support roles**

The activity titles which have been used in this document are those generally agreed to be the most widely used and understood. These titles must be the ones referred to by providers when completing a study needs assessment and communicating with SFE. Assessors, institutions and NMH providers must use the support activity titles set out in this section when making recommendations or submitting invoices for payment.

Some support workers will only deliver one type of support. However, where a range of support is delivered by a single non-medical helper that is qualified to deliver more than one type of support, the invoice should stipulate clearly the hours provided for each type of support and the charges should fall within the cost range for that particular type of support.

## Scope

From AY 2016/17 some roles within this document became the primary responsibility of HE providers. These roles have still been described within this document as DSAs funding is still available by exception. Each descriptor sets out what is considered to be in scope of the support, should DSAs funding become payable. However, this does not transfer the primary responsibility back to DSAs where the role has already been flagged as a HE provider responsibility.

## Exceptions

Where this section refers to DSAs funding being available by exception only, this means the support will be considered on an individual case by case basis – see below and section 9.2. Any general exceptions that are identified in the future will be stated within the individual roles.

## Exceptions to the role descriptors

It is expected that almost all recommendations and subsequent invoices will be able to fit into the role descriptors presented in this document. However, there may be rare cases when an individual exception to the use of the role descriptors needs to be made. Any activity not covered within the following descriptors will be dealt with as an exception and must be agreed with SFE prior to support being delivered.

## Exceptional Case Process

The Exceptional Case Process (ECP) is intended to provide support to DSAs eligible students who are in dispute with their HEP over reasonable adjustments. It provides interim funding to pay for support which will enable the student to study whilst the dispute is being decided. It applies to students eligible to receive DSAs support from Student Loans Company who are studying on a higher education course. Students can be studying at a university, a college providing higher education courses, or an alternative provider of higher education.

The ECP can be triggered once the student enters into a formal dispute with their institution. The Exceptional Case team will consider whether the support falls within the scope of DSAs, and if so, whether interim support should be provided. In rare occurrences, where the needs of the student are very exceptional, the ECP team may deem that DSAs funding should be awarded for the duration of the course. However, it is not the purpose of interim funding available through the ECP to replace reasonable adjustments that should be made by an institution. See section 9.2 and Annex B for more details.

## **DSAs should not be used for charges for any support services which the institution makes available to all students.**

DSAs are not available for counselling, coaching or the costs of extra academic tuition, subject specific coaching or support in the main subject area(s) being studied. Institutions should meet any costs arising from these activities as part of providing the course.

Similarly, where an institution makes special adaptations to course hand-outs or other course equipment for use by a disabled student during the delivery and assessment of the curriculum, it

should meet any costs associated with it.

### **Non-medical help quality assurance framework**

It is important that students receive good quality support that is provided by individuals who are qualified to provide the right level and type of support, as well as recognising and respecting the boundary between supporting a student to access their studies and providing academic support, advocacy, coaching or counselling. DSAs NMH services should also be provided by support workers who have the appropriate employed or self-employed status.

Any supplier wishing to provide new DSAs-funded non-medical help services from April 2016 is required to register with DSA-QAG, agree to comply with the quality assurance framework and will be subject to a periodic audit to measure compliance against the registration requirements and quality assurance framework. Any student receiving DSAs funded NMH support which is agreed for the first time from April 2017 will only be permitted to receive support from a NMH worker registered with DSA-QAG.

Cost ranges and maximums are in place which set out the amount that DSAs will cover in respect of NMH support. This guidance sets out the support roles and the corresponding cost range, DSAs will not be available to pay for support that exceeds the cost framework, other than by exception and where it is agreed in advance with SFE.

### **NMH Excessive Hours**

It is important to note that disability type can have an impact on the amount of NMH that an individual student requires. The number hours of NMH support per day is taken in account with regards to the various regulations on working hours.

DSAs will not pay for hours of support where this is more than that shown on the DSA2 letter. However, a student can get further recommendations for additional hours if required.

The SLC will monitor the weekly and yearly amounts of NMH support recommended and drawn-down for individual students, and will challenge any which appear excessive.

### **NMH and local authority care plans**

The provision for the non-medical helper allowance does not remove the duty of local social services to provide assistance towards personal care costs that would have been incurred irrespective of a student's attendance on a course. DSAs funding is not available for personal care costs.

### **Using self-employed non-medical helpers**

Non-medical helpers who are self-employed are responsible for their own tax and national insurance contributions etc. Using a self-employed non-medical helper would mean that students, or any other body, are not the employer of the non-medical helper. For the purpose of tax and National Insurance contributions it is the engager's responsibility to decide whether someone is an employee or self-employed. HMRC can provide advice and, in deciding whether to approve a

non-medical helper as self-employed, HMRC would look at what the job involves. If a person negotiates their own fees, runs their own business and works for a number of people it is more likely they would be classed as self-employed.

### **Administration charges for arranging non-medical helpers**

In the context of DSAs, HEPs may arrange and administer non-medical helper support; and institutions may incur extra costs in providing this service. Such costs might include recruiting potential non-medical helpers, advertising for helpers, selecting suitable candidates, training unqualified non-medical helpers and maintaining records of their personal and financial details. Administration costs form part of the on-costs that are a legitimate part of the overall cost. However, on-costs must relate solely to the provision of support for that particular student. DSAs cannot be used as a contribution towards the infrastructure, general administration and pastoral costs of the institution. That is, DSAs must not be used to cross-subsidise the infrastructure of institutions' disability services.

HEPs' governing bodies are responsible for the proper stewardship and value for money of public funds, and the amount institutions claim for DSAs administration needs to be relevant and proportionate, and to have been incurred by the institution specifically in providing the DSAs service to the DSAs recipients in their care. Fixed percentages without an evidence base do not provide a sound basis for the calculation and award of relevant administration costs. Finding the clearly calculated cost of activity is a more transparent and sustainable means of funding than arbitrary fixed percentages. Costs should be based on actual delivery and not assessed delivery. Institutions may be asked to submit information on how any on-costs in relation to the DSAs recipient have been calculated.

Administration charges and associated overheads should be claimed only once: the same activity should not be claimed twice. A reasonable level of actually-incurred marginal costs should be the maximum. Institutions and providers should clearly distinguish the types of services and their costs on the invoices submitted. All costs must be clearly indicated on the invoice. Additional costs not included in the stated on-costs for providing the service will not be funded through DSAs. Any provider, institution or private, may be asked to submit details of how their administrative costs have been calculated with the first claims each year. Costs are expected to be maintained at the same level during the financial year for certainty for the student and SFE.

A fundamental review of costs should be undertaken by institutions / providers periodically to ensure that the service continues to provide value for money (for example, that efficiency improvements are effectively managed, to avoid a "last year plus x per cent" approach, and to assess whether the level of resources used to provide the service remain appropriate in the light of changing demand and other factors) and to avoid double-counting.

SFE should be satisfied that claims for DSAs are made in accordance with guidance and should query costs which do not appear to them to be reasonable.

### **Cancellation charges when students fail to attend a pre-arranged session with a non-**

**medical helper**

As a general rule NMH provision will only be paid for through DSAs if the student has booked their support sessions with their NMH provider and attended the sessions. 'Booked' means that the student and NMH provider have agreed the date, time, location and support role in advance of the session. Please see below how sessions that are not attended by the student will be treated for funding purposes.

DSAs will **not** generally be provided to meet the cost of cancelled support sessions if the cancellation is made with more than 24 hours' notice.

There will be occasions where a student does not attend a booked support session and/or does not give more than 24 hours' notice of cancellation, for example, because they were ill or had a personal emergency or unforeseen circumstances. In these cases the student is engaging with their support provider and only cancelled at short notice, or did not attend, due to a reason outside of their control. When this occurs it is understood that the NMH provider has arranged for a Non-medical Helper to attend the support session and so has incurred a cost for arranging the support. The cost of these booked support sessions will be met from the student's DSAs as it is understood that the student booked the session expecting to attend (subject to the repeated missed sessions rule below).

There may be occasions where a student does not attend a session and could have cancelled the session with more than 24 hours' notice. The cost of such sessions may still be met through the student's DSAs where the NMH provider has incurred a cost for arranging the support and paying the support worker for those sessions (subject to the repeated missed session rule below).

However, in all scenarios, DSAs funding will not be provided for NMH provision that is repeatedly not being used once booked, or cancelled with less than 24 hours' notice, or where students indicate that they no longer need or want NMH support. For the purposes of DSAs funding, repeatedly is considered to be more than two sessions which have been missed per term. DfE consider that it is unlikely that most students would need to cancel their NMH session with less than 24 hours' notice more than twice per term.

DSAs funding will not be provided where the institution is responsible for cancelling the lecture/tutorial etc. that the session was booked for. The institution must take responsibility for notifying the student that the lecture/tutorial etc. is cancelled to enable the student to cancel the session with the NMH provider.

