

Disabled Students' Allowance

Higher Education Student Finance in Wales

Academic Year 23/24

Version 1.0

This guidance is for key stakeholders in academic year 23/24 for “Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA)”. The guidance covers DSA legislation and the administration of applications for DSA.

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REGULATION REFERENCES

Since AY 18/19 there have been two sets of Regulations governing student support in Wales. As these Regulations will often have mirroring provisions the regulation references throughout this guidance will be followed by either “(2017)” or “(2018)” to denote which set of Student Support Regulations the regulation is in reference to.

(2017) will denote the “The Education (Student Support) (Wales) Regulations 2017 (SI 2017/47)” as amended.

(2018) will denote the “The Education (Student Support) (Wales) Regulations 2018 (SI 2018/191)” as amended.

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Full
ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
AT	Assistive Technology
ATSP	Assistive Technology Service Providers
AY	Academic Year
BSL	British Sign Language
CMS	Courses Management Service
DfE	Department for Education
DfE (NI)	Department for the Economy (in Northern Ireland)
DL	Distance Learning
DLA	Disability Living Allowance
DSA	Disabled Students' Allowance
DSA-QAG	Disabled Students Allowance Quality Assurance Group
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EHC	Education, Health and Care
FT	Full-Time
FTDL	Full-Time Distance Learning
GP	General Practitioner
HE	Higher Education
HEP	Higher Education Provider
HMRC	His Majesty's Revenue and Customs
ILE	International Learning Exchange (also known as Taith)
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
NAR	Needs Assessment Report
NHS	National Health Service
NHSBSA	National Health Service Business Services Authority
NI	National Insurance

NMH	Non-Medical Helper
OU	Open University
PC	Personal computer
PG	Postgraduate
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PIP	Personal Independence Payment
PT	Part-Time
RRML	Reduced Rate Maintenance Loan
SAAS	Student Awards Agency for Scotland
SASC	SPLD Assessment Standards Committee
SFW	Student Finance Wales
SLC	Student Loans Company
SpLDs	Specific Learning Difficulties
STEC	SpLD Test Evaluation Committee
TFL	Tuition Fee Loan
UG	Undergraduate
UK	United Kingdom
VAT	Value Added Tax

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Introduction

This DSA guidance is for FT students (regulations 24 (2017) and 61-63 (2018)), PT students (regulations 88 (2017) and 61-63 (2018)), FTDL students (regulation 71 (2017)) and PG students (Part 13 (2017) and Schedule 4 (2018)).

Guidance on the other grants payable under the 2017 Regulations or 2018 Regulations is provided separately in the following guidance:

- “Assessing Financial Entitlement” (Maintenance Grant, Special Support Grant, Welsh Government Learning Grant and Travel Grant)
- “Grants for Dependents” (Adult Dependents’ Grant, Childcare Grant and Parents’ Learning Allowance)

DSA

1. Under regulations 24 (2017) and 61-63 (2018) an eligible student qualifies for DSA to assist with the additional expenditure the student is obliged to incur to attend a designated course because of a disability. The DSA is intended to help a disabled student benefit fully from their course.
2. A person is required to provide evidence that they meet the Equality Act 2010 (Equality Act) definition of “disability” to be eligible for DSA. 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)).” The 2017 and 2018 regulations use this definition of disability for the purpose of receiving student support, including DSA. Aligning to the Equality Act definition provides clarity and consistency, particularly where providers are considering adjustments in parallel to DSA.
3. The Equality Act does not define what is to be regarded as a “normal day-to-day activity.” Normal day-to-day activities can include general work-related activities, and study and education-related activities, such as interacting with peers or colleagues, following instructions, using a computer, driving, carrying out interviews, preparing written documents, and keeping to a timetable or a shift pattern. For the purposes of establishing whether the student meets the definition, SFW should consider study and education-related activities as day-to-day activities.
4. Students who would ordinarily be asked to submit evidence of their disability either for the first time or because their disability has changed in some way or there has been a gap in their studies would be asked to provide evidence that they met the definition of “disability.” Where a student is unable to provide sufficient evidence that they meet the definition of disability under the Equality Act they will be required to submit a completed medical evidence

pro-forma. The student's study needs assessment will still determine if and how their ability to study is materially affected by their disability.

5. Students who may be asked to submit new medical evidence will include:

- Students who are applying for DSA for the first time from AY 23/24;
- Students who have completed or withdrawn from a previous course and who begin a new course or top-up or begin to undertake a PG course but the gap between the two courses is more than one AY;
- Students whose disability has changed in some way; and
- Students who present with a different disability to that already assessed

6. DSA are not intended to pay for:

- disability related expenditure that the student would incur even if they were not attending a HE course;
- costs that any student might have regardless of disability; and
- services which can reasonably be expected to be provided by the student's provider (further guidance in this respect is given under the heading "The Scope of DSA").

ELIGIBILITY

7. The personal eligibility criteria for receiving student support, including DSA, are set out in the "Assessing Eligibility" guidance.

DSA are not subject to:

- an age limit;
- previous study rules; or
- household income assessments.

8. A student can only receive support while studying on a designated course. Where the eligible course does not appear on the SLC's courses management system, SFW will not be able to fully process the application. Information on what action should be taken in this situation is covered in the AY 23/24 "Assessing Eligibility" guidance. Students are potentially eligible for DSA whilst attending an overseas provider as part of their UK designated course, whether obligatory or optional. Further guidance can also be found in the AY 23/24 "Assessing Eligibility" guidance.

Students who are eligible for student support under

- Schedule 1 paragraph 2A, 9, 9A, 9BA, 9C or 9D (2017); or

-
- Schedule 2 paragraph 1(2)(d)(ii), 1(3), 4A(1)(b)(ii), 4A(2)(b)(ii), 6(1), 6A(1), 6A(2)(d)(ii), 6BA, 6BB, 6C, 6D, 7A(c)(ii), 8A(1)(d)(ii) 1 (2018),
 - but not under any other paragraph of those Schedules, are not eligible for DSAs.

9. Since AY 17/18, students studying via DL whilst resident outside of the UK as of result of being a serving member of the armed forces (or a family member of) may be eligible for support including DSA. For more information on this please see the “Assessing Eligibility” guidance.

STUDENTS ON OVERSEAS PLACEMENTS

10. As a result of the UK’s exit from the EU, support on an Erasmus+ programme is no longer available to new students as of AY 21/22. However, funding may be provided from AY 21/22 under the Turing Scheme or the Taith:ILE programme.

Note that some support via Erasmus+ may still be available to continuing disabled students on an Erasmus+ programme where it was approved on or before 31 December 2020.

Students undertaking a course funded by Taith or Turing may be eligible to claim DSA from SFW. In the first instance, eligible disabled students on Turing or Taith programmes will be encouraged to apply to SFW for their disability needs to be met. Assessors undertaking assessments for students who will be undertaking overseas placements should confirm in the NAR if the students advises they are on Taith or Turing.

PRISONERS

11. FT students who are prisoners and who began a designated course before 1 September 2012 are potentially eligible for DSA but will not generally qualify for other grants for living and other costs under regulations 23(13) and (14) (2017) and 62 (2018)). See “Grants for Dependents” guidance.

For FT students who are eligible prisoners and commence their course on or after 1 September 2012, support is only available for tuition fees. No maintenance support (including DSA) will be available to any prisoner (including an eligible 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

12. Under regulations 23(3) (2017) and regulations 44, 62 and 69(2018) , students are not eligible for grants for living costs, including DSA, for any AY 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 for an NHS bursary should visit NHS Wales at: <https://nwssp.nhs.wales/ourservices/student-awards-services/> for information about the financial support available through the NHS Bursary Scheme. Or they can phone the NHS Wales Student Awards Unit on 029 2090 5380. If a student eligible for an NHS bursary opts out of taking that bursary, they may be eligible for DSAs from SFW.

ITT COURSES

13. Students undertaking an ITT course may qualify for DSA support. Note that students undertaking a PG ITT course qualify for the UG package of student support. Therefore, they would qualify for DSA under the UG scheme and would not be eligible for PG DSA.

The additional student support package available to students depends on whether the course is either FT or PT:

- Designated FT UG ITT and FT PG ITT courses attract the same support package as standard FT UG degree courses (see “Assessing Financial Entitlement” guidance for more detail).
- Designated PT UG ITT and PT PG ITT courses attract the same support package as standard PT UG ITT courses (see “Support for part-time students” guidance for more detail).

SANDWICH COURSES AND WORK PLACEMENTS

14. Students on part-year paid or unpaid placements where the periods of FT study in the AY are 10 weeks or more in aggregate are potentially eligible for DSA support. For example, DSA could pay for additional disability related travel costs to and from the HEP 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.

15. Under regulations 23(6) (2017) and regulations 44, 62 and 69(2018), students are not eligible for grants for living and other costs, including DSA, in any AY of a sandwich course in where the periods of FT study are in aggregate less than 10 weeks (unless the period of work experience is an unpaid placement of a type specified in regulations 23(7) (2017) and 44 (2018)). Students who do not qualify for grants for living and other costs, including DSA, under regulation 23(6) (2017) and regulations 44, 62 and 69 (2018) are eligible for a RRML

which is not subject to income assessment (regulation 45 (2017)) or an amount of maintenance loan in accordance with regulation 55, category 2 (2018).

16. Under regulation 23(7) (2017) and regulations 44 and 62(2018), 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 DSA (even where the periods of FT study in the AY are less than 10 weeks in aggregate).

STUDENTS WHO BECOME ELIGIBLE DURING THE COURSE

17. Under regulations 23(11) and (12) (2017) and 62 (2018), a student may qualify for DSA support from, and including, the date on which they become an eligible student due to one of the reasons noted below:

- the student's course becomes designated;
- the student, their spouse, civil partner or parent is recognised as a refugee or becomes a person with leave to enter or remain (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 student, or the student's eligible family member is awarded leave under one of the following categories:
 - Calais leave,
 - Humanitarian protection,
 - Stateless leave,
 - Section 67 leave,
 - Leave to Remain as a victim of domestic violence or abuse, or Leave to remain as a bereaved partner,
 - the student is awarded leave under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy or the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme;
- the student acquires the right of permanent residence;
- the student becomes a person described in paragraph 6(1)(a), Schedule 1, 2017 or Category 4 (1) (a), Schedule 2 (2018); or
- the student becomes the child of a Swiss national.;
- the student becomes a protected Ukrainian national

A student is not eligible for DSA for AYs of the course falling before the AY in which they become eligible in the circumstances mentioned above (regulations 23(12) (2017) and regulation 62 (2018)). More information about Events can be found in the Assessing Eligibility Guidance Chapter, 2.46 and Annex A.

Studying courses by distance learning

18. Students who are undertaking a FTDL course or a PTDL course that started on or after 1 August 2018 may be eligible for DSA (regulation 62 (2018)), tuition fee support and maintenance support. They do not qualify for travel grant but since August 2022, students studying on FTDL or PTDL courses may qualify for GFDs.

Students undertaking a FTDL that started on or after 1 September 2012 but before 1 August 2018 may qualify for DSA (regulation 24 (2017)) and tuition fee support. They do not qualify for travel grant. As a continuing student post August 2022, these students may qualify for GFDs.

Further information on FTDL courses is available in the Assessing Eligibility guidance chapter.

DSA FOR STUDENTS ATTENDING FULL-TIME COURSES

20. UG and PG students are eligible for a maximum allowance of £33,146. This is intended to meet the combined costs incurred in the following areas of expenditure:

- Non-medical personal help;
- Major items of specialist equipment; and
- Other disability related expenditure

A separate uncapped travel allowance is also available for students who incur additional study related travel costs due to their disability.

There is no provision to pay more than the maximum allowance set out in the Regulations. Therefore, a student cannot use unspent DSA from a previous AY or anticipate grant entitlement for a future AY to pay costs in the current AY.

Where the Needs Assessor has identified support and strategies where the total value may exceed the maximum allowance, the Needs Assessor should continue to make the recommendations in the Needs Assessment Report. If SLC approve these recommendations, they will include guidance in the students DSA2 Entitlement Letter to explain how the total cost of the agreements is above the maximum funding available and that the student may want to discuss this with their HEP to consider if additional support may be available and to discuss prioritising their agreements.

