



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

To:

Institutions in Wales providing designated Higher Education courses
The Student Loans Company
UCAS
The Open University in Wales
Student Finance Wales Stakeholder Group
NUS Wales
Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
Universities Wales
Disability Wales
British Assistive Technology Association
Independent Assessments Centres in Wales
Disabled Students Stakeholder Group Members
Equality and Human Rights Commission in Wales

February 2019

Dear Colleague

DISABLED STUDENTS' ALLOWANCES – PROPOSED CHANGES TO ELIGIBILITY EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES (SpLDs)

This Information Notice details a proposed change to the eligibility evidence requirements for students with SpLDs applying for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) from Student Finance Wales (SFW).

To date, students applying for DSAs in relation to an SpLD have been required to provide a diagnostic assessment report undertaken after the student's 16th birthday. As of the date of this notice, SFW will not reject diagnostic assessment reports submitted in connection with an SpLD on the basis of the student's age at the time of the diagnostic assessment.

SFW finds it reasonable to remove the age aspect of this eligibility evidence requirement. The proposed relaxation will help improve the process of applying for DSAs.

Summary of proposed change to DSA eligibility evidence requirements

Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) are available to cover the additional study-related costs faced by disabled students as a direct result of their disability, such as a long-term health condition, mental health condition or SpLD. The Education (Student Support) (Wales) Regulations 2018 and the Education (Student Support) (Wales) Regulations 2017 (as amended) stipulate that DSAs can be awarded to students who incur additional costs while studying as a direct result of their disability.

Prior to this change, in order to determine their eligibility for DSAs, students with SpLDs have been required to provide proof of their condition through a diagnostic assessment from a psychologist or suitably qualified specialist teacher, with applicants needing to be re-assessed if the assessment had taken place when they were under 16 years of age. These re-assessments would typically be costly and self-funded or full/part-funded by the student's Higher Education Provider. It would also usually lead to a delay in the processing of a student's DSA application.

Therefore, as of the date of this Information Notice, SFW will accept diagnostic assessment reports as evidence of SpLDs, regardless of the age of the student at the time of the assessment.

This change will apply to all new and continuing full-time, part-time, and postgraduate students (including distance learning) applying for DSAs for the first time.

ENQUIRIES

If you have any queries about DSAs or this Information notice, please contact the Higher Education Division, Welsh Government – email studentfinancedivision@gov.wales. If you have an enquiry about a student's DSA application please contact SFW on 0300 200 4050.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh. Correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to any delay.

Large print, Braille, and alternate language versions of this document are available on request. A copy of this Information Notice can be downloaded in Welsh or English at www.studentfinancewales.co.uk.