

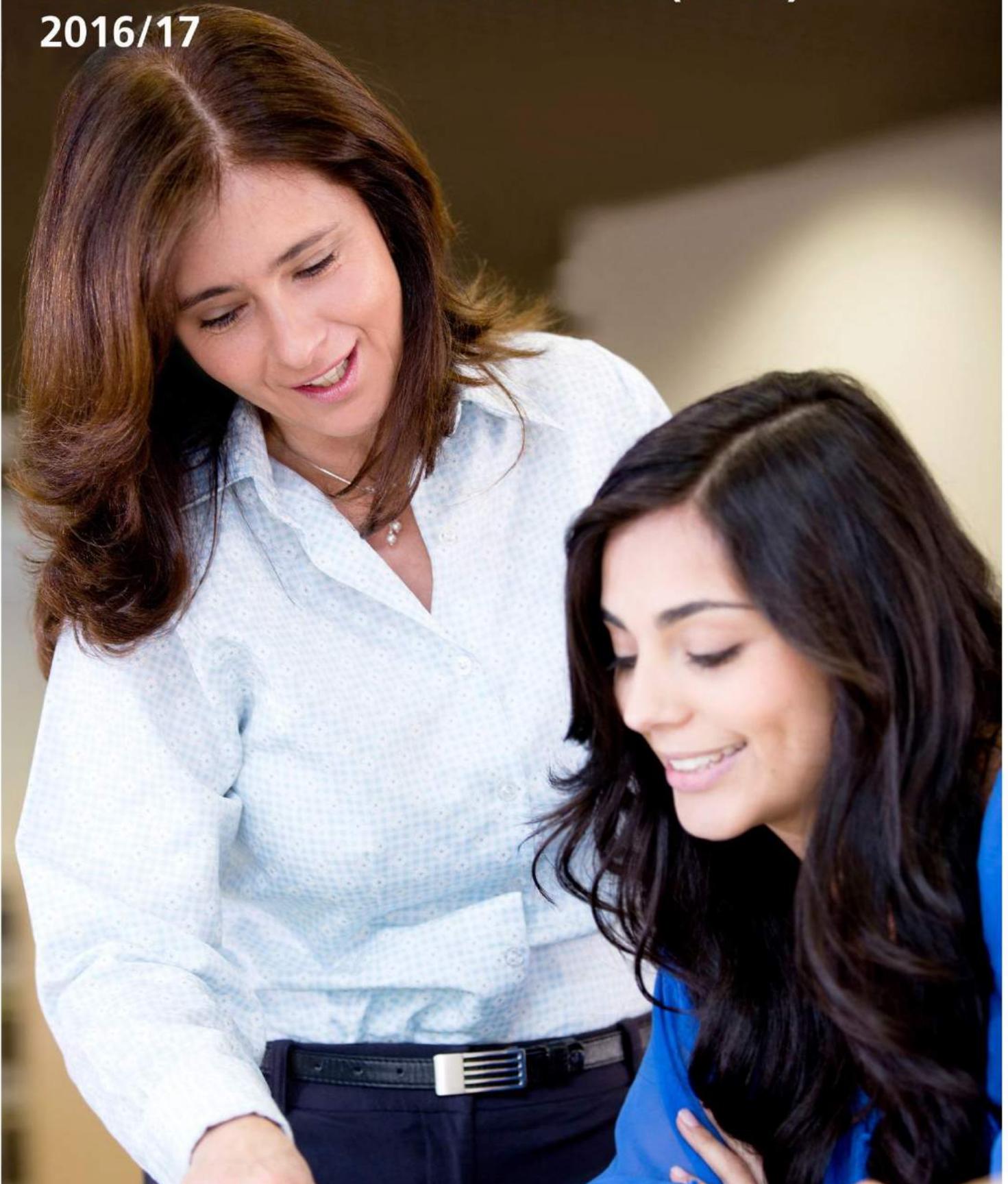
Student Services

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**Business Services Authority**

# Disabled Students Allowances (DSAs) 2016/17



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## Section 1: Introduction

This guide provides information about Disabled Students Allowances (DSAs) for new and continuing NHS funded students who are undertaking pre-registration healthcare courses in England from 1 September 2016 to 31 August 2017. The guide also applies to medical and dental students who are ordinarily resident in England at the start of their course but who may be undertaking their training in other UK countries. For the purpose of this guide the term 'institution' refers to any Higher Education Institution providing pre-registration healthcare courses, eligible for NHS Bursary funding in England or any UK country for medical and dental students.