NON-MEDICAL HELPER CATEGORY OF ALLOWANCE

21. The portion of allowance used towards a non-medical helper may be used to pay for additional support required because of a disability. Non-medical helpers can include sighted guides, British Sign Language interpreters, note-takers and any non-medical helpers necessary to enable the student to benefit fully from the course. See Annex 4 for further details of the support DSA is available for. The needs assessment should consider reasonable adjustments made by the HEP before recommending support to avoid duplication of support. Where the student must make regular or frequent payments for a non-medical helper, SFW may consider arranging for some of the student's grant payments to be made in corresponding instalments. If grant payments are made in instalments, SFW will inform the student, or the provider, how such transactions should be recorded and verified for audit purposes.

22. The provision for the non-medical helper category of the overall 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, SFW might agree to apportion the cost to pay for the course-related help provided by the carer.

23. It is not a requirement for Welsh students that their NMH support is secured from a known supplier. However, if required, needs assessors can refer to the current list of suppliers for DSA-funded NMH which has been published by the SLC on the SFW practitioner page: <https://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/practitioners/guidance-for-assessment-centres>

Needs assessors can continue to source quotes for NMH directly from suppliers. This can be done in conjunction with confirming that the supplier has the capacity to deliver the support recommended. Needs assessors should continue to provide two quotations for NMH support along with their recommendation as currently.

Needs assessors must also consider any existing support arrangements the student may have for continuity of support and where a student has a preferred NMH supplier, for example, one they have used previously. The award of support to a preferred supplier must still meet the Conflict-of-Interest standards. Where there is a preferred supplier, this must be documented on the needs assessment report (NAR).

24. DSA funding will not be provided for anyone to carry out NMH support who is not suitably qualified and/or experienced and does not have appropriate employment status. They must be registered with HMRC to pay tax and NI on their earnings. This also applies to DSA funded support provided by family members or friends. Assessment Centres would be expected to ensure that all NMH support workers they recommend have an appropriate employment

status and are suitably qualified and/or experienced. Where the request to change to an independent NMH or for the support to be provided by family/friends comes direct to SFW, they will request appropriate evidence of HMRC registration, such as a Tax Return, before the request can be agreed.

25. Due to the potential conflict of interest, DSA funding will not normally be available to any company, partnership or other organisation that is owned or controlled by the student being supported, or in which the student has a financial interest. Where a potential conflict of interest is identified, Welsh Ministers will consider each case based on the information available to them.

26. It is the view of the Welsh Ministers that where a recommendation has been made for Assistive Technology Training, the standard duration recommended should be no longer than two hours per session. Sessions of other lengths may be considered on a case-by-case basis or where a disability related need is clearly demonstrated. Agreement is at the discretion of SFW.

27. Where a student has not used the NMH in the previous year of study then SFW will not request updated costs for NMH support.

28. Where the student engages with a company which provides both the needs assessment and NMH support, students must be provided with accessible terms and conditions that these companies may require the student to adhere to. SFW may require sight of the terms and conditions prior to approving any NMH. While it is the student's responsibility to ensure that such conditions are met, SFW and Welsh Government will ensure that these have been fully explained to the student and are not considered to be detrimental to the student's support needs. Ultimately, it is the student's choice as to which provider they use, and careful consideration should be given to all aspects and requirements.

Students who are dissatisfied with the service received by a company providing any aspect of their support should raise any concerns they have with these companies via the company's internal complaints process in the first instance. If a student is unsure on how to proceed in such cases, or requires further help, they may seek assistance from their disability adviser or a tutor at their HEP. SFW have published a helpful guide for students to understand what they can expect from their NMH provider which is available at <https://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/media/nsej5ft3/your-disabled-students-allowance-funded-non-medical-helper-support-what-to-expect.pdf>

It is worth noting that students are not expected to face undue pressure from providers of NMH to use their services where they have undergone a needs assessment from the same company. A student should be made aware of all the options available to them. There is an expectation that such companies will effectively manage any conflict of interest between the

need's assessment and the provision of any support. This may be routinely monitored by SFW and the Welsh Government.

29. The allowance may be used to pay for items of equipment which the student will need, because of a disability, to benefit fully from the course. It may also be reasonable to meet the cost of associated insurance, extended warranty costs, repair and modification costs from the allowance. Where students do not take out insurance and their equipment are stolen or damaged, the cost of replacing or repairing the equipment will not be met from the DSA. Therefore, SFW will recommend that students take out insurance cover for their DSA equipment. The insurance premiums can be paid from the DSA. SFW might, at the same time, also suggest that the student consider whether they might benefit from some initial training in the use of any equipment to be purchased. Research has shown that many students start their courses without becoming familiar with specialist equipment and can face difficulties that could be avoided. The cost of training in the use of specialist equipment may be set against DSA (see point 27 above), subject to the maximum overall allowance threshold specified in the Regulations.

COURSE TRANSFERS AND SPECIALIST EQUIPMENT FUNDED BY THE ALLOWANCE

30. It is expected that a recommendation made for specialist equipment will last the student for the duration of their course, however, a student may apply for additional/replacement specialist equipment each year if justified by the study needs assessor and approved by SFW. The previous separation between specialist equipment costs being for a course only has been removed and specialist equipment is now part of the annual overall maximum allowance. For all students whose DSAs are being calculated from AY 23/24, the Specialist equipment allowance is not limited out with the upper limit of £33,146.

31. All equipment purchased with the help of this allowance is and remains the property of the student. If the student chooses not to keep the items after they have completed their course, it is open to the student, to donate the equipment to their provider or to SFW for the use of other students. Providers and SFW are free to suggest that students make such donations. The Regulations do not permit SFW to purchase equipment either to donate to providers or to lend to students. Should the student apply for further study following completion of a course, SFW may enquire about the previous equipment supplied.

GENERAL EXPENDITURE ITEMS WITHIN THE ALLOWANCE

32. The allowance may be used for other expenditure not covered by specialist equipment or NMH. The cost of a study needs assessment is drawn from the overall allowance under general expenditure. Additional costs associated with accommodation appropriate to the student's needs are also drawn from general expenditure of the overall allowance threshold. The general expenditure of the allowance cannot be used to accommodate a student's special

diet. Any additional dietary costs incurred as a result of a disability would be incurred regardless of a student's attendance at college or university.

Attending a hospital appointment linked to a disability cannot usually be regarded as being additional expenditure incurred with the undertaking of a course. Travel to medical treatment can be considered where the additional expenditure incurred is:

- by reason of a student's disability; and
- in connection with the undertaking of a designated course

The additional costs that may be considered are if the treatment is only available in a certain location and the student incurs additional travel costs which except for being enrolled on a course the student would not have to incur. The additional cost of travelling would be calculated as the actual cost less the cost of travelling from the student's home address (not term time address) to the appointment.

TRAVEL ALLOWANCE (SEPARATE TO THE OVERALL ALLOWANCE)

33. The travel allowance may be used to pay the additional costs of travel to and from the HEP which are incurred because of a disability. For example, if the needs assessment identifies that a student needs to travel by taxi rather than by public transport because of mobility or visual difficulties, then the DSA will cover the additional expenditure that represents. In this instance, the amount of travel allowance should be any excess between the public transport costs (regardless of subsidised travel pass) and taxi costs for the journey. This additional cost should be set out in the NAR.

34. Some students may be required as a result of a disability to use their own car to travel to and from the provider. In this instance, the amount of travel allowance should be any excess between public transport costs (regardless of subsidised travel pass) and the cost of the same journey by car. Reimbursement of travel allowance will be in accordance with the HMRC Fuel Rates, currently set at 45p per mile for cars (can also be applied to electric cars usage where appropriate). Suitable parking facilities should be arranged by the HEP.

35. SFW will need to be satisfied that the additional travel expenditure arises in each case 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 31 to 34(2017) and regulations 64 to 67(2018)) in the same way as any other student (see "Travel Grants" guidance for AY 23/24 which can be found in the "Assessing Financial Entitlement" guidance).

Part-time DSA

36. Under regulations 88 (2017) and 63 (2018), an eligible PT student qualifies for DSA to assist with the additional expenditure that the student is obliged to incur to undertake to attend or study by DL) their designated PT course because of their disability. Students undertaking a PT course with the OU, which they commenced prior to 1 September 2014, should continue to apply for DSA from the OU. This includes students who started an “end-on” course in AY 14/15 and students who transferred from a previous PT course which they started at the OU before 1 September 2014 to another PT course at the OU. The PT DSA policy closely follows that for FT students. However, there are, necessarily, some differences and these are explained below.

ELIGIBILITY

37. Like the FT DSA, previous study rules do not apply to PT DSA. They are available to eligible students regardless of age or household income. For details of the personal eligibility criteria for receiving PT support, including PT DSA, please refer to the guidance “Support for part-time student.”

DESIGNATED PART-TIME COURSES

38. To be eligible for support, including DSA, a student must be undertaking a designated PT course. The criteria for course designation in respect of PT support, including PT DSA, are set out in the “Support for part-time students” guidance.

39. Students who begin courses before 1 September 2014 must be studying at a minimum intensity of 50% FTE to be eligible for DSA (regulation 83(1c) (i) (2017)). Students who begin PT courses on or after 1 September 2014 must be studying at a minimum intensity of 25% FTE during the AY to be eligible for DSA (regulation 83(1c)(ii) (2017)).

DSA FOR STUDENTS UNDERTAKING PART-TIME COURSES

40. Since AY 22/23, students undertaking designated PT UG and PG courses will have their DSA combined into a single allowance of up to £33,146 covering costs relating to NMH, special equipment and general support, in addition to a separate uncapped travel allowance. This is the same upper cap as in FT.

DSA for postgraduate students

41. Under Part 13 (2017) and Schedule 4 (2018) an eligible PG student qualifies for DSA to assist with the additional expenditure that a student is obliged to incur to undertake to attend or study by DL) a designated FT or PT PG course because of a disability. DSA for students undertaking a PG course with the OU are administered by the OU where the student started

their course prior to 2014. All students who started their PG course on or after 1 September 2014 will be assessed by SFW. The PG DSA scheme closely follows that for UG students.

42. PG DSA allowance is aligned with that of UG in relation to new and continuing students. Therefore, PG students can access a single annual allowance of up to £33,146 for NMH, specialist equipment and general support with separate uncapped travel allowance.

43. Eligible Welsh PG students can also access loans and grants as a contribution towards costs, subject to when they commenced their course. For more information, please see the AY 23/24 "PGL" guidance. This PG support will not affect the provision of PG DSA.

ELIGIBILITY

44. Previous study rules do not apply to PG DSA. They are available to eligible students regardless of age and are not income assessed. To be eligible for the PG DSA students must meet the personal criteria set out in Schedule 1 (2017) and Schedule 2 (2018) and undertake a designated PG course (regulations 112 (2017) and Schedule 4, paragraph 2 (2018)).

45. PG students studying by DL are eligible for DSA, but only if they are undertaking a designated course which is provided by a HEP in the UK (regulations 110(8) (2017) and Schedule 4, paragraph 4(2018)). Students undertaking courses on a DL basis are deemed to be studying at their home address. Therefore, to receive DSA, PG distance learners must remain living in the UK whilst undertaking their course.

Under regulation 110(4) (2017) and Schedule 4, paragraph 5(2018), a PG student is not eligible for DSA if they:

- are eligible to apply for:
 - an 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
 - an allowance under the Nursing and Midwifery Student Allowances (Scotland) Regulations 2007
 - an allowance, bursary or award of similar description made by a Research Council (a list of the relevant Research Councils is provided at Annex 1)
 - an allowance, bursary or award of similar description made by their HEP which includes a payment for meeting additional expenditure incurred because of a disability
 - the Social Care Wales bursary for students on PG social work courses (where the student is continuing on a PG social work course that started before AY 22/23).

Note that students starting a designated social work course in or after AY 22/23

who are in receipt of the Social Care Wales bursary may be eligible for PG DSA support.

- are in breach of an obligation to repay a student loan
- have not ratified an agreement for a student loan made with them when they were under the age of 18
- have shown themselves by their conduct to be unfitted to receive support.