All missed sessions will be carefully considered by SFE before payment and where more than two sessions have been missed per term, to ensure that all parties understand their responsibilities and reasons for missed sessions are being investigated and documented. In cases like this, DSAs funding may be suspended.

### **NMH 'sessions'**

A 'session' will be deemed to be the entire day.

Therefore a provider who has been booked to provide a support role at any point during that day will have an equal status. For each support role, that day will be deemed the first missed session. Similarly, where repeat sessions are booked during the day, all sessions for that support role will be deemed as a single session, but charges should not be made where the support provider is able to make alternative arrangements for the remainder of the day.

Any support that was not scheduled for that day will remain unaffected. No 'missed sessions' will be counted against unscheduled support for that day.

Example: A student has four booked sessions during the day:

Booked session 1 BSL + notetaker

Booked session 2 BSL + notetaker + library assistant

Booked session 3 BSL + mentoring

Booked session 4 notetaker + study skills support.

All the BSL support booked for that day will be counted as one missed session for the purposes of DSAs-funding.

All the notetaking support booked for that day will be classed as one missed session for the purposes of DSAs-funding.

The same will apply for the library assistant, mentoring and study skills support.

The student has been also recommended to have workshop assistant support, but none was booked on this particular day, therefore any allocation of workshop assistant support remains unaffected.

### **What action should the support worker or service provider take when a session is missed?**

At the first missed session, the support worker or service provider should make all reasonable efforts to contact the student to find out the reason for the student missing the session and confirm arrangements for the next session booked. The support worker should not attend the next session until the arrangement is confirmed with the student. If the student states they no longer require the support, support should be terminated and SFE informed.

The same process should be followed for the second missed session.

The support worker should not suspend the student's support if the student wishes to book a future session. If the support worker no longer wishes to continue providing the support, they should notify SFE immediately so that another support worker can be identified. Alternatively they

should contact the disability adviser to discuss ongoing support.

### **What is deemed to be a term when considering missed sessions?**

Generally the academic year falls into 3 terms/semesters. However, some courses have non-standard delivery models that do not fall into 3 periods.

For ease we will refer to terms. This refers to the study periods that run either side of the standard holidays i.e. September – December, January to April, and May to July/August. The start of the academic year is not relevant for this purpose.

Whilst DfE acknowledges that exceptions may need to be considered, it is expected that providers and students are working together to minimise the number of missed sessions and that exceptions will only be considered rarely.

### **NMH support following missed sessions**

SFE will not suspend support after two missed sessions. It is assumed that the need for support continues and that sessions are being managed by the support worker and the student. However, payment will not be made for any missed sessions occurring beyond the first two, other than in exceptional circumstances.

### **The role of the HEI disability adviser in managing missed sessions**

Where there is consent to share information with the institution, support workers may wish to liaise with the disability adviser if it appears that the student is not managing their sessions effectively and sessions are regularly being cancelled or missed without cancellation. This may indicate other problems or may indicate that the student does not require, or is not satisfied with the support they have been recommended. Early intervention in such cases may result in different support being offered.

DfE/SLC will separately consider what action might be taken if the nature of the student's disability is such that they might regularly need to miss booked sessions without warning. Study needs assessors should indicate on the needs assessment report if they identify that this is likely to occur.

### **Payment of invoices**

In most instances non-medical help support is paid by SFE upon receipt of an invoice. Frequency of payment is determined by when the invoice is received. Invoices are paid on a first-come, first-served basis. Therefore suppliers should provide invoices as soon as practicable. SFE are not permitted to pay support that exceeds the maximums set out in the regulations.

## **BAND ONE - Support Assistants**

Staff that carry out these activities must have the skills and competence to work effectively, at the direction of the student, in their own particular context.

The role of a support assistant is generally to provide support in the following areas:

- Providing practical support around the campus
- Providing practical support in the library, laboratory or workshop/studio etc.
- Reading aloud
- Scribing
- Text checking (pointing out errors but not providing corrections)

Roles which might provide this support include:

- Practical Support Assistant
- Library Support Assistant
- Reader
- Scribe
- Workshop/Laboratory Assistant
- Sighted Guide
- Proof Reader

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### **PRACTICAL SUPPORT ASSISTANTS £15-24**

This role provides practical and mobility support to assist a student with a physical impairment in manoeuvring around the campus. This could include helping to manipulate a wheelchair, carrying books, IT equipment etc. It could also include general orientation and finding out where things are located for students whose disability means that they have problems with orientation. It could also include 'social support' in order to ensure access to the wider aspects of student life, for example for a student on the autism spectrum who had difficulty with social interaction. While some of these tasks, such as carrying equipment for a student with mobility difficulties, will need to continue throughout a student's course, others, such as general orientation, should decrease as the student becomes more able to manage independently.

Skills required: Some experience/understanding of providing support for disabled adults; thorough knowledge of the campus; good interpersonal skills.

Qualifications/training: No mandatory qualifications or professional body membership has been identified for this support; Generic non-medical help training; Those whose support activity includes supporting wheelchair users will also need to have had specific health and safety training relevant to the physical demands of their activity.

In any event, DSAs funding is not available for any aspects that are covered by a local authority care plan. Such support will continue to be provided under the duties placed upon the local authority.

**Library Support Assistant: cost range £15-24**

This support is provided to help students search library catalogues, locate materials, collect materials, photocopying etc. Access to libraries and information available through libraries to support students in their study can be supported in many ways. Libraries should particularly consider the provision of e-books and alternative format publications to assist disabled students. This would reduce the need for the provision of hard copy publications and scanners/photocopying.

It is expected that library staff should all have disability awareness training and be available to assist disabled students with accessing information including support to use systems that aren't accessible to assistive technology. It is not expected that provision is available to assist disabled students 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. That might not be a reasonable expectation. Contact time for lectures and tutorials varies greatly from course to course. This should provide sufficient time for all students, including disabled students, to access libraries during the normal opening hours.

Skills required: Good working knowledge of the library.

Qualifications/training: No mandatory qualifications or professional body membership has been identified for this support; Generic non-medical help training required; understanding of the HE context.

**Reader: cost range £15-£35**

A reader provides support for students whose disability makes reading or other forms of accessing text impossible. There are now many forms of assistive software that provide this facility and appropriate alternatives should be considered. Assistive software may enable students to become independent, autonomous learners in many cases and therefore should be considered where this barrier exists and where students will not require additional support to use systems that aren't accessible to assistive technology.

Skills required: Clear reading voice; sufficient skills to cope with the demands of the text including any technical jargon.

Qualifications and training: No mandatory qualifications or professional body membership has been identified for this support; Generic non-medical help training; some understanding of the HE context.

**Scribe: cost range £15-£27**

A scribe is used to write down or type what a student dictates. This is directed notes and should not be confused with general notetaking which may occur in a lecture, seminar etc.

There are now forms of assistive software that can help in this area which may remove the need for human support in many cases. Assistive software may enable students to become independent, autonomous learners in many cases and therefore should be considered where this barrier exists and where assistive technology would fully meet the support needs of the student.

Skills Required: Clear handwriting and/or accurate keyboarding skills; good spelling and punctuation; sufficient skills to cope with the area of work being followed by the student including any technical jargon; understanding of the boundaries of this activity including personal integrity and an awareness that the scribe's activity is to write down exactly what the student says and not to make any amendments or changes to content.

Qualifications and Training: No mandatory qualifications or professional body membership has been identified for this support; Generic non-medical help training; competency in English; understanding of the HE context.

**Workshop/Laboratory Assistant: cost range £15-£26** Supporting a student in gaining access to the practical aspects of their course, e.g. in the laboratory or in a workshop/studio situation.

Skills Required: Knowledge and experience of the particular educational setting, e.g. laboratory or workshop.

Training/qualifications: No mandatory qualifications or professional body membership has been identified for this support; Generic non-medical help training; sufficient knowledge in the requisite practical area; health and safety training relevant to the particular workshop context.

**Sighted Guide: cost range £15-£25**

A sighted guide may be required to assist a student with visual impairment to navigate the campus and may be required for all or part of each day the student needs to attend the university. This role is about the physical attendance at lectures, tutorials, workshops etc. and not about accessing the information that is delivered.

Skills required: Thorough knowledge of the campus; good interpersonal skills.

Qualifications/training: Any mandatory qualifications or professional body membership required to provide this support are set out on the DSA-QAG website <http://www.dsa-qag.org.uk/nmh-online-registration>.