Institutions have the primary legal duty to support disabled students in their studies in higher education, set out in [the Equality Act 2010](#). The government provides additional funding for individuals through the Disabled Students Allowances (DSAs). Provisions in the Care Act mean that a person aged 18 or over who has eligible needs for care and support will in future receive a statutory Care and Support Plan delivered by a Local Authority.

DSAs are awarded under the rules of [the NHS Bursary Scheme](#), which is updated and published annually by the Department of Health (DH). The Scheme is administered by the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA). From 2016/17, the Secretary of State has discretion to determine whether the additional costs a student is obliged to incur in connection with undertaking a course because of their disability will be covered by the DSAs.

This document provides the detail on how this discretion will be exercised and has been adapted from the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) DSAs guidance for 2016/17. These changes will apply in respect of new and continuing students applying for DSAs for the first time in respect of an academic year beginning on or after 1 September 2016.

### 1.1 The purpose of this guidance

This guidance is for use by DSAs study needs assessors and NHSBSA DSAs assessors when considering the support that may be funded through DSAs. Institution staff may also find the information helpful when considering how best to support their disabled students and signposting students to available DSAs support.

Institutions are under a duty to support disabled students as set out in the Equality Act 2010. An institution should anticipate and respond to the needs of its disabled students where it is reasonable to do so. The decision on how to satisfy that duty is for the institution to determine and advice is available from other sources, for example, [The Equality Challenge Unit](#). The DSAs guidance does not set out what an institution should do to meet that legal duty, but it does indicate where DSAs are

likely to have a primary role and where institutions are expected to have a primary role.

The DSAs guidance sets out the type of support that may be funded for students through DSAs. It sets out changes to the provision of certain non-medical help support ([Section 4](#)), certain computer and peripheral equipment ([Section 5](#)) and accommodation costs ([Section 7](#)).

The DSAs study needs assessor will continue to consider what DSAs funded support is essential for the individual student. This reflects the requirement that funding through DSAs will only be provided for costs a student is *obliged* to incur. The DSAs study needs assessor will have regard to this guidance and NHS Bursary Scheme rules when determining what DSAs funded support to recommend for the student, including where it is indicated that the primary source of support is expected to be via the institution. The Secretary of State requires the NHSBSA to deliver DSAs according to the NHS Bursary Scheme rules and the guidance set out here.

The DSAs assessor should also be aware of the requirement for local authorities to provide the DSAs assessor with current assessment information for young people with special educational needs who have been supported through an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan while at school and/or college, where requested by the student<sup>1</sup>.

## **1.2 The purpose and scope of the Disabled Students Allowances (DSAs)**

DSAs are available to contribute to the additional costs that a student is obliged to incur, in relation to their studies, because of their disability. 'Obliged to incur' means that the support is essential to enable the student to access their studies. DSAs should supplement the provision of reasonable adjustments made by institutions. DSAs are not available in place of a reasonable adjustment. Expenditure being considered for DSA purposes must be reasonably incurred and appropriate to the individual needs of the student. DSAs are **not** intended to assist with disability-related expenditure that the student would continue to incur if they were not following their course of study. Local authority social services 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.

It remains the case that DSAs will only be considered where it has been established that the student is obliged by reason of their disability to incur additional expenditure to be able to attend or undertake their course i.e. the support is essential. Such expenditure must be reasonably incurred and appropriate to the individual needs of the student.

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<sup>1</sup> 0-25 SEN Code of Practice, Chapter 8, page 134, paras 8.45-8.48:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

Disabled students should expect to be able to study effectively and leave higher education as more autonomous, independent learners, ready to follow their chosen career. The provision of support, both by institutions and DSAs, should focus on achieving those outcomes.

A DSA is personal to the student and may not be used to contribute to the infrastructure, administrative or pastoral costs of the institution concerned, or to other services which the institution might reasonably be expected to provide. The allowance may not be paid to any third party without the written consent of the NHSBSA and the student.

### **1.3 Who the changes apply to?**

Any changes set out in this document apply to all disabled students applying for DSAs for the first time for academic year 2016/17, even if they are already part way through their course. Continuing students in receipt of DSAs will continue on their current package of support for 2016/17. This includes undergraduate and postgraduate students studying part-time or full-time.