46. PG students may be in receipt of a bursary or award from another funding body that provides DSA or support equivalent to DSA. PG students are not eligible for the PG DSA if they have been awarded an NHS bursary or a grant from a Research Council. Similarly, PG students are not eligible for PG DSA if they are in receipt of a bursary or award from their provider which includes support equivalent to DSA (excluding financial assistance received from their provider's hardship fund). Under regulation 110(14) (2017) and Schedule 4, (4)(2) (2018) an eligible PG student is not eligible for support for more than one designated course at a time.

47. Where a serving member of the armed forces (or a family member of such a person) is studying their designated PG DL course from outside the UK, as a result of their being posted overseas, they can be eligible for PG DSA.

DESIGNATED POSTGRADUATE COURSES FOR DSA

48. Regulation 112(1) (2017) and Schedule 4, paragraph 2 (2018) provide the criteria for course designation in respect of PG DSA. The requirements are:

- a first degree or higher qualification should be an entry requirement to the course
- a course duration of at least one AY
- if the course is PT that began before 1 September 2014, it must be ordinarily possible to complete the course in not more than twice the period ordinarily required to complete an equivalent FT course. If the course is PT which began on or after 1 September 2014, it must be ordinarily possible to complete the course in not more than four times the period ordinarily required to complete an equivalent FT course
- the course is provided by a UK provider maintained or assisted by public funds
- the course is not an ITT course, or a course taken as part of an employment-based teacher training scheme

49. Courses need to be provided by publicly funded providers in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland and approved fee cap providers in England, in order to be automatically designated, although courses at other providers may be designated on application to Welsh Ministers. FT and PT Legal Practice courses and Bar Vocational courses are designated courses under the

Regulations as the entry requirement to such courses is a first degree or higher. However, some of these courses are provided by private providers in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland and approved providers in England which have been designated specifically for PG DSA. PG courses provided by private providers must be designated for the students to receive DSA support. Students on PG ITT courses are potentially eligible for DSA under the UGFT or UGPT scheme. They are therefore **not** eligible for the PG DSA.

50. The Welsh Ministers may designate courses for the award of PG DSA that are not automatically designated under the Regulations. A provider will be required to apply to the Welsh Ministers via the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), in the same way as for UG courses, giving evidence of course aims and validation of the qualification. Course designation is considered an event and covered under point 17 above.

PERIODS OF ELIGIBILITY

51. The Regulations provide for DSA to be paid for the period ordinarily required to complete the course (subject to the course satisfying the requirement of regulation 112 (2017) and Schedule 4, paragraph 2 (2018)). If a student withdraws from the course, abandons or is expelled from the course the period of eligibility is terminated and no further support will be paid. Where a student intends at the outset to complete a PT PG course in not more than twice the period (for courses that began before 1 September 2014) or not more than four times the period (for courses which began on or after 1 September 2014) ordinarily required to complete an equivalent FT course but subsequently takes longer, the period of eligibility will terminate at the end of the AY during/at the end of which it becomes impossible for them to complete the course within the required timeframe.

Example 1 (continuing student): Student A studies PT for a Master's degree (which takes one year to complete studying FT) for two years and then studies PT for a PhD (which takes three years to complete studying FT) for a further six years. As the duration of each of the two PT PG courses does not exceed twice the period normally required to complete its FT equivalent, student A is eligible to receive support for the whole of that time.

Example 2 (continuing student): Student B undertakes the same two courses as Student A. However, student B studies PT for the Master's degree for two years, and then they study PT for the PhD for eight years. As the PhD normally takes three years to complete FT, the duration of the PT PhD exceeds twice the period normally required to complete its FT equivalent and is therefore not designated for support. Student B is only eligible for support for the two years of the Master's degree.

Example 3 (continuing student): Student C states an intention to study PT for a PhD for six years. The equivalent FT PhD would take three years. The student is awarded DSA in years one to five of the course as the PT study is at least 50% of a FT course. However, during the fifth year the student's pattern of PT study changes so that they now require a further three

years PT study to complete the course, making eight years in total. This period exceeds twice the period normally required to complete an equivalent FT course and so the student cannot receive DSA support for the final three years of the course. Their eligibility will cease at the end of the fifth year.

Example 4 (new student): Student D states an intention to study PT for a PhD for 12 years. The equivalent FT PhD would take three years. The student is awarded DSA in years one to eleven of the course as the PT study is at least 25% of a FT course. However, during the 11th year the student's pattern of PT study changes and they reduce intensity to below 25%. This will effectively make the period of study exceed four times the period normally required to complete a FT course and means the student cannot receive any further DSA support. Their eligibility will cease from when the intensity drops below 25%.

52. It is for HEPs to decide whether a PG course is FT or PT and whether a PT course takes more than twice the period ordinarily required to complete a FT course leading to the same qualification where the PT course began before 1 September 2014, or four times the period ordinarily required to complete a FT course leading to the same qualification where the PT course begins on or after 1 September 2014.

53. SFW may terminate the period of eligibility where the eligible PG student has shown themselves by their conduct to be unfitted to receive support. SFW may also terminate the period of eligibility or decide that a student no longer qualifies for an amount of grant if a student has failed to comply with a request to provide information or provided information that they know is false. If the provisions in regulation 113(7) (2017) and schedule 4, paragraph 10 (2018) are used, SFW may treat support paid to the student as an overpayment for recovery under regulation 119 (2017) and schedule 4, paragraph 22(2018).

TRANSFER OF ELIGIBILITY

54. Regulation 114(2017) and Schedule 4, paragraph 15 (2018) provide for eligible PG students to transfer their eligibility to another PG 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 provider recommends a transfer in writing and that the importing provider agrees to the transfer. If a student transfers their eligibility to another course, any DSA amount awarded for the first course, in the AY of the transfer, would need to be considered for the second course as the period of eligibility has not been broken. 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

55. Where a student has graduated and is proceeding directly to PG study, the medical evidence provided and DSA needs assessment undertaken in respect of the UG course should be sufficient to identify the student's support needs in respect of the PG course. This means, that the student could continue to receive support from non-medical helpers without the necessity of submitting new medical evidence or undergoing a new needs assessment. However, if new medical evidence is presented or a new needs assessment is deemed necessary, because the student's disability has changed in some way or the course is substantially different, this may be paid for from the PG DSA.

56. If the student seeks new equipment, SFW will need to take into account any equipment the student received from their UG DSA, having regard to how recently the equipment was bought and how appropriate it now is for the software necessary to support the student's disability. The Welsh Ministers' view is that SFW could replace equipment provided in the first year of an UG course but would need to look carefully at requests for new equipment if it had been provided in the final year of an UG course. Discretion on whether to agree equipment rests with SFW.

57. Students who have not studied recently (those with a break of at least two years since graduating) should be assessed in the same way as UG students. They should provide evidence of disability (which will need to meet the Equality Act definition) and then have their course related needs assessed.

POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS COMPLETING DISSERTATIONS AFTER THEIR COURSE ENDS

58. A student retains their status as an eligible PG student for a period equal to that which is ordinarily required to complete the relevant designated PG 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 PG 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 PG student will qualify for support during the writing up period.

59. However, there may be occasions when students request payment of DSA to continue when they are writing up a dissertation or thesis after the end of the period ordinarily required to complete the designated course. Regulation 113(8) (2017) and Schedule 4, paragraph 11 (2018) provide SFW with discretion to extend or renew a student's eligibility for such further periods as they consider appropriate after the expiry of the period ordinarily required to complete the course. This discretion might be used when a student is writing up a thesis or dissertation after the expiry of the period ordinarily required to complete the course.

60. In the case of PT designated PG courses that began before 1 September 2014, if the additional period of writing up a thesis or dissertation would mean that the overall duration

of the PT course will be more than double the time needed to complete a FT equivalent course, the PT course would then cease to be designated. Consequently, the student would not qualify for any further DSA support after the ordinary duration of the PT course. Where the PT PG course begins on or after 1 September 2014, if the additional period of writing up a thesis or dissertation would mean the overall duration of the PT course will be more than four times the time needed to complete the FT equivalent course, the PT course will cease to be designated and the student will not qualify for further DSA support.

ADMINISTRATION OF DSA

Evidence of a disability

61. For most applicants, there should be little difficulty establishing their eligibility for DSA. 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 DSA. Eligibility for DSA is not dependent on an applicant being registered as disabled. Since AY 15/16, the Regulations have applied the definition of disability contained in the Equality Act. Where a student is unable to provide evidence that they meet the definition of disability under the Equality Act they will be required to submit a completed disability evidence proforma. DSA are not intended to provide assistance to members of the general student population who suffer temporary illness or injury. Assisting such students would properly be the responsibility of the HEPs.

62. Care will be needed for applicants whose disabilities have not previously been identified. In such cases, SFW will request an assessment of the disability by a suitably qualified person or body for the purposes of establishing eligibility for DSA (see paragraphs 72 to 77 below).

63. Students can become eligible for DSA 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. Equipment needs may arise later in the course. SFW must not, therefore, adopt a policy of only accepting applications for the DSA at the beginning of a course.

64. Students who are physically disabled, or who have a mental health condition, will need to provide medical evidence of their condition, such as a letter from their doctor or an appropriate specialist. Medical disability evidence should state the nature of the student's disability and ideally should also briefly explain how the student is affected by the disability. Students with a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia will need to provide evidence of this in the form of a diagnostic assessment from a chartered or practitioner psychologist or suitably qualified specialist teacher (see Specific Learning Difficulties below). Since AY 19/20 a diagnostic assessment does not need to have been carried out after the student's 16th birthday to be valid for DSA purposes. Any cost a student incurs obtaining the necessary

expert evidence or opinion cannot be met from DSA. This is because such costs are not incurred by the student to attend or undertake their course. They are incurred to substantiate their claim for DSA. However, students might be able to receive assistance with such costs from their HEP's hardship fund once enrolled.

65. Cases may arise where SFW is not satisfied with the evidence initially provided. In such cases, the student should be invited to provide further evidence, perhaps in the form of a diagnosis undertaken by a body or person acceptable to SFW. In making such an invitation, it is important that SFW makes clear to the student that they will normally be liable to meet the cost of providing the necessary evidence. Students can, however, apply for help with such costs from their HEP's hardship fund once enrolled.

66. Cases may arise where SFW is unclear, from the medical evidence initially provided, how a student's disability affects their ability to study. In such cases, the student should be invited to provide further evidence from a body or person acceptable to SFW. The person acceptable to SFW may in some cases be an appropriate specialist with knowledge of the student's particular condition or an appropriate professional adviser. An example where this may be appropriate might be where a student who is deaf submits evidence from a teacher of the deaf who would have the specialist knowledge and skills required to be able to make this assessment. As with the above paragraph, in making such an invitation, it is important that SFW make clear to the student that they will normally be liable to meet the cost of providing the necessary evidence.

67. Where a student is in receipt of a disability related benefit, such as PIP or DLA, and provides a copy of their benefit award letter, SFW can use this evidence when establishing eligibility for DSA. The evidence must still confirm the required criteria under the Equality Act clearly, such as confirming day to day impacts etc. It is unlikely evidence of this type will confirm all the required criteria, and so will most likely be used in conjunction with other evidence provided.

68. Once SFW is satisfied with the medical evidence, the student is required to undergo a DSA study needs assessment to identify the appropriate course-related support. The cost of the assessment is met from the overall allowance of the DSA. 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 DSA support with their medical evidence. Given that the expert is unlikely to be aware of course requirements and technologies, there is still a requirement for the student to receive a separate full assessment of their course needs.