**DSAs funding remains available for this support.**

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### **PROOF READER/TEXT CHECKER £15-£28**

Text checking, often referred to as proof reading in this context, is provided for a range of students to help identify and point out the types of errors that the student has been made in grammar/spelling/structure etc. and to give advice on ways of rectifying such errors in the future. This type of support is valuable for the general student body and institutions will wish to consider how best to meet the needs of all their students. For disabled students there are now alternative forms of assistive software that can provide some support in this area. Assistive software may enable students to become independent, autonomous learners in many cases and therefore should be considered where a particular barrier exists and where assistive technology would fully meet the support needs of the student.

Skills Required: Fast reader but also good attention to detail; an understanding of the area of work being followed by the student including any technical jargon; an understanding of the boundaries of this activity including personal integrity and an awareness that the proof reader's role is to support the student to learn to recognise their own mistakes and is not to make any amendments or changes to content.

Qualifications/Training: No mandatory qualifications or professional body membership has been identified for this support; Generic non-medical help training with particular emphasis on boundaries of activity; understanding of the HE context.

## 5.10 BAND TWO – ENHANCED SUPPORT ASSISTANTS

These are activities which demand an enhanced level of skill, knowledge and training to Band One activities.

From AY 2016/17 these activities became the primary responsibility of the HE provider. However, where DSAs funding is available by exception, funding will be provided only within the cost ranges that apply to each activity and within the scope set out within each role.

The role of an enhanced support assistant is generally to provide support in the following areas:

- Supporting students to develop their independence and autonomy in HE, for example by providing support with issues such as time keeping; organisational skills etc. and can be supplemented by practical support e.g. library support, workshop support etc.
- Supporting a disabled student during examinations

Roles which might provide this support include:

- Study Assistant
- Examination Support Worker
- Notetaker

### **Study Assistant: cost range £20-£29**

This role does not refer to the specialist one-to-one skills support which is provided under band 4 support – see 5.5.2

This support is provided where a mix of enabling strategies complemented by some practical assistance has been required. This is usually as a result of the student's combined complex circumstances. Previously this has been described as supporting the student in adapting to the academic demands of HE, providing information, helping with time keeping, helping with organisational skills etc. and can be supplemented by practical support e.g. library support, workshop support etc.

Skills required: An enhanced level of skill and experience of working with disabled students and an understanding of the barriers which disabled students may have in accessing learning, but not the specialist experience and knowledge of those working at Band Four, One to One Study Skills Support or Specialist Mentors; knowledge of the way the institution/organisation works and the

demands of studying in HE; excellent interpersonal skills; clear understanding of issues of confidentiality.

Qualifications/training: No mandatory qualifications or professional body membership has been identified for this support; Generic non-medical help training and also a level of specialist training relevant to the demands of the activity; understanding of the HE context.

### **Examination Support Workers: cost range £20-£28**

Examination Support Workers may assist with reading out the examination paper, writing down student answers using exactly the words used by the student and for some students, e.g. those on the autism spectrum who might get very focussed on a particular question, giving a prompt as to when it is time to move on to another.

Skills required: Clear reading voice; excellent spelling and grammar; clear handwriting and/or good and accurate keyboard skills; ability to cope with any specialist vocabulary or technical jargon; clear understanding of the activity and high level of personal integrity in order to not make any additions or amendments to student's answers.

Training/qualifications: No mandatory qualifications or professional body membership has been identified for this support; Generic non-medical help training; competent knowledge of English; specific subject expertise where relevant e.g. to cope with technical jargon; understanding of the HE context.

In any event, the cost of any arrangements that institutions may need to make to enable a disabled student to take examinations (e.g. providing physical access to the examination hall or allowing the examinations to be taken and invigilated somewhere else) will not be considered within the scope of DSAs.

Institutions will also need to have regard to competency standards when considering how disabled students undertake an examination of their skill in a particular area.

### **NOTETAKERS: COST RANGE £20-£28**

This support is provided for students who require notes to be taken on their behalf, for example because they have a physical impairment. The activity of note-taking is to produce an accurate record of the content of lectures, seminars, discussions, off-campus events etc. in the student's preferred style and format.

Skills required: Clear and legible handwriting at speed if providing handwritten notes; accurate spelling and grammar skills; familiarity with subject specific vocabulary and technical language; and disability awareness.

Qualifications/training: A Level 2 qualification in notetaking is required. A standard of education to at least second year degree level is expected, the undertaking and completion of specialist notetaker training (may be in-house training) which includes the formal assessment and evaluation of skills and suitability, the successful achievement of that assessment and evaluation.

There is a wide range of ways to deliver information to students which may reduce or remove the need for individual note-taking, which should be discussed with the student. There are many forms of assistive technology that can provide some support in this area, for example recording devices, and these should be considered as an alternative to note-taking where possible.

Assistive software is likely to enable students to become independent, autonomous learners in many cases and therefore should be considered where a particular barrier exists.

In cases where DSAs funding is provided for notetaking, the DSAs Study Needs Assessor will be asked to determine the required format of notes at the needs assessment taking in to consideration the course, the student's needs and compatibility with the student's assistive technology where appropriate and indicate the outcome of that discussion in the report for consideration by the institution.

Where DSAs-funded notetaking is agreed by exception, assessors will be required to provide the following information, where possible: the actual number of note-taking hours required based on timetable; or where this is not possible (i.e. prior to course commencement or when module options have not been finalised) make informed estimate of the likely number of hours based on contact with HEI, discussion with the student etc.

Where typed notes are required by the student the assessor must take steps to identify workers that can take typed notes at the time required. Only if that is not possible should provision for a handwritten note be provided with the notes being typed up for the student afterwards. A note typed at the time is the default position if available – given value for money considerations.

In the case where handwritten notes and subsequent typing up is the only available option, (see example above) a maximum additional charge of 30 minutes will be paid for the typing up time, per 1 hour of manual note-taking. But only where it has not been possible to provide a note-taker that can take typed notes or typed notes are not appropriate.

Note-taking costs should be clear on the invoice. Typed notes should be invoiced as manual note-taking (typed). This is a band 2 activity. Where the notes have been taken by hand and typed later, the invoice should set this out clearly as manual note-taking (written) + typing up fee. The subsequent typing up of notes is not a band 2 activity and therefore an appropriate reduction in the amount charged for typing up after the session is therefore expected. Typing up charges should be no more than half the amount charged for the actual note-taking session (and half the time of the note-taking).

Example: A session of notetaking is arranged for a tutorial lasting an hour. The notes are taken manually and the charge is £20 per hour. The amount available for the subsequent typing up of the notes (if required to comply with the students specific needs) is £10 per hour, with only half an hour being the appropriate charge (i.e. an additional £5).

The typing up of written notes by the note-taker or a third party is not electronic note-taking or specialist transcription services and should not be recommended or charged as such.

### 5.11 BAND THREE – SPECIALIST ENABLING SUPPORT

These are activities which demand specific expertise and specialist training in a particular access area.

DSAs funding remains available for these support roles, with the exception of specialist transcription services, which become the primary responsibility of the HE provider. Where DSAs funding is available by exception for specialist transcription services, funding will be provided only within the cost ranges that apply to the activity and within the scope set out within the role.

The role of a specialist enabler is generally to provide support in the following areas:

- Making use of specialist expertise and training in a particular access area in order to facilitate a student's access to learning using specialist skills and/or equipment to represent the language of delivery into another more accessible format
- Using specialist skills to enable students to navigate themselves independently around the educational environment

Roles which might provide this support include:

- Communication Support Worker
- Electronic Notetaker
- Specialist Transcription Services
- Mobility Trainer

## **COMMUNICATION SUPPORT WORKERS AND LIP SPEAKERS: COST RANGE £35-£44**

This support is provided to translate sign language into voice and vice versa although not at the level of competence required by a trained and qualified British Sign Language (BSL)/English Interpreter, or to convey a speaker's message to lip readers accurately using unvoiced speech. The support worker is required to work flexibly with an individual deaf student in workshop and seminar situations as well as providing general one to one support. This does not include academic support.

Skills required: Competent signing/lip speaking and experience of working with deaf learners in an HE context; understanding of how deafness affects learning.

Qualifications/Training: Any mandatory qualifications or professional body membership required to provide this support are set out on the DSA-QAG website <http://www.dsa-qag.org.uk/nmh-online-registration>.

**DSAs funding remains available for this support.**

## **SPECIALIST NOTE-TAKERS FOR DEAF AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS: COST RANGE £35-£40**

There are a range of Specialist Note Taking options which can be provided for sensory impaired students. Assessors should discuss with the student which option will be most appropriate for them to gain access to their course. This is different to note taker (see 5.3.3) and Specialist Transcription services (see 5.4.3).

This support activity is predominantly for students who are deaf or hard of hearing and for visually impaired students. Deaf and visually-impaired students cannot take notes for themselves. The primary requirement of this support is to make a comprehensive set of notes to meet the needs of the student for access, review and revision purposes.