### **1.4 The role of the NHSBSA**

The NHSBSA administers NHS Bursaries for students enrolling on pre-registration healthcare courses in England, and medical and dental students who are ordinarily resident in England and undertaking courses at institutions in any UK country. Funding is administered in accordance with the rules of [the NHS Bursary Scheme](#) on behalf of the Secretary of State under Section 63(6) of the Health Services and Public Health Act.

The NHSBSA is required to deliver DSAs within the framework set by the NHS Bursary Scheme, which is published by the DH. The NHSBSA may contact DH with questions that arise from the applications they are processing and the guidance may be updated to clarify the policy if needed.

The NHSBSA is required to make decisions on DSAs awards, taking into account the recommendations of the DSAs study needs assessor. The NHSBSA may challenge study needs assessment reports where DSAs support is recommended that falls outside this guidance and a reasonable adjustment is either expected or is known to be offered. Similarly, the report will be challenged if the individual DSAs 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.

Where a student or institution approaches the NHSBSA to seek additional DSAs funding in the absence of reasonable adjustments, the case may be brought to the attention of DH to determine what action might be taken in relation to the institution's

response. For example, DSAs support might be put in place through the Exceptional Case Process (ECP), whilst discussions are underway with the institution ([see Section 8.5](#)).

## **1.5 The role of the student**

DSAs are a grant for NHS funded students to help pay towards the extra costs they may incur as a direct result of a disability, long-term health condition or specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia or dyspraxia. Like all other NHS Bursary awards, students do not normally have to pay this back, unless they have received any payments in excess of their entitlement i.e. specialist equipment purchased prior to the start of the course, where a student does not enrol. Any student wishing to apply for DSAs should continue to do so. The time-limits governing applications for student support are set out in Section 3 along with other eligibility criteria.

The application process is set out in [Section 3](#). Students are advised to apply for DSAs 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 institution at the same time as completing their DSAs application form, to ensure reasonable adjustments can be considered.

## **1.6 The role of institution disability services**

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

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

Disability advisers have an understanding of the institutional environment and will have access to academic teaching staff and to detailed course information. They should have an up to date knowledge of the level and type of support offered by their institution as reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act, or more generally as part of the institution's support for disabled students or students in general, to help inform the student about any barriers they might face, and provision they can access

to reduce barriers. Institutions should also be working towards making this information readily accessible to relevant stakeholders, including students and Assessment Centres.

If contacted by a student it is essential that the disability adviser does not advise the student to purchase equipment or services on the assumption that funding through DSAs will be made available. Eligibility for DSAs can only be determined by the NHSBSA and entitlement to funding through DSAs will be based on the recommendations of a DSAs study needs assessor.

## 1.7 The role of the DSAs study needs assessor

The role of the assessor is to:

- consider the nature of the student's disability
- consider the learning environment of the student
- consider the impact of the student's disability on their ability to undertake their course
- analyse the student's previous educational experience and the effectiveness of any strategies
- identify appropriate solutions to enable barriers to be overcome
- explain to the student that support may also be available from the institution and to encourage the student to discuss their additional needs with the disability adviser at the institution

Assessors make recommendations; they do not make final decisions on eligibility or entitlement to DSAs. Decisions on eligibility and entitlement are a Secretary of State function which has been delegated to the NHSBSA. Eligibility criteria are set out in the NHS Bursary Scheme rules. The NHSBSA will have regard to the recommendation of the DSAs study needs assessor when considering entitlement to DSAs support.

Through discussions with the student, and using the information or medical evidence provided by their GP, consultant etc. (and information in any specialist diagnostic assessment report, statement etc. where appropriate), the assessor should identify what type of support is **essential** to enable the student to undertake their chosen course.

A Needs Assessment Report (NAR) should be readable as a standalone document which clearly demonstrates:

- the impact of the student's condition on their ability to undertake their course
- an understanding of the requirements and demands of the student's chosen course at their preferred institution

- an understanding of the teaching practices for the student's chosen course at their preferred institution
- an analysis of all the support strategies available to the student
- a clear decision making process for the support strategies ultimately recommended
- a commitment to the provision of cost-effective solutions for each student within the parameters of DSAs funding as set out by BIS

The Needs Assessor should consider the barriers that need to be addressed and set out the strategies that are necessary to overcome the barrier(s) in the NAR.

Assessors should set out clearly in the report what recommendations they are making for DSAs funded support. Any recommendations for DSAs support will require clear and robust evidence-based justification.

Assessors should only recommend support from suppliers that are accredited by DSA-QAG to deliver DSAs funded services, qualified to provide the type of support recommended and have the requisite capacity to provide the support. Where a provider does not have the capacity to provide the support, the student should be referred back to the assessor to select alternative provision. The provider should not select alternative provision.