Where SFW is satisfied with partial evidence, i.e., student has more than one disability, the student's application can be processed based on the approved medical evidence for the accepted condition and the student can choose whether to provide additional information for

any other conditions. It is important for the student to understand that providing the additional evidence may or may not add to the support recommendations approved. For instance, the approved disability may provide sufficient support to cover the support required for the other condition and as such, sourcing additional evidence to receive approval for the second condition may not always generate additional support and may result in delays and additional costs.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

69. Once SFW has established that a student is an eligible student under the Regulations (for example, eligible to receive support for fees, living and other costs) the student is potentially eligible at that stage for DSA, subject to receipt of DSA evidence. A study needs assessment should be arranged as soon as possible after it is established that the student is eligible for support and SFW is satisfied that they have a disability, mental health condition or specific learning difficulty. This arrangement should mean that appointments for assessments are spread over the early summer and will help to reduce the backlog of appointments in September/October time. The needs assessment allows SFW to determine the amount of DSA for which the student is eligible. Given that the assessment may be carried out some months before the start of the course, some students may subsequently attend a different HEP or course. In such cases, a top-up assessment can be carried out once the student has confirmed their place on a course. Students should be advised not to attend a second study needs assessment without prior approval from SFW.

The current list of assessment centres is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-assessment-centre>

70. The cost of the DSA needs assessment is met from the overall allowance. The allowance may also be used to pay for the student's travel costs to the needs assessment. Where students do not subsequently start a course, they should not be asked to repay the needs assessment fee. If they reapply for a HE course the following year the needs assessment already carried out should be sufficient to process their new DSA application unless the course is significantly different or their circumstances have changed. From 1 January 2016, a maximum amount of £660 (plus VAT where applicable) of DSA funding will be available to individual students for their study needs assessments.

71. SFW will notify students that they will need to undergo a DSA needs assessment, ensuring that the student understands what is involved and that if they do not attend an assessment, they cannot progress their DSA application and will not receive the additional support they require. Students are directed to a list of available needs assessment centres in the DSA1 letter that students receive informing them they are eligible for DSA's. Students should contact a needs assessment centre and agree a convenient date and time as missed appointments contribute to the backlog in obtaining new appointments. With the explicit

consent of the student, the needs assessor may send a copy of the needs assessment report and award letter to the Disability Adviser at their provider once they have received confirmation of a place. Again, where consent is provided (captured on the SFW application form) SFW will send a copy of the DSA 2 letter to the HEP for information. This will help ensure that the support the student requires is put in place.

As part of the assessment booking process, the student should be offered a face-to-face assessment. However, students must be able to choose a remote study needs assessment if they wish and where appropriate to do so. The method of study needs assessment must take into account the student's circumstances and anticipated needs, for example, if there is a high likelihood that the student will benefit from trying different items of equipment during the assessment, this should be encouraged to be done in person. SFW do not have to pre-approve a remote study needs assessment, however, the method of study needs assessment, and the reason for that method undertaken must be highlighted on the student's study needs assessment report.

72. To support a remote study needs assessment, the Needs Assessor must have discussed all the options with the student, assessed availability in the area and concluded that the provision of remote assessment will meet the needs of the student.

73. Recommendations for remote NMH support will be considered through the normal processes, but only where it has been clearly identified that it is the student's choice, is in the best interests of the student and fully meets their needs. It is not expected that an NMH provider would opt for remote support simply as a way to reduce costs, whilst drawing the same level of funding from SFW. Students who have not had remote support agreed previously but see value in having their support conducted this way, should be referred back to their Needs Assessment centre. Additional recommendations should be submitted for SFW's consideration in the usual manner. Assistive technology training can be delivered remotely on the condition it brings the same benefits to that provided in person.

74. DSA will cover the cost of one study needs assessment (including any associated reviews).

However, SFW may be able to fund a review of the initial study needs assessment at a reduced fee of £300. A funded review may be considered if the student presents with a new condition not identified at their initial assessment, they have had a break of 2 or more years from study or where 5 years has passed since the initial assessment was conducted. Funded reviews will not generally be considered for worsened conditions, reviews at the student's request which do not meet one of the fundable criteria, or a change from UG to research-based PG course. Where the original assessment centre cannot provide the review, the student must be advised to contact SFW where consideration will be given to seeking an alternative assessment centre. In certain circumstances SFW may deem that a new

assessment is needed, this is available at the discretion of SFW. Students should be advised that they cannot have a second study needs assessment without prior permission from SFW.

DSA QUALITY ASSURANCE GROUP (DSA-QAG) CLOSURE

75. Following the closure of DSA-QAG in December 2019 and until alternative arrangements are introduced, the Welsh Ministers expect all assessment centres and equipment providers to adhere to the key principles and standards underlying the Quality Assurance Framework previously operated by DSA-QAG. All NMH providers must continue to have the required level of knowledge, skills, training and qualifications to deliver SFW DSA support competently and to meet professional standards.

76. Further information on the DSA-QAG closure and SFW DSA arrangements can be found here: <https://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/media/fejhm1w1/sfwin-230120-dsa-process-change-v10-final.pdf>

NEEDS ASSESSMENTS FOR STUDENTS STUDYING OUTSIDE WALES

77. It is hoped that the majority of Welsh students who study in England, Scotland or Northern Ireland receive a DSA needs assessment in their home area before they start their courses. This should be carried out by an assessment centre selected from the list provided via the student's DSA 1 letter. However, there will be occasions when students who are domiciled in Wales, but study in England, Scotland or Northern Ireland require a needs assessment during term time. In these circumstances, SFW will accept a study NAR carried out by centres used by DfE in England, SAAS in Scotland and DfE (NI) in Northern Ireland.

The role of the student

78. Students are advised to apply for DSA as soon as possible, to ensure that all parties involved in identifying and providing support are aware of the student's needs. The student is encouraged to contact the disability services at their chosen university at the same time as completing their DSA application form.

Disability Advisers

79. Most HEPs have someone responsible for advising on disability matters in support of students. The job title varies (for example they could be Disability officers or disability coordinators as well as advisers) but they are expected to play an important role in the DSA process. Those working in disability services will have the best understanding of their disabled student body and have a key role in ensuring support is delivered effectively. If requested to assist a student with arranging their DSA needs assessment, it is essential that they liaise with SFW before making any arrangements, primarily to ensure the student is an eligible student under the Regulations. It is essential that the disability adviser does not advise the student to

purchase equipment or services on the assumption that funding through DSA will be made available. Disability advisers understand the institutional environment and will have access to academic teaching staff and to detailed course information to help study needs assessors to identify appropriate recommendations for support. Disability advisers have an important role in the DSA process by offering advice on the support available, supporting students with their DSA applications, ensuring that the support recommended in the NAR is in place and working with Accommodation Services, Social Services, SFW and academic departments.

80. HEP Disability advisers will also have an up-to-date knowledge of the level and type of support already offered by the HEP as reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act, or more generally as part of the HEP's support for disabled students or students in general. Some trained disability advisers may also carry out DSA needs assessments. However, it is the view of the Welsh Ministers that it would not be appropriate for a disability adviser to carry out the DSA needs assessment of students for whom they are responsible.

81. DSA NARs will contain information about the student's disability, mental health condition or specific learning difficulty, which is classed as sensitive personal data under section 2 of the Data Protection Act 1998. Those releasing disability related data about the student to a third party must obtain written consent from the student. During the DSA needs assessment, assessors are requested to explain the role of the "disability adviser" and, once with the student's consent, a copy of the report should be sent by the assessment centre to the disability adviser and SFW. It helps study needs assessors if they are then provided with a copy of the student's SFW letter which sets out the agreed DSA support; this is subject to the student giving their consent to SFW to share a copy of their letter back to the needs assessor. This information would make assessors aware of any recommendations which have fallen outside the scope of the Regulations and reduce the likelihood of similar inappropriate recommendations in the future. The DSA application for AY 23/24 asks students to give their consent to the release of information about their DSA to third parties such as disability advisers and DSA assessors.

DSA study needs assessor

82. The role of the DSA study needs assessor is to consider the nature of the student's disability and the impact of that disability on the student's ability to access their chosen course. Consideration must be given to the learning environment of the student and the content of the course they intend to study. Through discussions with the student and using the information in the specialist diagnostic assessment report and an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan where one exists, the assessor should identify what support is essential to enable the student to undertake their course effectively. Assessors are required to have regard to the Student Support Regulations and this guidance when considering the support funded through DSA that they wish to recommend for the student. This guidance sets out what falls within the scope of DSA. If DSA are available, but the assessor determines that

some of the support is already provided by the provider, then DSA funding will not be necessary and should not be recommended for that support. The primary responsibility for supporting a disabled student rests with the provider; DSA are made available to complement the existing support. DSA study needs assessors should set out clearly in the report what recommendations they are making for DSA funded support and why. Any recommendations for DSA support will continue to require full justification. Decisions on the support to award will be taken by SFW, taking into account the recommendations of the DSA study needs assessor.

83. If the DSA study needs assessor identifies support that falls outside DSA funding, they will wish to advise the HEP of their findings for consideration. The DSA study needs assessor should not state how that support should be delivered or the level required – that is for the HEP to determine taking into account the individual needs of the student and their obligations under the Equality Act. Study needs assessors are required to follow certain processes when undertaking a DSA study needs assessment and compliance with those processes will be routinely monitored. A standard NAR is used to ensure consistency of approach. The Report will be sent simultaneously to SFW and to the HEP's disability service if the student gives their permission to do so. A guide to how assessors should fulfil their role is set out at Annex 4 below.

84. The DSA study needs assessor does not make decisions on eligibility or entitlement to DSA. This function has been transferred from the Welsh Ministers to SLC (including SFW). Eligibility criteria are set out in the Regulations. SFW will have regard to the opinion of the DSA study needs assessor when considering entitlement to DSA support.

85. SFW is a SLC service, providing financial support to students on behalf of the Welsh Ministers, support is provided to students who are from Wales entering HE in the UK. SFW is required to deliver DSA within the framework set by the Student Support Regulations and guidance. SFW may contact the Welsh Government with questions that arise from the applications they are processing, and the guidance may be updated to clarify the policy if needed.

86. SFW is required to make decisions on DSA awards, taking into account the recommendations of the DSA study needs assessor. SFW will challenge study NARs where DSA support is recommended that falls outside this guidance and a reasonable adjustment is known to be offered. Similarly, the report will be challenged if the individual DSA recommendations are not sufficiently justified according to the guidance and the impact identified during assessment. Challenges will be brought to the attention of the Assessment Centre manager for monitoring purposes. Needs assessors must take account of what help is available from the HEP when assessing what type and level of support is additional to that already available in order to make appropriate recommendations.

Recommendations for assistive technology must continue to be made using the e-quote system. In the unlikely event that an item is required for a student that is not listed on the system, the needs assessor must contact the SFW DSA team to discuss.

THE SCOPE OF DSA

87. SFW must satisfy itself that the student is obliged by reason of their disability to incur additional expenditure to be able to attend or undertake their course. SFW must also be satisfied that all such expenditure is reasonably incurred and appropriate to the individual needs of the student. DSA are not intended to assist with disability-related expenditure that the student would continue to incur if they were not following their course. For instance, 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.

The Equality Act 2010

88. The Equality Act 2010 (Equality Act) came into force from 1 October 2010. The Equality Act generally carries forward the protection that the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 provided for people with disabilities. It is for SFW, HEPs and further education colleges to take their own advice on how the Equality Act and related legislation applies to them.

The duty requires public authorities (which will include most colleges and universities), when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- promote equality of opportunity between people with disabilities and other people
- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Equality act 2010
- eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disabilities
- promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities
- encourage participation by people with disabilities in public life
- take steps to take account of peoples' disabilities, even where that involves more favorable treatment

These elements are defined as the general duty to promote disability equality. HEPs also have specific duties, which provide a clear framework to meet the general duty. Central to the specific duties is the requirement on HEPs to produce a Disability Equality Scheme. For further information on these duties see the Equality and Human Rights Commission Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Disability Equality.

89. In addition, it is unlawful under part 2 of the Equality Act 2010 for educational providers (including HEPs) to discriminate against disabled people. The Equality Act encompasses any services provided for students - education, training, leisure facilities and accommodation – and also covers admissions, enrolments and exclusions. Part 2 of the Equality Act includes two key requirements on bodies responsible for educational providers:

- i. Responsible bodies must not treat a disabled person “less favourably” than a non-disabled person for reasons related to their disability
- ii. Responsible bodies must make “reasonable adjustments” to ensure that a disabled student is not placed at a “substantial disadvantage”

90. Reasonable adjustments cover everything from admissions procedures, to teaching arrangements, exam procedures or course content. HEPs must anticipate what sort of adjustments may be necessary for disabled students in the future. The anticipatory nature of reasonable adjustments requires education providers to be proactive in finding out about individual disabled students’ needs but this does not mean that education providers should wait for a disabled person to approach them before giving consideration to the duty to make reasonable adjustments. The Equality and Human Rights Commission Code of Practice requires consideration and implementation of a range of mechanisms to overcome barriers that are likely to or would obviously disadvantage disabled people.