The note-taker may be either a manual notetaker (handwritten notes or handwritten notes that are later typed) or a trained electronic notetaker (ENT). The note-taker will make a comprehensive although non-verbatim, typed or hand-written record of the content of lectures, seminars, discussions, off-campus events etc. in the student's preferred style and format.

Electronic Notetaking (ENT): requires the provider to be the laptop owner. Using a student's laptop will negate their insurance and relies on the student bringing a laptop with them which may be inappropriate and/or unnecessary.

Some students may wish to receive the information simultaneously on their own computer using for example NoteED or Stereotype software; in these cases the second laptop could belong either to the student or the service provider.

For some students, ENT may be delivered remotely, using live captioning services.

For visually-impaired students the laptop could also be linked to Braille reading equipment. The notes can be sent to the student within a specified time frame or will be saved by the student at the end of the session.

Note: This activity is not to be confused with that of Specialist Transcription.

For visually-impaired students there are now many forms of assistive technology (for example, recording devices) that can provide some support in this area and may be considered as an alternative. Assistive technology may enable students to become independent, autonomous learners in many cases and therefore should be considered first where a particular barrier exists and where assistive technology would fully meet the student's note taking needs.

Qualifications/training: Any mandatory qualifications or professional body membership required to provide this support are set out on the DSA-QAG website <http://www.dsa-qag.org.uk/nmh-online-registration>.

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## **ELECTRONIC NOTETAKING**

Electronic notetaking (ENT) systems involve a trained operator, usually using a standard laptop and specialist software which enables them to provide summary notes (so accuracy is not a % figure) at approximately 120 words per minute. **Speech to Text Reporting (STTR)**

STTR involves a trained operator using a specialist chorded keyboard system and software to enable them to listen to speech and transcribe the text verbatim. The text is displayed on a screen at 200-300 words per minute with an accuracy of 97-99%. This support is available for deaf students but should only be recommended where:

- a verbatim record is needed to enable the student to interact or to follow a session (for example a tutorial where it is important to capture discussions in real-time) AND
- the student has a high fluency in English

Students who use BSL are unlikely to require STTR or ENT in lectures, as they will be concentrating on the BSL delivery of the lecture. However, they will still require notes to be delivered by specialist notetakers trained to take notes for deaf students.

STTR is not a standard recommendation for deaf students and will be considered on a case by case basis.

**DSAs funding remains available for this support.**

### **5.11.3 Specialist Transcription Service: cost range £25-£32**

This support is provided to transcribe lecture notes, seminar notes, oral dictation or audio files into an alternative format accessible to the student.

Skills required: Familiarity with a range of specialist office packages and equipment and knowledge of how to transcribe into various alternative formats.

Qualifications/training: No mandatory qualifications or professional body membership has been identified for this support; Relevant specialist IT training.

#### **5.11.4 Mobility Trainer: cost range £35-£42**

The Mobility Trainer provides a professional assessment of the campus location and then carries out a time limited programme of training. This training is particularly applicable for blind or visually impaired students who will require an individually developed programme based on agreed assessment of needs and who will need to learn with their coach safe routes around the campus, either making use of a long cane or with a guide dog.

This kind of training may also be applicable to other students whose disability means they have particular difficulty with orientation, for example students who have significant difficulty with orientation because of acquired brain damage.

For on-going support around campus a sighted guide might be a more appropriate response (see 5.2.6)

Skills Required: A worker who has the requisite qualification and proven experience in training blind or visually impaired people, or those who have significant orientation difficulties because of other impairments, to find their way independently and safely around a new environment.

Qualifications/training: Any mandatory qualifications or professional body membership required to provide this support are set out on the DSA-QAG website <http://www.dsa-qag.org.uk/nmh-online-registration> .

If a student already has a guide dog then The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association (GDBA) takes responsibility for mobility training in a new environment.

**DSAs funding remains available for this support.**

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## 5.12 BAND FOUR – SPECIALIST ACCESS AND LEARNING SUPPORT

These activities require advanced specialist skills, training and/or qualifications concerning how particular disabilities affect a student's access to learning and how to address these access issues. These support workers will make use of specialist skills and training in order to: understand the particular barriers to learning experienced by individual disabled students, work with the student in order to identify strategies to help address these barriers, monitor the effectiveness of these strategies, work to enhance student's autonomy within their learning context and interpret the language of delivery, giving real-time access, into another language accessible to the student

Functions undertaken by Specialist Access and Learning Support Workers require the use of specialist skills and training in order to:

- Understand the particular barriers to learning experienced by individual disabled students
- Work with the student in order to identify strategies to help address these barriers
- Work with the student to continually monitor the effectiveness of these strategies
- Work to enhance student's autonomy within their learning context
- Interpret the language of delivery, giving real time access, into another language accessible to the student

Roles which might provide this support include:

- Specialist Mentor
- Specialist One to One Study Skills Support
- BSL Interpreter
- **Specialist Support Professional (SSP) for students with sensory impairments** Assistive Technology Trainer

**Specialist Mentors: cost range £50-£66**

Specialist mentors provide highly specialist, specifically tailored, one to one support which helps students address the barriers to learning created by a particular impairment. This support is primarily provided for students with mental-health conditions, Attention Deficit Disorder / Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD), or autism spectrum disorders. The support could address a range of issues, for example, coping with anxiety and stress situations, how to deal with concentration difficulties, time management, prioritising workload and creating a suitable work-life balance. Specialist Mentors should not act as advocates or counsellors. Their role is to help students recognise the barriers to learning created by their impairment and support them in developing strategies to address these barriers, particularly at times of transition, e.g. when starting at university or when planning to move on from it. For some students this support will need to be on-going while for others it might be gradually phased out or only be required at certain points of their course.

DSAs study needs assessors should carefully evaluate the stages of the course where the student will require this support and agree a reducing level of support to enable independence where appropriate.

**Skills Required:** In depth knowledge and experience of the particular disability (e.g. mental-health condition, autism spectrum disorder); understanding of the particular demands of study in HE; close working relationship with other support service both inside and outside the HEI and recognition of when there is a need to refer to other services.

**Training/Qualifications:** Any mandatory qualifications or professional body membership required to provide this support are set out on the DSA-QAG website <http://www.dsa-qag.org.uk/nmh-online-registration>.

**DSAs funding remains available for this support.**

**Specialist One to One Study Skills Support: cost range £50-£72**

This specialist one to one support addresses the issues which some students might have in acquiring, recalling and retaining information in written and spoken language as well as the range of memory, organisational, attention and numeracy difficulties that students with specific learning difficulties or an Autism Spectrum Disorder often face when working in an HE context. This support is primarily provided for students with a Specific Learning Difficulty, Attention Deficit Disorder / Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD), or an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

This support should aim to develop students' skills and to develop independent learning. It should be tailored to a student's individual needs and professionals delivering the support should set out clear goals and timescales for achieving these goals. A reducing level of support to enable independence should be agreed, where it is appropriate.

**Skills Required:** Substantial experience of working with students with the relevant disability e.g. SpLD or ASD on a one-to-one basis, also experience of working with these disabilities in an educational/learning environment. A good working knowledge of assistive technologies and related AT study skills strategies would be desirable.

When working with students with specific learning difficulties an in depth understanding of the effects of specific learning difficulties on language and learning in a HE context.

When working with people on the autism spectrum, an in-depth knowledge and understanding of autistic thinking and learning is needed.

An awareness of the strengths which students with specific learning difficulties and those on the autism spectrum can bring to a learning situation and the skills to help students to make use of these strengths and overcome barriers to learning.

**Qualifications/training:** Any mandatory qualifications or professional body membership required to provide this support are set out on the DSA-QAG website <http://www.dsa-qag.org.uk/nmh-online-registration>.

The National Autistic Society website identifies some appropriate courses:  
<http://www.autism.org.uk/working-with/training-and-experience/courses-for-professionals-in-autism-and-other-related-topics.aspx>

**DSAs funding remains available for this support.**

### **British Sign Language Interpreters: cost range £50-£57**

BSL interpreters are interpreters for students who are deaf and whose first or preferred language is BSL. The interpreter will attend lectures, seminars and tutorials with the student and will interpret from English to BSL or vice versa. Interpreters will use their skills and knowledge of BSL and English and their understanding of the differences between the two, in order to receive information in one language and pass it on in another.

**Skills Required:** Interpreters should be trained and have experience of working in a HE setting. They should also have some knowledge of the academic area being followed by the student.

**Qualifications/Training:** Any mandatory qualifications or professional body membership required to provide this support are set out on the DSA-QAG website <http://www.dsa-qag.org.uk/nmh-online-registration>.

**DSAs funding remains available for this support.**

#### **5.12.4 Specialist Support Professional (SSP) for students with sensory impairments: cost range £50-72**

This support is bespoke support for the individual needs of students with a sensory impairment which reflects their method of communication, educational history and experience. The SSP should have specialist knowledge of the support that was provided to the student prior to their entry into HE and can build on those strategies to frame the support provided in the new learning environment.