DSAs support should not be recommended where support is available from another source e.g. the institution, local authority etc.

Assessors are required to follow certain processes when undertaking assessments, and compliance with those processes will be audited annually by DSA-QAG. A standard NAR template must be used to ensure consistency of approach. The NAR will be sent to the NHSBSA and simultaneously to the student.

If the assessor identifies a need for support that is indicated as being the primary responsibility of the institution or which falls outside the scope of DSAs funding, these should be noted throughout the report and a summary provided which the student can share with the institution for consideration under reasonable adjustments.

The assessor should not state how support that is required from the institution should be delivered or the level required – that is for the institution to determine taking into account the individual needs of the student.

## **1.8 Disabled Students Allowances Quality Assurance Group (DSA-QAG)**

DSA-QAG is a non-profit making company with charitable status. Its Board consists of a Chairman, two NUS trustees and two independent trustees. Institutions,

assessment centres and equipment suppliers are 'associate members' of DSA-QAG, with observers from BIS and the SLC. A central administrative unit supports this work. DSA-QAG has responsibility for a quality assurance framework against which levels of service for both DSAs assessment centres and equipment suppliers are audited. From 2016/17 a registration process, quality assurance framework and audit function for NMH suppliers is being introduced. DSA-QAG is also responsible for delivering this service.

Since 2015/16, only DSA-QAG accredited assessment centres can provide DSAs-funded study needs assessments (England and Wales). Assistive technology, including assistive software, is expected to be provided and installed by registered assistive technology service providers. Students may opt to source their computer from the open market. More information on DSA-QAG and a list of registered and accredited assessment centres and suppliers is available at the following website: <http://www.dsa-qag.org.uk/>. A new DSA-QAG registration scheme is being put in place for non-medical help providers from 2016/17. All NMH providers will be required to register in order to supply support for new DSAs students in 2016/17. Existing DSAs students ([see Transitional Arrangements](#)) may continue with their existing NMH provider.

DSA-QAG organisations that are accredited to deliver DSAs-funded services are required to comply with the standards set out in the DSA-QAG Quality Assurance Frameworks in order to retain accreditation to deliver DSAs related services <http://www.dsa-qag.org.uk/Framework-Documents/framework-documents.html>  
This does not affect their membership of DSA-QAG.

From 2016/17, assessment centres, assistive technology service providers and non-medical help providers are required to be registered with DSA-QAG in order to deliver DSAs services for English-funded students, unless they are based in Scotland or Northern Ireland. Scottish assessment centres should be validated by the Scottish Government's Disabled Student Advisory Group in order to provide services for English-funded students. Assessment centres in Northern Ireland do not currently require accreditation.

A BIS-led oversight group has the role of considering the accreditation of the DSA-QAG membership organisations and considering actions for organisations who do not meet expected standards.

## **1.9 Conflicts of Interest**

Public funds should be used fairly, transparently, and for the purpose intended. Anyone making decisions about the administration, distribution or use of DSAs must at all times be conscious of any relationships or links they have, or any actions they take or do not take, that could raise doubts about their impartiality or probity. This includes any relationships or links – including personal, financial, business or familial

– that could be seen to have an influence on their decision making. Managing conflicts of interest appropriately is essential for protecting the integrity of the DSAs process. [Separate guidance on conflicts of interest is available](#) .

## **1.10 Transitional arrangements**

The changes set out in this guidance apply to:

- i. Students who are starting an NHS Bursary eligible higher education course for the first time in 2016/17 and are applying for DSAs for the first time.
- ii. Students who are starting an NHS Bursary eligible higher education course in 2016/17 and are applying for DSAs, having studied on a previous course where they were not awarded DSAs.
- iii. Students who are starting an NHS Bursary eligible higher education course in 2016/17 and are applying for DSAs, having ceased to undertake a previous HE course where they were awarded DSAs more than 5 months before the start of the current course (i.e. the gap between the two courses is more than an intervening vacation).
- iv. Students who are continuing an NHS Bursary higher education course in 2016/17 and who are applying for DSAs for the first time.

## **Section 2: The Equality Act and the role of institutions**

As independent and autonomous bodies, institutions that provide NHS Bursary eligible pre-registration healthcare courses are entirely responsible for addressing any issues of discrimination that might come to their attention. The Government provides a legal framework for individuals, which protects their right not to be discriminated against – primarily through the Equality Act 2010. Institutions are prohibited by law, through the Equality Act 2010, from discrimination against students with protected characteristics which includes disability.