91. The duties in respect of students over 16 years were introduced in three stages: majority of legislation, September 2002, provision of auxiliary aids and services September 2003 and adjustments to physical features of premises, September 2005. This means that providers of goods and services must take reasonable steps to remove or alter a physical feature which makes it difficult for a disabled person to use a service or provide the service in an alternative way. The Equality and Human Rights Commission website (<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com>) provides a useful source of information about the Equality Act 2010 including guidance for the further and HE sectors.

Equality Act 2010 and work placements

92. Work placements are currently included in the Equality Act 2010 which means that college and university staff must take into account a person’s disability when arranging work placements and liaise with the work placement providers to implement the support. The Equality Act 2010 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 HE course. The providers of work placements are now required to ensure that they do not have discriminatory practices and 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.

Support appropriate to DSA

93. The following headings provide a breakdown of the disability-related support considered appropriate to the DSA, although it should be noted that the contents are not an exhaustive definition of support appropriate to the DSA or appropriate in all cases.

Specialist equipment – for example:

- Computer hardware/laptops
- Disability specific ICT peripherals, audio capture equipment and accessories
- Disability assistive software – not course-specific software
- Ergonomic furniture required for study purposes within the student's residence

Non-medical helper support – for example:

- Training in use of disability software
- Note-takers
- Disability-related specialist support
- Library support
- Human assistance with carrying course-related materials and mobility around the HEP
- Payments to non-medical helpers that comply with statutory employment rights (for example, tax, holiday pay)
- Support for practical coursework
- Communication support workers (inc BSL) to access lectures and other academic areas where learning takes place
- Administration costs incurred in recruiting and organising helpers
- Readers/scribes and proof-readers

General support

- other disability-related items not covered elsewhere; can also be used to cover additional costs associated with disability suitable accommodation.
- The costs of a study needs assessment or review of needs.

Travel Allowance (separate to the capped allowance)

- The extra cost (due to their disability) of the student's travel to and from a HEP
- The extra cost (due to their disability) of the student's travel to and from a work placement
- The extra cost (due to their disability) of the student's travel to and from a field trip.

Given the complexities surrounding disability-related support, it is impossible to provide an exhaustive list of support appropriate to DSA. In many cases, a separate decision would need to be taken, taking into account circumstances and the purpose of the disability-related support. The following principles should be used to decide if the support is appropriate for DSA funding when it is unclear if the funding should be met from the DSA or the HEP's own funding allocation:

- the support in question is not provided by the HEP for all other students and
- the equipment is provided for use exclusively by the disabled student.

The Welsh Ministers recommend:

- DSA should not be used for charges for support, counselling or tutorial services which the provider makes available to all students.
- DSA are not intended for the costs of extra academic tuition or support in the main subject area(s) being studied. Providers should normally meet these costs as part of providing the course.
- Similarly, where an HEP 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 HEPs may need to make to enable a disabled student to take examinations (for example, providing physical access to the examination hall or allowing the examinations to be taken and invigilated somewhere else) should not be set against DSA. Additional costs which the disabled student themselves needs to incur in taking their examinations (for example, a helper or item of specialised equipment) would however fall within the scope of DSA.
- DSA may be used only where a student is obliged by reason of their disability to incur costs in receiving specialised individual support. Some students will require additional support to develop appropriate learning strategies because of their disability, for example dyslexia or a mental health condition. The aim of this support is to maximise their ability and remove the barriers caused by the impairment. The costs of extra tutorial support to improve their study skills (for example, in essay construction and writing, examination techniques, revision skills) would be appropriate for DSA.

However, SFW should satisfy itself that the cost is reasonable and appropriate. If such study skills or IT support or IT installation and training are provided through the summer, it would seem reasonable to use DSA to pay for it. However, any such activities undertaken outside term time would not count as attendance on the course and therefore would not trigger extra weeks' maintenance loan.

Social services

94. 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 the Welsh Government to fund personal care support for disabled people and are responsible for deciding how their budget allocation is spent.

SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

95. "Specific Learning Difficulty" (SpLD) 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:

- a) Developmental SpLD – a neurologically based problem with particular aspects of learning despite appropriate educational opportunity and intellectual ability.
- b) Acquired dyslexia – 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, causing the print to appear distorted or the reader to lose the 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 the ability to acquire arithmetical and mathematical skills
- lack of structure in oral presentations and word retrieval difficulties
- short attention spans and a high level of distractibility
- poor organisation making time management very difficult

Screening for SpLDs

96. Screening for SpLDs usually precedes a diagnostic assessment and the purpose is to determine whether a full psychological or diagnostic assessment would be warranted. Screening for dyslexia does not constitute a diagnostic assessment of dyslexia and therefore SFW should not accept a screening for dyslexia as the sole evidence of dyslexia. There is no requirement for a student to undergo a screening for dyslexia when providing their evidence of dyslexia for HE purposes.

Full diagnostic evidence of SPLDS

97. A Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) Working Group was set up in 2003 to review the arrangements for identifying and assessing SpLDs in HE 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 DSA section of the SpLD Assessment Standards Committee website at: <http://www.sasc.org.uk>

98. The SpLDs Working Group asked a committee to take a lead in implementing a number of the report's recommendations. This committee is the National Committee on Standards in SpLD Assessment, Training and Practice (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 can be found on the SASC website at <http://www.sasc.org.uk> or Email: sascweb@sasc.org.uk.

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

Diagnostic assessments carried out before September 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 Annex 2).
Diagnostic assessments carried out between September 2006 and August 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept diagnostic reports from psychologists and specialist teachers. Specialist teachers must hold a current practising 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) or Dyslexia Action). Psychologists must hold a current practising certificate issued by their relevant professional association (for example, the British Psychological Society). • Diagnostic reports to be in the report format recommended in the SpLDs Working Group's guidelines

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 from September 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procedures as from September 2007 above plus the following: All training for assessing specific learning difficulties to incorporate the SpLDs Working Group's guidelines.
From September 2012 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psychologists will be registered with the HCPC (the Health and Care Professions Council, formerly the Health Professions Council) as practitioner psychologists.

99. Further information on identifying SpLDs through assessment can be found in the regularly updated guidance issued by SASC and its SpLD Test Evaluation Committee see <http://www.sasc.org.uk>. New guidance relating to the assessment of ADHD and updated guidance on dyspraxia is also available.

100. Diagnostic assessments 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, 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 the 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 PG courses.

101. If assessments 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 (for example, an assessment at aged 40 following diagnosis at aged 15, or an assessment at aged 18 following diagnosis at aged 7). A 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). This assessment is part of the diagnosis and the cost should be met by the student, although help may be available via the student's HEP. Students should speak to their HEP's disability officer for further advice. This assessment should be carried out by a qualified specialist assessor.

102. 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.

Students diagnosed after the start of their HE course

103. Students who might previously have attained high levels of academic achievement without any additional support may request DSA support after entering HE. In order to gain entry to HE, most dyslexic students have developed compensatory strategies. Although these strategies may have been adequate in their previous learning environment, they may be inadequate for coping with the greater demands of HE. The switch to independent learning and self-reliance in the organisation of study can present extreme difficulties. Students with SpLDs typically have greater problems in adjusting to independent learning because the necessary organisational capacity is weak. A student with SpLDs who has used compensatory strategies will usually need to put in more time and effort than other students to complete the same academic work. As they progress through their courses, the quantity and volume of work increases, and they can no longer cope without additional support.

Arrangements for engaging Non-Medical Helpers

THE EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS OF NON-MEDICAL HELPERS INCLUDING TAX AND NATIONAL INSURANCE CONTRIBUTION IMPLICATIONS

104. If non-medical helpers earn more than the NI lower earnings limit (which is £123 per week in tax year 23/24), any issues that arise relating to the employment of the non-medical helper and pay records will need to be submitted to HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC). In the tax year 23/24 Class 1 NI contributions are payable by the employer and the employee when the employee earns £242 per week or more. Employee's NI contributions are 13.8% of weekly earnings between £242 and £967. Employer's contribution is 13.8% on earnings of £175 and above per week. Non-medical helpers pay income tax on earnings over and above £12,570 per annum for tax year 23/24 but may have to pay tax on earnings below this level if, for example, they have other employment earnings which combined takes their earnings above the threshold. The employers of non-medical helpers are responsible for calculating the amount of tax and NI, deducting it from the employee's wages and making payments to HMRC. Employers may also be required to pay Employer's NI contributions. This will be in addition to the gross pay paid to the non-medical helper and therefore needs to be taken into

account when agreeing how much the helper will be paid. Non-medical helpers have certain other employment rights regardless of how much they earn. These rights are:

- itemised pay statements
- time off for public duties
- basic maternity leave for women
- basic paternity leave for men
- not be discriminated against on grounds of sex, race or disability
- not to be victimised for trade union membership
- paid holiday entitlements

For further details on rates and allowances in relation to NI contributions, please refer to the following: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rates-and-allowances-national-insurance-contributions/rates-and-allowances-national-insurance-contributions>

105. Information on the individual rights of employees may be accessed through the website at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/topics/employment>

106. NMH suppliers should not charge additional costs for travel and parking on top of their agreed rates. These costs should be quantified and factored into business costs.

THE EMPLOYER OF THE NON-MEDICAL HELPER

107. It is the engager's (for example, the student's or HEP's) role to decide whether the person they are hiring should be treated as an employee or self-employed. Individual and the engager are free to decide the terms and conditions of any engagement. However, the engager cannot simply call a contract employment or self-employment unless the facts support that. For the purpose of tax and NI contributions, where the facts suggest that the contract is one of employment, PAYE income tax and Class 1 NI contributions should be deducted. In order to make this decision, each case needs to be considered on an individual basis. It is impossible to provide comprehensive guidance on where employer responsibilities lie for every arrangement. The following case studies provide an indication of who would be treated as the employer of the non-medical helpers. They are based on advice received from HMRC technical advisers. Further advice on identifying the employment status of non-medical helpers can be obtained direct from HMRC Enquiry Offices and at: <https://www.gov.uk/employment-status>

CASE STUDY 1

The university recruits, organises and trains the non-medical helpers. The university invoices SFW and then pays the non-medical helper.

Assuming there is a contract of service between the HEP and the non-medical helper, regardless of the invoicing arrangements, the HEP, as the employer, is responsible for PAYE/NICs. If under the same arrangements, SFW or student pays the non-medical helper on the HEP's behalf as its agent direct this does not affect who is the secondary contributor (the person responsible for paying the secondary contribution which is normally the employer).

CASE STUDY 2

The student recruits, organises and pays the non-medical helper directly.

Assuming there is a contract of service between the student and the non-medical helper, the student is the employer and responsible for PAYE/NICs.

CASE STUDY 3

The student recruits and arranges their own non-medical helper. The university draws the DSA monies from SFW and pays the non-medical helper on the student's behalf.

Assuming there is a contract of service between the student and non-medical helper the student as the employer, is responsible for PAYE/NICs. The fact that the HEP pays the non-medical helper on the student's behalf as their agent does not affect who is the liable secondary contributor.

108. In all of the three case studies, if the non-medical helper runs their own business: for instance, negotiates their fees independently of the HEP and has a number of other clients, it is likely the non-medical helper is self-employed and responsible for their own Class 2/Class 4 NICS and tax on their trading income.

109. For assistance in determining the correct employment status of the non-medical helper you can use HMRC's interactive Employment Status Indicator (ESI) tool. The ESI is an online tool which HMRC use to determine a worker's employment status. It is free and easy to use and can help you work out whether the non-medical helper is employed or self-employed in all but the most complex of cases. The ESI is available at:
<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/calcs/esi.htm>

110. Generally DSA funding will not be available for individuals without an appropriate employment status for example, they must be registered with HMRC to pay tax and NI on their earnings. DSA funding will not be provided for family members or friends to provide NMH support without evidence that they have the appropriate qualifications and employment status. Students will be asked to provide appropriate evidence when requesting that a family member or colleague provides their support. Exceptions can be considered, for

example for the short-term, where an appropriate support worker cannot be identified before the student's studies commence.