Support may include developing research strategies, composition strategies, working on presentations - structure and mode of presentation, organisation, time management, communication etc. – which should all facilitate strategies for independent learning.

This support is not subject specialist support but support to enable access to the course. The SSP is uniquely placed in a position which gives them an in depth understanding of the specific requirements of the student. Therefore, the SSP should provide bespoke advice to the HE Providers disability officers and teaching staff on what adjustments could be made in order to create an inclusive learning environment for the student. This advice should be provided only if the student gives permission for this and when it is required.

#### **Specialist Support Professional for deaf or hard of hearing students**

The support provided by the Specialist Support Professional (SSP) is bespoke so that it reflects the individual needs of the student and their personal learning style. In addition, to the all of the above, specialist support uses appropriate communication strategies to enable access and understanding of carrier language (this is not subject specific vocabulary), to work on planning work load and structuring assignments, to support access to research sources and to support preparation for assignments.

Additionally, as students with sensory impairments face even more specific barriers to learning, the SSP should provide the HEP with specific advice on making adjustments to disability officers and teaching staff, with the permission from the student. This will be focused on helping the student access the course, all assessments and support the student needs to develop strategies to overcome barriers to learning. Specialist audiological advice regarding different personal FM systems or specific course needs e.g. amplified stethoscope should be provided to the HEPs as needed.

This support is not subject specialist support but support to enable access and will include appropriate modifying of carrier language of assignments. For a student whose preferred communication is British Sign Language (BSL), the specialist support professional must have the level of BSL specified within the DSA assessment.

### **Mandatory Criteria**

Any mandatory qualifications or professional body membership required to provide this support is set out on the DSA-QAG website <http://www.dsa-qag.org.uk/nmh-welcome>.

### **Specialist Support Professional for Students with Vision Impairment**

The support provided by the SSP is bespoke to individual student's specific vision impairment. They should support the student to develop strategies to overcome barriers to learning and should provide the HEP with bespoke advice on making adjustments that the student requires.

This advice should be given with the consent of the student. The SSP should; regularly assess and monitor a student's functional vision and advise disability officers and teaching staff of any necessary changes, support and advise students and universities with regards to modifying any learning materials into accessible formats including; Braille and tactile diagrams, teach specialist skills (for example Braille and accessing tactile diagrams). Alongside this SSPs should support students with the use of specialist equipment and ICT, and provide support regarding access to all assessments.

This support is not subject specialist support but support to enable access.

### **Mandatory Criteria**

Any mandatory qualifications or professional body membership required to provide this support is set out on the DSA-QAG website <http://www.dsa-qag.org.uk/nmh-welcome>.

### **Specialist Support Professional for Students with Multi-sensory Impairment (MSI)**

Depending on the primary need of the student, tutorial support may be provided by a SSP for Deaf Students or a SSP for students with a Vision Impairment through liaison with colleagues specialising in MSI.

The support provided by the specialist is bespoke for the combined vision and hearing impairments of the student (including deafblind students). The Specialist uses their knowledge of previously used strategies to ensure the utilisation of appropriate communication strategies to enable access and understanding of carrier vocabulary. The specialist supports planning work load and structuring assignments, access to research sources and support preparation for assessments.

In addition, the SSP should; provide the HEP with bespoke advice on making adjustments to meet the needs of the student. The advice provided to members of the HEP should be given with permission of the student. In addition to, providing advice students and universities with regard to modification of any learning materials into accessible formats (including Braille and tactile

diagrams). Alongside, supporting students with the use of specialist equipment and ICT and provides support and advice regarding access to all assessments. This support is not subject specific support but support to enable access and will include appropriate modifying of carrier language of assignments. For a student whose preferred communication is British Sign Language (BSL), the SSP must have the level of BSL specified within the DSA assessment.

### **Mandatory Criteria**

Any mandatory qualifications or professional body membership required to provide this support is set out on the DSA-QAG website <http://www.dsa-qag.org.uk/nmh-welcome>.

#### **5.12.5 Assistive Technology Training: cost range £50-£65**

This activity provides support over and above the practical installation and familiarisation support given to students on receiving a new piece of software. Its purpose is to provide a substantial programme of training for the student in how to use the range of assistive technology and specialist software or hardware, in relation to their studies. This support is time limited and is generally provided in the early stages of the course.

Institutions should consider how students can access on-going assistive technology training support once initial training has been undertaken and completed.

Where online training is available, and is fully accessible using assistive technology, institutions should consider bulk-buying licences to enable their disabled student body to access on-going training free-of-charge.

Skills required: Assistive Technology (AT) trainers require knowledge and skills in strategies to support learning and a broad understanding about the range of existing products and technological solutions to learning challenges. Knowledge and understanding of students' learning requirements is fundamental to this activity alongside an understanding of how to address learning challenges. These challenges might include organisational skills, planning and time management or concentration, or gaining access through, for example, vision or hearing. Solutions include assistive technology, software programmes such as mind mapping, text to speech and speech to text, Microsoft Windows and Mac accessibility options and features to support learning such as the use of Outlook for organisational skills and digital recorders to aid memory. They require significant experience of working in a training capacity with people with a disability and an understanding of the kind of work required by a student at higher education.

Qualifications and training: There are no specific qualifications for DSAs IT training, although IT trainers should have a thorough knowledge of assistive technologies.

**DSAs funding remains available for this support.**

From AY 2016/17 the SLC NMH manual was decommissioned and the relevant information has been transferred to the DSAs guidance. This section sets out the types of support that is provided through the NMH allowance (or postgraduate DSAs where applicable). Some changes have been made to the provision of NMH from AY 2016/17, these do not apply to students already in receipt of a type of NMH. Cost maxima, the requirement to register with the DSA-QAG and the requirement for mandatory qualifications or professional body membership only apply to any NEW type of NMH support awarded after the launch of the new NMH quality assurance framework.

## ANNEX 2 – SPECIALIST EQUIPMENT ALLOWANCE

DSAs study needs assessors must always consider the suitability of a student's existing equipment before recommending that a student receives DSAs-funded computer equipment.

### ENTRY-LEVEL COMPUTERS

DSAs funding is not available for entry level computers. However, some of the students in the "continuing" cohort are eligible for entry-level machines. For instance, anyone awarded DSA pre AY 2015/16 would be eligible for an entry level computer.

Some disabled students may only require an entry-level computer to support their studies, as a higher specification computer is not required to run their software. In this context an entry-level computer is one which is used for internet browsing, word processing, spread-sheets and the least technically demanding assistive software packages e.g. mind mapping software. Such computers may not have the capacity to run assistive software effectively at the same time. DfE considers entry level computers a mainstream participation cost for all students and cost £200 or less.

### STANDARD COMPUTERS

**The £200 student contribution only applies to students applying for DSAs for the first time for an academic year starting AY 2015/16 or later.**

DSAs funding is available for a 'standard' computer, subject to a £200 student contribution.

Other disabled students may require a computer with a higher specification than an entry-level computer in order to effectively use more demanding software – for example speech-to-text software and/or text-to-speech software. This is termed as a standard computer in the DSAs context. The specification for a standard computer for DSAs purposes is set out as a 'Classic/WKH' in the DSA-QAG Computer Specification Matrix.

DSAs study needs assessors should not recommend a standard computer unless it is essential and full justification will be required in each case. DSAs study needs assessors must not recommend a standard computer where an entry-level computer will meet the needs of the student. Where a standard computer is identified as a necessity, additional costs, over and above the cost of an entry-level computer (i.e. £200) will be provided through DSAs. DSAs study needs assessors should identify the appropriate computer type that meets the student's needs i.e. entry level / standard / high cost. DSAs funding is available for insurance and warranty cover for these computers.

DSAs study needs assessors should refer to separate guidance on establishing whether a student's existing computer is suitable for running their assistive software effectively.

## HIGH COST COMPUTERS

**The £200 student contribution only applies to students applying for DSAs for the first time for an academic year starting AY 2015/16 or later.**

DSAs funding is not generally available for high-cost computers

However, some of the students in the “continuing” cohort are eligible for high cost computers. For instance, anyone awarded DSA pre AY 2015/16 would be eligible for a high cost computer.

DSAs funding is only available for high cost computers e.g. non-PC laptops and desktops, PC computers with larger memory, faster processors and/or graphics cards where such a computer is required solely because of the student’s disability – and they will no longer be funded through DSAs where the need is solely due to the way in which the course is delivered.

Institutions must consider how their students, including disabled students, will access the appropriate equipment, when electing to run courses requiring access to a non-PC platform, or other higher cost equipment. Institutions should make appropriate provision for access for all students to such IT equipment. Provision might be made in the form of communal facilities or individual access through institution discretionary funding e.g. bursaries or loan arrangements.

