



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Student Finance Wales Information Notice

SFWIN 03/2020

Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) - Diagnostic Assessments for students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs).

In the context of the physical distancing guidance currently in place to reduce Covid-19 infections, the SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC) has recently considered whether it is possible for diagnostic assessments for SpLDs to be carried out remotely rather than face-to-face. SASC has concluded that a full diagnostic assessment cannot be carried out remotely, but that it is possible for assessors to produce a professional interim evaluation of need based on a remote screening and diagnostic interview¹. This short SFWIN is intended to clarify the position regarding what evidence the Student Loans Company (SLC) can accept to demonstrate eligibility for DSAs.

While under normal circumstances we would require a full diagnostic assessment of a SpLD to be submitted as evidence of eligibility for DSAs, we do not wish there to be a delay in students accessing the support they need through DSAs. We have therefore decided that DSAs applicants who do not already have a full diagnostic assessment for a SpLD will temporarily be able to submit an **evaluation of need** carried out in line with the SASC guidance, and that SLC will accept this as evidence of eligibility for DSAs.

This means that SLC will accept evaluations of need which have been undertaken up to and including **31 August 2020**. Given the current uncertainties around the Covid-19 situation, we will keep this date under review and any extension to this cut-off date will be publicised. Students who have their eligibility for DSAs agreed on the basis of such an evaluation of need will not be expected to provide a full diagnostic assessment later on to confirm their eligibility, unless they make a new application for DSAs (for example, if they are currently on an undergraduate course and later on apply for DSAs for a postgraduate course).

Providers should note that all remote evaluations of need must contain the wording of the 'specific statement' as advised in the SASC guidance² to be acceptable.

¹ The relevant SASC guidance is available at

<https://sasc.org.uk/SASCDocuments/Diagnostic%20assessment%20online-SASC%20position%20paper%20March%202020%20final.pdf> and

<https://sasc.org.uk/SASCDocuments/Physical%20Distancing%20and%20SpLD%20Assessment%20SASC%20Guidance%20May2020.pdf>

²<https://sasc.org.uk/SASCDocuments/Physical%20Distancing%20and%20SpLD%20Assessment%20SASC%20Guidance%20May2020.pdf>