RELIEVING STUDENTS OF EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITIES

111. Few students are trained or equipped to act as the employer of a non-medical helper and we also believe that whenever possible disabled students should not be burdened with employer responsibilities if they do not desire this role. As SFW has no role in engaging non-medical helpers and agreeing the terms of engagement, it is unlikely that SFW would be the employer of a non-medical helper. It may help SFW when approving payments for non-medical helper support to request a statement from the helper that they are self-employed or a statement from the employer confirming they are acting as the employer of the non-medical helper. But remember, individuals and their engagers are free to decide the terms and conditions of any engagement, but they cannot simply call a contract employment or self-employment unless the facts support that. The following arrangements could be considered to avoid students being the employer of their non-medical helpers.

USING NON-MEDICAL HELPERS EMPLOYED BY HEPS

112. 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, NI and other employer-related costs.

USING SELF EMPLOYED NON-MEDICAL HELPERS

113. Non-medical helpers who are self-employed are responsible for their own tax and NI and are not covered by the employment legislation set out in the paragraphs above. Therefore, using a self-employed non-medical helper for the particular engagement would mean that students, or any other body, are not the employer of the non-medical helper. For the purpose of tax and NICs it is the engager's responsibility to decide whether someone is an employee or self-employed. HMRC can provide advice. 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.

ANNUAL LEAVE

114. From 1 April 2009, a FT worker has a statutory right to take a minimum of 5.6 weeks paid annual leave, (28 days if working a 5day week) this is prorated for those working PT.

115. The entitlement begins on the first day of employment. The amount of leave accrues monthly at the rate of one-twelfth of the annual entitlement each month. When the calculation does not result in an exact number of days, the amount of leave is rounded up to the next half day. For example, a worker who works 5 days per week would have accrued 6 days annual leave after 3 months (24 divide by 12 x 3), or 7 days annual leave after 3 months (28 divided by 12 x 3).

EMPLOYER'S LIABILITY (COMPULSORY INSURANCE)

116. The Employer's Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969, as amended, requires employers to take out insurance against liability for bodily injury or disease sustained by their employees during the course of employment. This requirement applies when the employer deducts NI and income tax and controls where and how the work is carried out. Employer's Liability Insurance is not required if the worker is self-employed. More information about employer's liability insurance is available from the Health and Safety Executive. For further guidance and clarification on the above and other employment legislation, advice should be taken from the appropriate sources.

NATIONAL LIVING/MINIMUM WAGE

117. Information on national living/minimum wage rates can be viewed at the below link:
<https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates>

ADMINISTRATION CHARGES FOR ARRANGING NON-MEDICAL HELPERS

118. In the context of DSA, many HEPs arrange and administer non-medical helper support however HEPs 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 Welsh Ministers accept that it is legitimate for HEPs to add the relevant element of these administration costs into their charges for non-medical helper support. Furthermore, the Welsh Ministers accept 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.

119. Although it is permissible for HEPs to recover administrative costs associated with the provision of DSA funded non-medical helpers, DSA cannot be used as a contribution towards the infrastructure, general administration and pastoral costs of the HEP. That is, DSA must not be used to cross-subsidise the infrastructure of HEPs' disability services.

120. HEP governing bodies are responsible for the proper stewardship and value for money of public funds. The amount they claim for DSA administration needs to be relevant and proportionate, and to have been incurred by the HEP 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.

121. Costs should be based on actual delivery and not assessed delivery. It is reasonable for SFW to ask for evidence that the support for which they are invoiced by HEPs was delivered.

122. 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**. HEPs should clearly distinguish the types of services and their costs on invoices submitted to SFW. SFW will need to assure themselves about the amounts claimed by individual providers. They might, for example, ask providers to submit details of how their administrative costs have been calculated with the first claims each year.

123. A fundamental review of costs should be undertaken by HEPs 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.

124. SFW should satisfy themselves that claims for DSA 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

125. The Welsh Ministers would not support a general policy of paying for NMH provision that has been recommended in a DSA NAR and put in place by a HEP or other provider, regardless of whether the student takes up that support. There will of course be occasions where a student fails to attend NMH sessions at short notice for reasons such as illness, etc. It is the Welsh Ministers' view that if the student is required in such circumstances to pay a cancellation charge, then the charge could be met from the student's DSA as part of the expenditure they were obliged to incur to secure NMH support. For example, where the terms of a contract the student has entered into with a HEP or other provider of NMH support stipulate that a charge will be made for missed sessions if less than 24 hours' notice of cancellation is given.

126. However, the Welsh Ministers would expect the number of missed sessions and the reasons for not attending to be closely monitored. Where students continually fail to attend NMH sessions without good reason a point must come where SFW can no longer agree to pay

for NMH provision that is not being used. "Continually" could mean, for example, where 3 or more sessions are cancelled or missed by the student. Sessions cancelled by the HEP or the provider will not be covered by DSA, unless there are exceptional circumstances that are beyond the control of either party, for example HEP strike action impacting on students' ability to attend their session. Similarly, where students give notice part way through the year that they no longer need or want NMH support, we do not consider that SFW should continue to pay for NMH provision that is not being taken up. Additionally, if a student has not used the NMH in the last year of study then SFW will not request updated costs for NMH support. The Welsh Ministers consider that it would be reasonable for SFW to request evidence that any NMH support for which they are invoiced by HEPs or other providers has been delivered.

PAYMENTS OF DSA

127. Regulation 24 (2017) and regulation 63 (2018) (FT DSA), regulation 71 (2017) (FTDL DSA), regulation 88 (2017) and regulation 63 (2018) (PT DSA) and regulation 110 (2017) and Schedule 4 (2018) (PG DSA) provide a 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, SFW will wish to consider the practical implications for the student who may have to make frequent payments to support workers. For example, a student who has to pay a helper £60 per week may have difficulty in meeting such costs in advance of receiving their grant instalment. While we do not recommend the payment of the full allowance available to the student in advance of the services carried out, SFW may wish to consult their auditors on whether provisional monthly or termly payments might be paid based on an estimate. SFW 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

128. In some cases, it may be necessary or desirable for students to purchase items of special equipment before the start of their courses, so that they may make use of them from the very beginning of their studies. SFW should not expect students initially to make large payments themselves and then claim reimbursement. Once SFW has established that the student is eligible for DSA, it would not be unreasonable for it to arrange the purchase and supply of equipment shortly before the start of the course once the student's place is unconditional, for example, after "A" level results and it is established that the student is eligible for student support. In particular some students may need longer time for training in the use of their DSA equipment and software. Needs Assessors and Disability Advisers may recommend that equipment is supplied before the start of the course to allow time for training in the use of the equipment. We advise that SFW accepts such recommendations. We would not expect SFW to make payments of DSA well in advance of the start of the course, particularly where the student is still at school. Regulations permit for payment of DSA grant in respect of the

academic year of the present course to be made prior to receiving attendance confirmation from the HEP, this will enable students to receive and become familiar with their equipment prior to commencing their course.

PAYMENTS TO THIRD PARTIES

129. The Welsh Ministers recommend that SFW pays DSA directly to assessment centres and suppliers of services and equipment after obtaining the student's written consent; this is obtained in the application form. We discourage SFW insisting that students purchase recommended DSA equipment using their own monies and then reimburse the student from the DSA. The Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998 (section 22) and the student support regulations authorise the payment of DSA directly to students. Therefore, payment directly to a third party would not satisfy the statutory requirements unless the student consents to this in the application declaration.

DSA APPLICATIONS RECEIVED IN THE FINAL STAGES OF A COURSE

130. Some students may apply for DSA support in the latter stages of the final year of their courses. If a need for disability-related support is identified in the latter stages of the course, it is important the student receives the appropriate support, even if it is only for a short period until the end of the course.

131. A concern is that students applying late may not receive their DSA support before the end of their courses. It is recommended that students applying near the end of their courses are also referred to their Disability Advisers for further advice. Disability Advisers may be able to arrange human support, such as exam support, study support or revision skills, at short notice. However, the usual DSA needs assessment would be required to identify any assistive technology requirements. Although it is reasonable for special equipment needs to arise at the end of a course, we continue to advise that SFW treats with caution applications for equipment towards the end of a student's course. If suppliers are willing to rent out equipment and if rental is better value for money, SFW should consider rental or hired equipment as the 2017 and 2018 Regulations allow for support to be provided by way of hire or rental as well as through outright purchases. Assessment centres can offer information on equipment suppliers who provide equipment for hire or rental.

However, it is important that students receive the necessary support and, in the event, that it is not possible to rent or hire equipment, purchases of equipment should be made.

STUDENT LEAVES A COURSE AFTER RECEIVING EQUIPMENT

132. If a student receives DSA equipment while on their course and then 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

133. 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 early, for example, 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 62(5) (FT students) (2017) and regulation 90 (2018), regulation 80(3) (2017) (FTDL students), regulation 109(7) (PT students) (2017) and 90 (2) (2018) and regulation 119(6) (PG students) (2017) and Schedule 4, paragraph 22 (2018).

134. 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 SFW had not been notified that the student had left the course). This will constitute an overpayment for the purposes of regulation 62 (FT students) (2017) and 90 (2018), regulation 80 (2017) (FTDL students), regulation 109 (PT students) (2017) and 90 (2018) and regulation 119 (PG students) (2017) and Schedule 4, Paragraph 22 (2018).

135. SFW will be able to accept the return of the equipment to the supplier, a monetary repayment or a combination of both. 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. SFW should clearly explain 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' ALLOWANCE

136. Under VAT law, equipment and appliances are VAT zero-rated if:

- they are designed *solely* for use by a disabled person
- the supply is to a disabled person for their personal or domestic use
- the equipment is relevant to a person's disability

If the supplier has received advice/confirmation from the "designer and/or manufacturer" that the goods are "designed solely for use by a disabled person" (condition "i" above) and the supplier is satisfied that conditions ("ii" & "iii" above) for VAT relief are met, he should not

charge VAT on the goods at the time of supply. Before zero-rating the goods, a supplier should ask a purchaser to complete an “eligibility declaration” contained in VAT Notice 701/7/2002 Reliefs for disabled people.

137. The services of adapting goods that have not been designed solely for use by disabled people, to suit the condition of a disabled person can also be zero-rated. The goods themselves however remain standard-rated and the value of those goods and of the zero-rated services of adaptation can be apportioned when calculating the VAT chargeable.

For the purpose of VAT relief, a disabled person is:

- a person with a physical or mental impairment which has a long term and substantial effect on their ability to carry out everyday activities
- a condition which the medical profession treats as a chronic sickness (for example, diabetes), or
- a person who is terminally ill.

COMPUTER EQUIPMENT THAT MAY BE ZERO-RATED WHEN SUPPLIED TO A DISABLED PERSON FOR PERSONAL OR DOMESTIC USE

138. In general, computer equipment is only zero-rated if it is designed solely for use by a disabled person. Examples of equipment which might qualify for zero-rating include special items of furniture, Braille embossing printers and speech synthesisers. A central processor can **by concession** be zero-rated if it has software installed which enables a disabled student to use the computer effectively or to carry out tasks effectively when otherwise they could not do so and is sold as part of a computer system.

139. When a computer system is purchased that contains both elements on which VAT is chargeable as well as zero-rated, the supplier may decide by concession to apply a “composite rate” of VAT to the whole system. Suppliers who decide to apply a composite rate of VAT for computer packages may do so after consulting HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC). Please refer to Section 9 of VAT Notice 701/7/2002 Reliefs for disabled people.

140. General purpose goods and services such as standard recording or computer equipment (standard printers, keyboards, VDUs or software) are not eligible for VAT relief even when purchased for, or by a disabled person. There is no provision for VAT relief on taxi fares and VAT will be chargeable in the usual way.

141. Under VAT notice 701/7/2002, the following are listed as services which might be zero-rated to a disabled person: installation of qualifying goods, adaptation of general goods, repair and maintenance, of qualifying goods some building alterations, goods supplied in connection with qualifying services and letting of goods on hire or lease.