Where a high cost computer is required solely due to the student’s disability, funding for the additional costs, over and above the cost of an entry-level computer i.e. £200, will be provided through DSAs. DSAs funding is available for insurance and warranty cover for these computers in this instance.

The student’s specific need must be appropriately evidenced. DSAs study needs assessors should not recommend a high-cost computer unless it is essential and full justification will be required in each case. DSAs study needs assessors should identify the appropriate computer type that meets the student’s needs i.e. entry level / standard / high cost.

## LOW WEIGHT COMPUTERS

**The £200 student contribution only applies to students applying for DSAs for the first time for an academic year starting AY 2015/16 or later.**

DSAs funding is available for low-weight computers, subject to a £200 student contribution.

Some students may have a specific disability related need for a low-weight laptop computer i.e. one that weighs up to 1.5kg. Where a low-weight laptop is required, additional costs, over and above the cost of an entry-level computer (i.e. £200) will be provided through DSAs. DSAs funding is available for insurance and warranty cover for these computers.

The student’s specific need must be appropriately evidenced. DSAs study needs assessors should not recommend a low-weight computer unless it is essential and full justification will be

required in each case. DSAs study needs assessors should identify the appropriate computer type that meets the student's needs.

## **TABLET DEVICES**

DSAs funding is not generally available for tablet devices

However, some of the students in the "continuing" cohort are eligible for tablet devices. For instance, anyone awarded DSA pre AY 2015/16 would be eligible for a tablet device.

Where devices such as tablets are essential to meet the specific needs of the student, DSAs funding will be provided. However, it is expected that a standard computer will provide the increased processing power with which to operate the full range of assistive software, compared to devices such as tablets. Therefore we expect a standard computer to be the most appropriate provision for the student should they require this software, unless their specific needs mean that exceptionally additional devices are required to support their study.

## **INSURANCE AND WARRANTIES**

DSAs funding is available for insurance and warranty cover for DSAs-funded computers.

Students should also be advised that DSAs funding is available for insurance and warranty for their existing computer, if the computer is required to meet their disability related needs and is of the appropriate specification.

## **DEVICES FOR PRINTING AND/OR SCANNING**

DSAs funding is available for devices for printing and/or scanning.

Where funding is made available, generally only multifunction printer/scanners should be considered.

Recommendations for separate individual printers or scanners will only be considered in exceptional circumstances, where there is a clear disability related need for separate items in place of a multifunction unit.

All recommendations for devices for printing and/or scanning must include full justification and evidence setting out why the provision of the item is required for the student to undertake their course solely due to their disability.

Assessors should clearly evidence the need for hard copy materials and how that need is additional to that experienced by a non-disabled student. Assessors should also evidence why that additional need cannot be met through the institution's services e.g. library services or reasonable adjustments.

Assessors are advised to use the following three-step approach in evidencing need:

- i) Is there an additional 'need' due to their disability over and above that needed by their non-disabled peers, both for printed materials and scanning?
- ii) If the student does have additional needs for printed or scanned materials, can the need be met using library services?
- iii) If the need cannot be met by library services, can the need be met by the HE Provider through other reasonable adjustments?

Where devices for printing and/or scanning are provided, DSAs funding is available for ink and paper consumables which are additional to the needs of a non-disabled student.

## **AUDIO CAPTURE EQUIPMENT**

DSAs funding is available for audio capture equipment (e.g. Digital Voice Recorders (DVRs), microphones).

Assessors should consider whether adequate personal recording of lectures and seminars could be achieved via a laptop or a smart phone, including with use of an app, before recommending DVRs. Assessors should also consider if recordings are provided by the institution.

DSAs funding is available for smart phone apps if they are essential for audio capture, where the student will be using their existing smart phone instead of a DVR for this purpose and a free version of the app is not available. DSAs are not available to cover the cost of the student's own device, or any insurance or warranty associated with that device.

All recommendations require full justification and evidence setting out why the provision of the individual item is required for the student to undertake their course solely due to their disability. Recommendations should demonstrate that full consideration of other strategies has been made before a DVR is considered. Assessors should not expect to recommend DVRs and note taking for the same purpose.

## **OTHER EQUIPMENT**

DSAs funding is available for other equipment where the provision of the individual item is required for the student solely due to their disability.

The list below indicates a range of support that is available through DSAs. The list is not exhaustive. Nor should it be taken that the list represents items that all disabled students should receive.

All recommendations require full justification and evidence setting out why the provision of the individual item is required for the student to undertake their course solely due to their disability.

Assessors are advised to use the following three-step approach in evidencing need for each item:

- i) Is there an additional 'need' for the item due to their disability over and above that needed by their non-disabled peers?
- ii) If the student does have additional needs for an item, can the need be met using common facilities provided by the HE Provider?
- iii) If the need cannot be met by common facilities provided by the HE Provider, can the need be met by the HE Provider through other reasonable adjustments?

In all cases, the lowest specification item that meets the needs of the student should be recommended by assessors.

- Screens and monitors
- Keyboards and mice.
- Specialist equipment for visually impaired people (e.g. viewing equipment, Braille equipment)
- Magnifying equipment.
- Ergonomic equipment and furniture.
- Handheld dictionary and spelling equipment.
- Scanning pens.

DSAs funding is available for laptop carry cases as a matter of course, up to a maximum price of £20 for those students being provided with a laptop computer.

DSAs funding is available for standard keyboards, standard size monitors and standard mice as a matter of course *if* they form part of a recommendation for a desktop computer.

DSAs funding is available for headsets or other items as a matter of course where they are essential for the effective use of specific assistive software that has been recommended.

The 'bundle' of standard computer peripherals remains available for students applying for DSAs prior to AY 2015/16.

## **ASSISTIVE AND STANDARD SOFTWARE**

DSAs funding is available for assistive and standard software where the provision of the individual item is required for the student solely due to their disability and the software is not available for free through site licences or other means. Most students should have access to standard Microsoft software packages (Word, Outlook, etc.) free of charge, currently through Office365.

DSAs will fund assistive software.

## **COURSE SPECIFIC SOFTWARE**

Some of the students in the “continuing” cohort are eligible for course specific software. For instance, anyone awarded DSA pre AY 2015/16 would be eligible for course specific software.

All students will need to access course specific software and therefore it falls outside the scope of DSAs funding. Institutions will need to consider how all of their students will be able to access course specific software.

## **WHEELCHAIRS / MOBILITY SCOOTERS**

DSAs funding is not generally available for wheelchairs/mobility scooters.

The responsibility for providing wheelchairs and mobility scooters rests with the National Health Service (NHS) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (e.g. through Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP)). The need for a wheelchair or mobility scooter is unlikely to be a solely study related need.

## **RADIO AIDS FOR DEAF STUDENTS**

DSAs funding is available for a radio aid

Funding is available if the student’s needs cannot be met through other means and a radio aid has not been supplied through other sources e.g. the NHS.

DSAs funding is only appropriate if the need for a radio aid is solely a study-related need.

## **ANNEX 3 – ARRANGEMENTS FOR ASSESSMENT REVIEWS FROM 1 SEPTEMBER 2015**

This guidance sets out when a review of a student's support arrangements would be funded, when it would come under the single fee arrangement, and when it would be 'rolled over' by SFE. It also sets out arrangements for fees applicable when a student fails to attend an appointment.

The new arrangements apply to all students (both new and existing) from 1 September 2015.

The available outcomes are:

- 1) The student's existing support arrangements are continued (or 'rolled over') by SFE without a review.
- 2) A review is undertaken within the single fee arrangement (i.e. at no extra charge).
- 3) A funded review is undertaken.
- 4) An entirely new full fee assessment is undertaken.

### **FUNDED REVIEWS**

Students will qualify for a funded review:

- When moving from an UG course to PGCE or non-taught PG study; or
- When they present with a new disability that requires an agreed significant amount of additional work. (Centres are required to fully document the additional work undertaken for a review and submit this to SFE. As a guideline, but not exclusively, it is anticipated that reviews requiring at least two hours of additional work will be considered for funding); or
- If there is a gap of more than 2 years since the student last studied; or
- If they have not had a full assessment or funded review for 5 years.

The fee for funded reviews will be capped at £300+VAT.

Students may be referred at their own request, or if SFE is concerned that the rolling over of support is inappropriate.

Significant change to the student's course will no longer be a criterion that prompts a review.

Also, a worsened existing disability or condition will no longer be a criterion that prompts a review.

## **REVIEWS UNDERTAKEN WITHIN THE SINGLE FEE ARRANGEMENT**

Reviews of a student's support arrangements will be undertaken within the single fee arrangement (i.e. at no extra charge) if none of the circumstances set out in the above 'Funded reviews' or below 'Full fee assessments' sections apply.