DSA EQUIPMENT ORDERED AND PAID DIRECT BY SFW

142. DSA funds belong to the student and items purchased with these funds remain the property of the student. SFW is unable to order equipment on a student's behalf. VAT is properly chargeable at the time of purchase (for example, the VAT relief, if appropriate, is applied at that time by the supplier) and cannot be reclaimed from HMRC by SFW or the student.

143. 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 reliefs for disabled people, on **0300 123 1073** or by visiting the HMRC website at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vat-notice-7017-vat-reliefs-for-disabled-people>

INTERNET CONNECTION

144. Internet connection will no longer be covered by DSA, other than in exceptional circumstances. The Welsh Ministers only recommend approval of internet access in exceptional circumstances. The wide availability of internet access within providers, student accommodation and other venues has removed the necessity of providing individual personal internet access. Exceptions should be considered by SFW on a case-by-case basis.

HIGH COST COMPUTERS

145. Study needs assessors should identify the lowest specification computer that meets the student's needs. DSA will only be available for high-cost computers for example, non-PC laptops and desktops including Mac (and iPad), PC computers with larger memory, faster processors and/or graphics cards where there is a robust disability-related justification for computer support and written confirmation from the course director (or equivalent) indicating that the course cannot be completed via a PC platform. DSA study needs assessors should not recommend a high-cost computer unless it is essential and the student's specific need must be appropriately evidenced.

When electing to run courses requiring access to a non-PC platform, or other higher cost equipment, providers must consider how its students, including disabled students, will access the appropriate equipment. Providers should make appropriate provision for access to such IT equipment.

NON-RECOMMENDED SUPPLIERS AND UPGRADES

146. There is no statutory requirement that students should purchase the DSA equipment or other support they need from a known supplier. However, although a student is free to use a different supplier from that recommended in the DSA NAR, they may only use DSA monies to purchase support which has been agreed by the SFW. SFW will need to be satisfied that the expenditure is reasonable. Purchases made directly by students should always be supported by receipts which SFW may request under the provisions of Schedule 3 (2017) and regulation 35 (2018). If a student wishes to purchase equipment of a higher specification than that recommended, they must use their own monies to meet the extra costs. Students must be advised on the risks when purchasing with their own money directly from a supplier.

ELECTRICALLY POWERED WHEELCHAIRS AND SCOOTERS

147. Generally the cost of purchasing wheelchairs and scooters would be incurred regardless of whether the student is attending a course. The need for a wheelchair or mobility scooter is unlikely to be solely related to their study. They would therefore not normally be covered through DSA funding. Individuals may qualify for support from the health authority or through DWP benefits to meet their mobility needs.

USING DSA TO SUPPORT PARTICIPATION IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

148. The Regulations allow for DSA to be used for additional expenditure on extracurricular activities which SFW is satisfied the student is obliged to incur in connection with their attendance on (or their undertaking) a designated course. This would not allow DSA to be used to support a student when participating in Freshers' week or other extracurricular activities where there is no link with the course of study. If it could be demonstrated that the extra-curricular activity is a course requirement, there is no statutory bar to paying a DSA to allow the student to participate in that activity. It is recommended that DSA 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 this is course related. It should be noted that course related costs which all students on the course are required to incur are not covered by DSA, for example items required by all students to attend a field trip such as waterproof clothing would fall outside the scope of DSA. It is expected that any reasonable adjustments which could have been anticipated when planning a field trip should be met by the provider.

REIMBURSING HEPs FOR SUPPORT PROVIDED BEFORE A DSA ASSESSMENT WAS CARRIED OUT

149. Students will not be reimbursed for items bought before the study needs assessment has been carried out. In the event the student commences their course before receiving their study needs assessment, HEPs may be able to 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.

STUDENT FAILS TO PAY AN ASSESSMENT CENTRE OR SUPPLIER

150. Although it is recommended that SFW 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 monies and make payments direct. In some cases, the DSA assessment has been undertaken but the student has not paid for the assessment. Advice is that this does not constitute an overpayment and that this is a matter between the assessment centre and the student. There are no provisions in the Regulations which would enable SFW 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

151. It has also been asked what should be done if DSA monies have been paid to a supplier of specialist equipment (paid either by the SFW or the student) and the supplier has gone bankrupt before supplying the equipment. In such circumstances, 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. However, if the student is unable to recover the monies or obtain their equipment, a further grant could be paid but subject to the prescribed financial limits. SFW may exercise discretion here to ensure the student is not disadvantaged for situations beyond their control.

The role of disability organisations

152. National disability organisations such as RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People) and Action on Hearing Loss (previously Royal National Institute for Deaf People) can often provide valuable specialist support and advice upon which SFW can draw. They can help SFW in one or more of the following ways:

- providing information on particular disabilities
- assessing students' needs
- helping with the training of Student Support Officers
- increasing awareness of DSA in their own constituent groups
- providing a network of wider help for SFW

153. The Welsh Ministers' view is that it is important for SFW to establish good working relationships with the national bodies. SFW who have a nominated officer with responsibility for DSA will find it easier to establish and maintain a good working relationship. Assistance of the type described above from a national body need not replace any local arrangements that SFW may already have but can usefully supplement them.

DISABILITY RIGHTS UK

154. Disability Rights UK is a national charity which gives information and advice to disabled students and the people who work with them. They can support students who are studying in Wales with general information on the Equality Act, welfare benefits and access to HE. All of the Disability Rights UK's factsheets are available on their website:

<https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/how-we-can-help/benefits-information/factsheets/education-factsheets>.

The Disabled Students Helpline is open 11:00am-1:00pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Telephone number 0330 995 0414, and email: students@disabilityrightsuk.org

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DISABILITY PRACTITIONERS (NADP)

155. The National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP) Ltd is the professional organisation for disability and support staff in FE and HE. NADP is for anyone working in the post-16 education sector and involved in the management or delivery of services for students with disabilities. NADP is available to respond to questions SFW may have on the role of disability staff and how they support disabled students.

National Association of Disability Practitioners Ltd
212A Lansdowne Building
2 Lansdowne Road
Croydon
Surrey
CR9 2ER
Tel/Fax: 0208 263 6220
Email: admin@nadp-uk.org
Website: <http://www.nadp-uk.org>

THE NATIONAL NETWORK OF ASSESSMENT CENTRES (NNAC)

156. The National Network of Assessment Centres (NNAC) comprises of assessment centres that previously registered with DSA-QAG. NNAC represents assessment centre managers and

all those who work within centres. NNAC itself does not currently deal with complaints about assessment centres, which should be directed to the individual centre concerned.

NNAC Administration Centre

Email: admin@nnac.org

[NNAC – NATIONAL NETWORK OF ASSESSMENT CENTRES \(BOOKYOURDSA.COM\)](https://www.nnac.org.uk/)

COMPLAINTS

157. DSA funded students should raise any complaints with the supplier of their service in the first instance. Where the student and supplier are unable to resolve matters the student should now be directed to SLC. Details of SLC's complaints procedure can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/student-loans-company/about/complaints-procedure>

Further guidance

158. It is important that students who may be eligible for DSA know that they are available. Guidance and other information can be downloaded from the website:

<https://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk>

THE DSA APPLICATION PROCESS

Application procedures for students applying for DSA in respect of full-time courses

159. It is important for SFW to identify as early as possible in the application process any applicant who may be disabled. Students are asked on the third page of the PN1 and the third page of the PR1 if they wish to apply for DSA and to provide details and, if possible, evidence of their disability. Continuing students applying for the non-income assessed element of the student loan are asked on the second page of the PR1a if they wish to apply for DSA. These questions allow the SFW user to recognise and prioritise the processing of these application forms. Where a student answers yes to these questions, the SFW user, at data entry is prompted to raise an "Issue Information Pack" task. This task should then be processed by SFW (this may be the responsibility of the same person who completed data entry or another officer). The process of assessing a disabled applicant's needs for their course, and arranging for those needs to be met, can take time. The aim must be for them to be completed before the start of the course so that the student can embark on it properly equipped.

160. It is recommended that SFW has nominated officers with specific responsibility for handling DSA applications. SFW should also ensure that other officers are trained in DSA work to provide cover for the nominated officers during periods of absence. The Welsh Ministers

commend this as good practice to be followed wherever possible. It is also recommended that SFW DSA officers make full use of the notes facility on the single system which will help other Student Support Officers to provide instant answers to enquiries and maintain standards of customer service, particularly in the absence of the nominated DSA officer.

PROVIDING INFORMATION TO STUDENTS

161. The process of applying for DSA can be confusing for students as they do not always understand what evidence is required. Therefore, 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 providers. Students should also be made aware that they have responsibilities to supply information promptly to minimise the risk of delay in processing their applications and arranging their support.

Therefore, SFW letters issued to students should include the following:

- Information on the evidence of disability/specific learning difficulty required from students together with a brief outline of the DSA process. This letter should be issued with “Extra help - Disabled Students’ Allowance in 2023/24” when students enquire about DSA or have indicated on their application forms that they wish to apply for DSA. The AY 23/24 DSA application form (either DSA1F for students who have not yet submitted a student support application or DSAL for those who have) should also be sent at this stage to obtain the consent of students attending FT courses.
- A brief outline of the DSA assessment process and its importance. This letter would confirm the SFW accepts the evidence of disability/specific learning difficulty 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 SFW has agreed the DSA support to be awarded.
- Named SFW contacts for DSA enquiries.
- A reference to Disability Advisers at HE providers as a source of further assistance for the student. Whenever possible it would be helpful if SFW included the name and contact details of the Disability Adviser at the student’s provider.

162. Individual circumstances may require different approaches (for example, different arrangements for arranging DSA assessments or obtaining equipment). The letters should clarify the required evidence of providing a diagnostic assessment report for students with specific learning difficulties in line with the recommendations of the SpLDs Working Group which are being taken forward by National Committee on Standards in SpLD Assessment (SASC).

163. Where SFW rejects an application for DSA or allows only part of the application, it should provide clear reasons to the applicant for its decisions. In such cases, it would be expected that SFW at the same time provided the applicant with information on its appeals policies and procedures. Whatever the outcome, the Welsh Ministers expect all applications to be dealt with expeditiously. It is recommended that SFW makes full use of the notes facility on the students' record on the system to detail information that may assist with enquiries from students.

164. The DSA flag (found on the Eligibility Details screen) is defaulted to "Undetermined". Once the SFW has determined a student's eligibility to receive DSA they should set the flag accordingly. DSA cannot be made against a student's record in any year unless the DSA flag for that year has been set to "eligible".

165. In 23/24 the PN1 and PR1 forms request that, whenever possible, students wishing to apply for DSA should include evidence of their disability with their completed application form. The PR1a form requests that students should provide details of their disability. SFW should note that continuing students who received a DSA earlier in the course are not required to resubmit evidence of their disability. 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, SFW should consider the advice provided below to minimise the risk of delays in the DSA application process.

- SFW identifies students wishing to apply for DSA by checking the third page of the PN1 or the third page of the PR1 and second page of the PR1a and the accompanying evidence of a disability if supplied immediately on receipt of application forms
- SFW determines 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, SFW should contact the student with a view to arranging a needs assessment.
- Further to the student being advised that they require a needs assessment, they can enter their postcode to find their nearest DSA assessment centre by using the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-assessment-centre>

- If a student has indicated they wish to apply for DSA on their application form but not included evidence of a disability, SFW should establish eligibility for support and then issue a DSA application pack, consisting of the booklet "Extra help - Disabled Students' Allowance in 2023/24", "Application for Disabled Students' Allowance 2023/24 (form DSA1) and a covering letter, requesting the student returns evidence of their disability

166. The AY 23/24 DSA application form (either DSA1F for students who have not yet submitted a student support application or DSAL for those who have) is also used for obtaining student consent to paying suppliers direct and for releasing information about the student's DSA application to third parties such as Disability Advisors and DSA needs assessors. DSA1F can be issued by SFW to FT UG students with "Extra help - Disabled Students' Allowance in 23/24 at the beginning of the application process. The DSAL form for 23/24 can be requested via the correspondence screen in the student's account. From AY 19/20, SFW enhanced the service to enable SFW FT students to apply for DSA through their online account.