## **FULL FEE ASSESSMENTS**

In a small number of cases, a subsequent full fee assessment will be paid where a student is unable to attend a review at their original assessment centre due to location and the issue could not be resolved by other methods (see scenario C below). If the issue could be resolved by other methods, then original assessment centre would only retain responsibility for the student up to a maximum of 5 years from their initial assessment.

## **MISSED APPOINTMENTS**

If a student fails to attend an appointment or gives less than 24 hours' notice of cancellation (excluding weekends and bank/public holidays), assessment centres will be able to charge a fee of no more than:

- £60+VAT for a full assessment appointment.
- £30+VAT for a funded review appointment.

If the centre is able to fill the appointment space with another student, they will not be able to charge a fee.

It is suggested good practice for the centre to contact the student (e.g. by text) the day before to remind them of their appointment.

**SCENARIO EXAMPLES:****UNDERGRADUATE TO UNDERGRADUATE COURSE**

Student A is assessed on an UG course in AY 2014/15. Student changes to a different UG course at the same HEI in AY 2015/16.

Student will have their support rolled over by SFE. Where the student asks for a review, the single assessment fee arrangement will apply.

Student B is assessed on an UG course in AY 2014/15. Student changes to a different UG course at a different HEI in 2015/16, but can attend the same assessment centre.

Student will have their support rolled over by SFE. Where the student asks for a review, the single assessment fee arrangement will apply.

Student C is assessed on an UG course in AY 2014/15. Student changes to a different UG course at a different HEI in AY 2015/16, but cannot attend the same assessment centre because of geographical distance.

The original assessment centre should make every effort to deal with the student e.g. telephone, email, Skype etc. under the single assessment fee arrangement.

- (1) If it is less than five years since the previous assessment, and the change can easily be managed, rolling over of support/single assessment fee applies.
- (2) If it is less than five years since the previous assessment and change cannot be easily managed because of the geographical location of the new HEI, then the student should be directed to a new assessment centre, which may then charge a full fee.
- (3) If five years or more has passed since the previous assessment, the student wants a new review and cannot attend the original assessment centre, they should be directed to a new assessment centre, which may then charge a full fee.

Student D is assessed on an UG course in AY 2014/15. Student is on the same course but presents a new disability in AY 2016/17.

The student would qualify for either a single fee review or a funded review depending on the impact of the change and the amount of work involved.

Student E is assessed on an UG course in AY 2014/15. Student is still on an UG course in AY 2019/20 and has not met the criteria for a funded review during that time.

The student would qualify for a funded review, as at least 5 years has passed since their previous assessment or funded review.

Student F is assessed on an UG course in AY 2012/13. Student suspends study for AY 2014/15. Student returns to same course in AY 2017/18.

The student would qualify for a funded review, as there has been an at least two-year gap in study.

## UNDERGRADUATE TO POSTGRADUATE COURSE

Student G is assessed on an UG course in AY 2012/13. Student moves straight from UG to PG course (PGCE) in AY 2015/16.

The student will qualify for a funded review.

Student H is assessed on an UG course in AY 2012/13. Student moves straight from UG to PG course (taught) in AY 2015/16.

Student will have their support rolled over by SFE. Where the student asks for a review, the single assessment fee arrangement will apply.

Student I is assessed on an UG course in AY 2011/12 and finished UG course in 2012. Student starts PG course (taught) in AY 2015/16.

The student would qualify for a funded review, as there has been an at least two-year gap in study.

Student J had initial assessment in AY 2009/10 and finished UG course in 2014. Student starts PG course (taught) in AY 2015/16.

The student would qualify for a funded review, as at least 5 years has passed since their previous assessment or funded review.

Student K had an initial assessment on an UG course in AY 2012/13. Student moves straight from UG to PG course (taught) in AY 2015/16.

Student will have their support rolled over by SFE. Where the student asks for a review, the single assessment fee arrangement will apply.

In AY 2017/18 Student K presents a new disability.

The student would qualify for a funded review as the change is at least 5 years after the initial assessment.

Student L is assessed on an UG course in AY 2014/15. Student moves straight from UG to PG course (taught masters) in AY 2015/16.

Student will have their support rolled over by SFE. Where the student asks for a review, the single assessment fee arrangement should apply

In AY 2016/17 Student L (above) presents a new disability.

The student would qualify for either a single fee review or a funded review depending on the impact of the change and the amount of work involved.

Student M is assessed on an UG course in AY 2014/15. Student moves straight

from UG to a research-based PG course in AY 2015/16.
The student would qualify for a <u>funded review</u> .
In AY 2016/17 Student M (above) presents a new disability.
The student would qualify for either a <u>single fee review</u> or a <u>funded review</u> depending on the impact of the change and the amount of work involved.

Student N is assessed on an UG course in AY 2012/13. Student moves straight from UG to PG (taught) course in AY 2015/16.
Student will have their support <u>rolled over by SFE</u> . Where the student asks for a review, the <u>single assessment fee</u> arrangement should apply
In AY 2016/17 Student N indicates a need to review support
The student would qualify for a <u>funded review</u> as the change is at least 5 years after the initial assessment.

Student O is assessed on an UG course in AY 2014/15. Student requests a review as they do not agree with the initial recommendations.
In line with current practice, this student can have a review under the <u>single assessment fee</u> arrangement but only at the original assessment centre. The student will not be funded to attend another assessment centre.

## POSTGRADUATE TO POSTGRADUATE CASES

It is anticipated that, for students moving from a PG course to another PG course, arrangements will follow the same logic as set out in the above scenarios.

## ANNEX 4

### SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES (SPLD)

“Specific learning difficulty” is often used as an umbrella term to cover the following:

- Dyslexia
- Dyscalculia
- Dysgraphia
- Dyspraxia or Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD)
- Attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADD or ADHD)

As with any disability, no two individuals experience the same combination of difficulties and some students may exhibit signs of more than one SpLD. There are two forms of SpLD

- Developmental SpLD – a neurologically based problem with particular aspects of learning despite appropriate educational opportunity and intellectual ability.
- Acquired SpLD – is characterised by a loss of skills as a result of a neurological trauma, illness or brain disease.

The following characteristics have been noted in connection with SpLDs;

- a marked inefficiency in the working or short-term memory system which may result in, for example, problems with reading comprehension and written composition;
- inadequate phonological processing abilities (innate difficulty linking sound and symbol) which affects the acquisition of fluent reading and spelling skills;
- difficulties with motor skills or coordination which might affect tasks which involve simultaneous use of several skills;
- problems with visual processing which can affect reading (for example, causing the print to appear distorted or the reader to lose their place excessively) and handwriting (for example losing track of place when copying. This can be termed visual stress);
- reading problems which may include slow reading speed, difficulty extracting sense from written material without substantial re-reading, inaccurate reading, omission of words;
- writing problems which may include poor handwriting and slow writing speed, omission of words, spelling problems, difficulties categorising information and sequencing ideas;
- difficulties with mathematical skills and concepts: can also be seen in difficulties with abstract concepts of time and direction, following sequential instructions, sequencing events affects, ability to acquire arithmetical/mathematical skills;
- lack of structure in oral presentations, seminars and discussion and difficulties with word retrieval;
- short attention spans and a high level of distractibility; and

- poor organisation making time management very difficult.

## SCREENING FOR SPLDS

Screening for SpLDs usually precedes a diagnostic assessment and the purpose is to determine whether a full diagnostic assessment would be warranted. Screening for SpLDs does not constitute a diagnostic assessment and therefore a screening for SpLDs as the sole evidence of a SpLD will not be accepted. There is no requirement for a student to undergo a screening for SpLDs when providing their evidence for HE purposes. Full diagnostic evidence of SpLDs

A Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) Working Group was set up in 2003 to review the arrangements for identifying and assessing SpLDs in higher education students. The Working Group was asked to produce a report recommending a framework to guarantee the quality of assessments which diagnose specific learning difficulties. The final report has been published and is available on the Student Finance England practitioners' website at:

[http://practitioners.studentfinanceengland.co.uk/portal/page?\\_pageid=133,4210339&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL#section7](http://practitioners.studentfinanceengland.co.uk/portal/page?_pageid=133,4210339&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL#section7)

The SpLDs Working Group asked a committee to take a lead in implementing a number of the report's recommendations. This committee is the SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC). A sub-committee of SASC, the SpLD Test Evaluation Committee (STEC), will review periodically the list of suitable tests contained in the SpLDs Working Group report and consider new tests for inclusion. Further information about SASC and STEC is provided at Annex 2 p45

Diagnostic assessments carried out before September 2006	Accept diagnostic assessments carried out by psychologists and suitably qualified specialist teachers. Specialist teachers who assess dyslexia should hold AMBDA (Associate Membership of the British Dyslexia Association) or a qualification from an advanced training course which assesses adults for dyslexia and is recognised by the British Dyslexia Association's Accreditation Board (see the table in Annex 1).
Diagnostic assessments carried out between September 2006 and August 2007	Accept diagnostic assessments carried out by psychologists and suitably qualified specialist teachers as above. Diagnostic reports to be in the format recommended in the SpLDs Working Group's report. Diagnostic reports to use tests recommended in the SpLDs Working Group's guidelines or added by the SpLD Test Evaluation Committee (STEC).