Application procedures for students applying for DSA in respect of full-time distance learning courses, part-time courses and postgraduate courses

167. Students wishing to apply for DSA support in respect of a FTDL course or a PT UG are requested to complete only part of the DSAL if they have already completed a PTG1 or an application for the PT TFL. PG students will be required to complete all of the DSA1F. In order to expedite the application process, it is recommended that SFW requests that students provide evidence of their disability with their completed application form.

168. The DSA application process for students undertaking FTDL, PT and PG courses involve completion of the DSA1F/DSAL form by the student and endorsement of course details by providers. Under the Equality Act, disabled students have the right to confidentiality which means that they are not required to reveal their disability to their provider. We expect that most students will not object to asking their providers to endorse their application form. However, some disabled students (we expect the number to be minimal) may object to asking their provider to complete the form because this would disclose that they are disabled and deny their rights to confidentiality under the Equality Act.

169. In the event that a disabled student does object to their provider seeing their application form on the grounds that this breaches their right under the Equality Act 2010, we recommend the following action:

- the student completes all parts of the application form except Section 5 and returns the form to the SFW
- the student obtains a letter from their SFW requesting information from the HEP about their course and the student's study pattern
- the student passes the letter to the HEP
- the information is returned by the HEP to the SFW via the student

Letters should not mention that the student is disabled or is applying for DSA.

For all DSA applications, SFW must consider if the student requires reasonable adjustments to help them complete the application process. This can include taking application details over the phone or engaging with a nominated third party to act as an intermediate between SFW and the student. Records of any reasonable adjustment required must be recorded on the student's notes for future reference.

ANNEX 1

LIST OF RESEARCH COUNCILS

Research Councils

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) at www.ahrc.ukri.org

Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) at <https://bbsrc.ukri.org/>

Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) at <https://esrc.ukri.org/>

Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) at www.epsrc.ukri.org

Medical Research Council (MRC) at www.mrc.ukri.org

Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) at www.nerc.ukri.org

Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) at <https://stfc.ukri.org/>

ANNEX 2

ACCREDITED COURSES

Courses accredited by the British Dyslexia Association (BDA) for dyslexia assessments carried out by teachers. You should contact the BDA for details of the specific providers and courses that meet the DSA requirements. BDA details can be found here: <https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/>

Courses Leading to SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate. Details of the courses that will qualify successful candidates to apply for SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate from Patoss or Dyslexia Action can be found at: https://sasc.org.uk/SASC_Default.aspx?id=16

This list will be updated as more courses are approved by the BDA Accreditation Board for AMBDA or by SASC as meeting the training requirements for SpLD Assessment Training.

ANNEX 3

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 SpLD 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 or Email: sascweb@sasc.org.uk

ANNEX 4

Non-medical Helpers – Guiding Principles

The following should be considered by study needs assessors when recommending NMH support:

- All disabled students, wherever they might be studying, should have equal access to good quality and cost appropriate non-medical help support.
- Where possible, DSA should be used to promote independent study solutions. NMH should be used where independence requires additional facilitation or is not possible due to disability-related issues.
- Duplicate support strategies should be avoided, unless a blended approach is taken to assist with transition (for example, providing a note taker until a student develops the skills to use a digital recorder themselves).
- All non-medical helpers should have the required level of knowledge, skills, training and qualifications (where appropriate) to deliver the support competently and to meet professional standards.

When assessors recommend and charge non-medical help work to SFW, they should consider:

- whether the costs of non-medical help services are comparable and represent an appropriate cost for the service provided and
- the training, range of qualifications, type/level of experience and professional standards required by the individual providing the service.

Activity titles currently allowable for DSA funding are shown in the table below:

Practical Support Assistants

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, ICT 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' 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 and good interpersonal skills.

Qualifications/training: Generic NMH training and 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.

The primary responsibility for providing this support lies with the HEP, however, DSA funding remains available where required.

HEPs should consider what reasonable adjustments can be put in place to meet the practical support needs of the student. In any event, DSA 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

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: Generic NMH training required and an understanding of the HE context.

The primary responsibility for providing this support lies with the HEP, however, DSA funding remains available where required.

HEPs should consider what reasonable adjustments can be put in place to meet the library support needs of the student.

Reader

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 and sufficient skills to cope with the demands of the text including any technical jargon.

Qualifications/training: Generic NMH training required and some understanding of the HE context.

The primary responsibility for providing this support lies with the HEP, however, DSA funding remains available where required.

HEPs should consider what reasonable adjustments can be put in place to meet the 'reader' needs of the student.

Scribe

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 and an 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/training: GCSE English Language grade C or above. No professional body membership has been identified for this support. Generic NMH training and some understanding of the HE context are considered.

The primary responsibility for providing this support lies with the HEP, however, DSA funding remains available where required.

HEPs should consider what reasonable adjustments can be put in place to meet the 'scribe' needs of the student

Workshop/Laboratory Assistant

Supporting a student in gaining access to the practical aspects of their course, for example, in the laboratory or in a workshop/studio situation.

Skills Required: Knowledge and experience of the educational setting where the student is studying, for example, laboratory or workshop.

Qualifications/training: Generic NMH training, sufficient knowledge in the requisite practical area and health and safety training relevant to the workshop context considered.

The primary responsibility for providing this support lies with the HEP, however, DSA funding remains available where required.

HEPs should consider what reasonable adjustments can be put in place to meet the workshop/laboratory support needs of the student.

Sighted Guide

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 and good interpersonal skills.

Qualifications/training: No qualifications or professional body membership has been identified for this support. Generic NMH training, sufficient knowledge in the requisite practical area and health and safety training relevant to the workshop context.

Proof-Reader/Text Checker

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 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 HEPs 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 and 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: GCSE English language grade C or above. Generic NMH training, specialist training relevant to the demands of the activity and an understanding of the HE context.

The primary responsibility for providing this support lies with the HEP, however, DSA funding remains available where required.

HEPs should consider what reasonable adjustments can be put in place to meet the proof reading/text checking needs of the student.

Study Assistant

This role does not refer to the specialist 1-to-1 skills support which is provided under band 4 support. This support is provided where a mix of enabling strategies complemented by some practical assistance has been required. This is usually because 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 for example library support, workshop support etc.

Skills required: An enhanced level of skill and experience of working with disabled students, 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 4, 1 to 1 Study Skills Support or Specialist Mentors, knowledge of the way the HEP/organisation works and the demands of studying in HE, excellent interpersonal skills, and clear understanding of issues of confidentiality.

Qualifications/training: Generic NMH training, specialist training relevant to the demands of the activity and an understanding of the HE context.

The primary responsibility for providing this support lies with the HEP, however, DSA funding is available where required.

HEPs should consider what reasonable adjustments can be put in place to meet the study assistant support needs of the student.

Examination Support Workers

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, for example 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 and a clear understanding of the activity and high level of personal integrity to not make any additions or amendments to student's answers.

Qualifications/training: Generic NMH training, competent knowledge of English, specific subject expertise where relevant for example to cope with technical jargon and an understanding of the HE context.

The primary responsibility for providing this support lies with the HEP, however, DSA funding is available where required.

HEPs should consider what reasonable adjustments can be put in place to meet the examination support needs of the student. In any event, the cost of any arrangements that HEPs may need to make to enable a disabled student to take examinations (for example 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 DSA. HEPs 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

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 notetaking 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. 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 and the successful achievement of that assessment and evaluation.

Qualifications/training: Other training, including at a HEP, delivered by an appropriately qualified trainer who can demonstrate a relevant qualification in notetaking, and which leads to a final skills assessment and certificate. Other formal UK notetaking qualifications should be considered.

The primary responsibility for providing this support lies with the HEP, however, DSA funding remains available where required.

HEPs should consider what reasonable adjustments can be put in place to meet the need for capturing information from lectures, seminars etc. or for providing notetaking support for the student. There is a wide range of ways to deliver information to students which may reduce or remove the need for individual notetaking, 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 notetaking 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 DSA funding is provided for notetaking, the DSA study needs assessor will be asked to determine the required format of notes at the needs assessment taking into 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 HEP.

Where DSA funded notetaking is recommended, DSA study needs assessors will be required to provide the following information, where possible: the actual number of notetaking hours required based on timetable or where this is not possible (for example, 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 HEP, discussion with the student etc. Where typed notes are required by the student the DSA study needs 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 notetaking, but only where it has not been possible to provide a note-taker that can take typed notes or typed notes are not appropriate.

Notetaking costs should be clear on the invoice. Typed notes should be invoiced as manual notetaking (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 notetaking (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 expected. Typing up charges should be no more than half the amount charged for the actual notetaking session and no more than half the time of the notetaking. 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 student's specific needs) is £10 per hour, with only half an hour being the appropriate charge (for example an additional £5). The typing up of written notes by the notetaker or a third party is not electronic notetaking or specialist transcription services and should not be recommended or charged as such.

Communication Support Workers and Lip Speakers

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 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 1 to 1 support. This does not include academic support.

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

Specialist Notetakers for Deaf and Visually Impaired Students

There are a range of Specialist Note Taking options which can be provided for sensory impaired students. DSA study needs assessors should discuss with the student which option will be most appropriate for them to gain access to their course. This is different to Notetakers and Specialist Transcription Services. This support activity is predominantly for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, and for visually impaired students. 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 notetaker may be either a manual notetaker (handwritten notes or handwritten notes that are later typed) or a trained 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. ENT: requires the NMH 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 NMH 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 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.

Electronic Notetaking (ENT) ENT systems involve a trained operator usually using a standard laptop and specialist software (NoteEd®, Speedtext® or Stereotype®) 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

(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.

Specialist Transcription Service

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.

The primary responsibility for providing this support lies with the HEP, however, DSA funding remains available where required.

HEPs should consider what reasonable adjustments can be put in place to meet the specialist transcription needs of the student.

Mobility Trainer

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 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.

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.

Specialist Mentors

Specialist mentors provide highly specialist, specifically tailored, 1 to 1 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, ADD/ADHD or ASDs. 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 and are expected to provide support that focuses on enabling the student to access their academic studies, rather than on the management or treatment of a specific condition. 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, for example, 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.

Mental Health mentors particularly should not act as mental health advisors or counsellors: these are roles which should be provided via a student's HEP or the NHS. DSA 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 disability, understanding of the demands of study in HE and close working relationship with other support services both inside and outside the HEP and recognition of when there is a need to refer to other services.

Specialist 1 to 1 Study Skills Support

This specialist 1 to 1 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 SpLDs or an ASD often face when working in an HE context. This support is primarily provided for students with an SpLD, ADD/ADHD or an ASD. 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 for example SpLD or ASD on a 1 to 1 basis, also experience of working with these disabilities in an educational/learning environment and a good working knowledge of assistive technologies and related AT study skills strategies would be desirable. When working with students with SpLDs, an in depth understanding of the effects of SpLDs 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 SpLDs 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.

British Sign Language (BSL) Interpreters

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, to receive information in 1 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.

Specialist Support Professional (SSP) for students with sensory impairments

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 HEPs disability officers and teaching staff on what adjustments could be made 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 (SSP) for deaf or hard of hearing students

The support provided by the SSP is bespoke so that it reflects the individual needs of the student and their personal learning style. In addition, to 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 workload 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, for example, an amplified stethoscope, should be provided to the HEPs as needed. This support is not subject specific, rather it is support aimed at enabling access to study. This

support will include appropriate modification to allow for language of assignments. For a student whose preferred communication is BSL, the SSP must have the level of BSL specified within the DSA assessment.

Specialist Support Professional (SSP) 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 vocabulary. The specialist supports planning workload 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 HEPs about 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 language of assignments. For a student whose preferred communication is BSL, the SSP must have the level of BSL specified within the DSA assessment.

Assistive Technology (AT) Training

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. HEPs 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, HEPs should consider bulk-buying licences to enable their disabled student body to access on-going training free-of-charge.

Skills required: 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 AT, 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 HE.

ANNEX 5

Updates log

Date	Updates
April 2023	Standard rollover updates
June 2023	V1.0 published