Diagnostic assessments carried out between September 2007 and August 2008	<p>Accept diagnostic reports from psychologists and specialist teachers. Specialist teachers must hold a current practicing certificate in assessing specific learning difficulties issued by their relevant professional association (for example, the Professional Association of Teachers of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties (PATOSS), Dyslexia Action or the British Dyslexia Association). Psychologists must hold a current practicing certificate issued by their relevant professional association (for example, the British Psychological Society).</p> <p>Diagnostic reports to be in the report format recommended in the SpLDs Working Group's guidelines</p> <p>Diagnostic reports to use tests recommended in the SpLDs Working Group's guidelines or added by the SpLD Test Evaluation Committee (STEC).</p>
Diagnostic assessments carried out from September 2008	<p>Procedures as from September 2007 above plus the following.</p> <p>All training for assessing specific learning difficulties to incorporate the SpLDs Working Group's guidelines.</p>
From 2012	<p>Psychologists will be registered with the HCPC (the Health and Care Professions Council, formerly the Health Professions Council) as practitioner psychologists.</p>

The framework recommended in the report has been adopted by SFE. The table below sets out the criteria a diagnostic assessment must meet depending on when it was carried out.

Further information on identifying specific learning difficulties through assessment can be found in the regularly updated guidance issued by SASC and its SpLD Test Evaluation Committee see [www.sasc.org.uk](http://www.sasc.org.uk). Guidance relating to the assessment of ADHD and updated guidance on Dyspraxia is now available.

Diagnostic assessments conducted from the age of 16 are appropriate for the purposes of DSA eligibility. If the diagnosis was carried out before the age of 16, the student will require a further diagnostic assessment. The diagnostic assessment should focus on those areas where there are likely to be difficulties that impact on study, in particular working memory, information processing and phonological awareness. It should include exploring effects on literacy skills, (speed and accuracy in reading and writing individual words and prose, also incorporating reading comprehension). The report should identify strengths, current strategies and anticipated difficulties that impact on study at HE level.

Once the diagnostic report has been accepted there is no requirement for a student to undergo a new diagnosis later in the course. A diagnostic report accepted for a first course should also be acceptable for subsequent courses, including postgraduate courses.

If assessments conducted before the age of 16 are incomplete or inconclusive further testing should be conducted at the discretion of the assessor. Further testing may also be indicated if many years have passed since the last assessment (e.g. assessment at 40 following diagnosis at 15, or assessment at 18 following diagnosis at 7)

A post-16 diagnostic assessment should be based on tests recommended in the Specific Learning Difficulties Working Group's guidelines and updated by SASC and its SpLD Test Evaluation Committee (STEC). See 'SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC) and the SpLD Test Evaluation Committee' p 45. This post-16 assessment is part of the diagnosis and the cost should be met by the student, although an application may be made to the institution's discretionary Access to Learning Fund to meet the cost. This assessment should be carried out by a qualified specialist assessor as noted in the table above.

The Diagnostic report should state that because the student has a specific learning difficulty they should receive extra support to compensate for these difficulties. The study needs assessment will then determine the nature of the support that is required. The judgement on eligibility made by a qualified professional should be accepted unless it can be shown that the supporting evidence is inadequate to have reasonably formed a view; for example, the evidence is out of date or very cursory. In such circumstances further information should be sought.

## **COURSES ACCREDITED BY BDA FOR DYSLEXIA ASSESSMENTS CARRIED OUT BY TEACHERS**

Courses Leading to SpLD Assessment Practicing Certificate-

The following courses will qualify successful candidates to apply for SpLD Assessment Practicing Certificate from Patois or Dyslexia Action.

- All courses leading to AMBDA
- University College London - Certificate in the Diagnostic Assessment & Management of Literacy Difficulties [from 2000 through 2004]
- Evesham & Malvern Hills College Postgraduate Certificate in the Assessment of Specific Learning Difficulties validated by University of Worcester
- London South Bank University LLU+ Postgraduate Diploma in Adult Dyslexia, Diagnosis and Support M Level (7) [from November 2006]
- Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations OCR Level 7 Certificate in Assessing and Teaching Learners with Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia)
- Below are tables that give details of the specific institutions and courses that meet the above requirements.

**ACCREDITED AMBDA COURSES**

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Level</b>
Bath Spa University	Professional Masters Programme, Module One Identifying and supporting Learners with Specific Learning Difficulties/Dyslexia and Module Two Assessment Methodology for SpLD/Dyslexia	AMBDA
Bangor University of Wales	Advanced Certificate of Further Professional Studies (8 modules)	AMBDA
Birmingham University	B Phil / PG Dip / M Ed in Dyslexia Studies	AMBDA
Durham County Council	PG Cert in Teaching Pupils with SpLD/Dyslexia within the School Context	AMBDA
Dyslexia Action (formerly Dyslexia Institute)	PG Dip in Dyslexia and Literacy	AMBDA & AMBDA FE/HE
East Sussex County Council	Meeting the Needs of Pupils with Dyslexia (SpLD)	AMBDA
Edge Hill College of HE	Postgraduate Certificate in SpLD	AMBDA
University of Gloucestershire	Postgraduate Certificate in SpLD	AMBDA
Leicester University	Postgraduate Certificate in Education Studies	AMBDA
Liverpool John Moores University	PG Cert in SEN (Dyslexia) (with upgrade to AMBDA)	AMBDA
London Metropolitan University	PG Dip: Assessment for Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia)/PG Cert Teaching Adult Dyslexic Learners in Higher Education (PGC: TADHLE)	AMBDA FE/HE & AMBDA
Manchester Metropolitan University	i) PG Dip/Cert in SpLD ii) PG Cert in SpLD (FE/HE)	i) AMBDA ii) FE/HE
Newport, University of Wales	MA (SEN), Dip SEN (SpLD)/ CFPS (SpLD) (modules G101444, G101511, G101512 & G105688)	AMBDA
OCR (previously RSA)	SpLD Diploma Level 7	AMBDA
Open University	E801: Difficulties with Literacy Development	AMBDA
Oxford Brookes University – Reaccreditation in progress	Working with Children and Young People with Literacy Difficulties: Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Professional Practice (Level M)	AMBDA
Somerset LEA	PG Dip in Complex Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia)	AMBDA

Institution	Course Title	Level
Southampton University	PCES: Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia): Identification and Assessment	AMBDA
Swansea LEA	Teaching Pupils with SpLD (Dyslexia) (with upgrade to AMBDA)	AMBDA
University of Teesside	University Certificate in Advanced Professional Development Dyslexia in Post Compulsory Education Settings	AMBDA

### COURSES LEADING TO SPLD ASSESSMENT PRACTISING CERTIFICATE

Institution	Course Title
University College London	Certificate in the Diagnostic Assessment & Management of Literacy Difficulties
Evesham & Malvern Hills College	Postgraduate Certificate in the Assessment of Specific Learning Difficulties
London South Bank University	LLU+ Postgraduate Diploma in Adult Dyslexia, Diagnosis and Support M Level (7)
Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations	OCR Level 7 Certificate in Assessing and Teaching Learners with Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia)

For additions check the SASC and BDA websites

### SPLD ASSESSMENT STANDARDS COMMITTEE (SASC) AND THE SPLD TEST EVALUATION COMMITTEE (STEC)

The SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC) leads in implementing a number of the recommendations contained in the report of the SpLDs Working Group. Membership consists of individuals representing organisations with national roles in promoting standards in SpLD assessment, support and teacher training. SASCs purpose and responsibilities are to:

- implement the recommendations for SpLD assessor training contained in the SpLD Working Group report;
- promote continuing professional development in SpLD assessment;
- oversee and approve processes of awarding SpLD Assessment Practising Certificates;
- maintain list of approved evaluators for Accreditation of Prior Learning and/or Experience (APL/ape) applications;

- provide training for evaluators;
- approve course as meeting standards of SpLD assessor training; and
- draw on expertise across the sector and provide a forum for sharing good practice.

A sub-committee of SASC, the SpLD Test Evaluation Committee (STEC), will review periodically the list of suitable tests contained in the SpLDs Working Group report and consider new tests for inclusion. Further information about SASC and/or STEC can be found on the SASC website at [www.sasc.org.uk](http://www.sasc.org.uk) or Email: [info@sasc.org.uk](mailto:info@sasc.org.uk).