Under the Equality Act 2010 institutions have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people to ensure they are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled students.

The duty to make reasonable adjustments comprises three requirements:

- Where a provision, criterion or practice puts disabled students at a substantial disadvantage compared with those who are not disabled, to take reasonable steps to avoid that disadvantage.
- Where a physical feature puts disabled students at a substantial disadvantage compared with people who are not disabled, to take reasonable steps to avoid that disadvantage or adopt a reasonable alternative method of providing the service or exercising the function.
- Where not providing an auxiliary aid or service puts disabled students at a substantial disadvantage compared with students who are not disabled, to take reasonable steps to provide that auxiliary aid/service.

The duty to make adjustments arises where a provision, criterion or practice, a physical feature or the absence of an auxiliary aid or service puts disabled students at a substantial disadvantage compared with students who are not disabled.

The Act leaves open what particular auxiliary aids or services might be provided in specific circumstances. The duty remains with the education provider to determine what steps it would be reasonable for them to take.

### **2.1 Anticipating reasonable adjustments**

The duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students is anticipatory, which means institutions must plan ahead and take a strategic approach to addressing the barriers that potentially impede individuals with different kinds of disability. This will involve institutions putting in place systems that are inclusive or can be utilised as appropriate by disabled students, staff and/or visitors.

Some disabilities are more common in the student body than others. BIS evidence shows that the prevalence of Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) in the UK domiciled student population has been fairly constant over the last decade and is estimated to be higher than in the general population. Students with SpLDs constitute just under half of the higher education population that declare a disability, the largest disability group that institution provision needs to accommodate. Within this group the most common learning difficulty is dyslexia. This suggests that all institutions will have a number of students with dyslexia who may require adjustments, which could include making changes to course materials and course delivery.

We would expect institutions to particularly consider what anticipatory adjustments should be made to accommodate this significant proportion of disabled students. However, we recognise that for some students these adjustments will not be sufficient, and for these DSAs support will need to be accessed.

## **2.2 Responding to individual requirements**

It will not always be possible for institutions to anticipate the needs of every prospective disabled student. Disability is an individual experience, with both the nature and the impact of the disability varying from individual to individual. Once an education provider becomes aware of the requirements of an individual disabled student it should consider what reasonable adjustments it can make to meet those requirements.

In the past, the provision of DSAs may have removed the need for reasonable adjustments in some cases. However, DSAs funding is not a replacement for reasonable adjustments. Institutions should not take the continued provision of DSAs as setting the limit to their reasonable adjustments. We expect institutions to strive to provide the best possible support for all their students, including their body of disabled students, to continue to remove or reduce the need for individual support through DSAs. From 2016/17 an expectation is placed on institutions to take primary responsibility for certain areas of support. DSAs will remain available by exception only. See the following sections for further details.

## **2.3 Examples of reasonable adjustments and good practice**

Over time we hope the sector will develop a resource of case studies of good practice in institutions, which those involved in strategic planning within institutions may wish to have regard to. Each institution will have its own response to how to best support its body of disabled students and case studies may be offered as examples, not a statement of what each institution should be doing in a particular area. However, DSAs will be considered on the basis that institutions will take the primary role in providing certain types of support and DSAs will only be considered for such support by exception only. See the following sections for detail.

There are many sources of information on managing reasonable adjustments, for example, Managing Reasonable Adjustments in Higher Education (Equality Challenge Unit 2010), Code of Practice on Students with Disabilities and Learning Difficulties (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2010)) etc.

## **2.4 The Equality Act and work placements**

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

## **Section 3: General eligibility and entitlement**

The personal eligibility criteria for receiving an NHS Bursary, including DSAs, are set out in the NHS Bursary Scheme rules. Students who are eligible to receive a full bursary under Section 2.1 of the NHS Bursary Scheme rules and are attending an eligible course as defined in Section 3.1 of the NHS Bursary Scheme rules can apply for DSAs.

DSAs are not subject to:

- an age limit
- previous study rules
- means testing

Students who are personally eligible for student support under category (o) of table 1 in the NHS Bursary Scheme rules (i.e. nationals of member states of the European Union), but not under any other category in that table are not eligible for DSAs.

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

DSAs are not available for:

- disability related expenditure that the student would incur even if they were not attending a course of higher education
- costs that any student might have regardless of disability
- auxiliary aids and services which can reasonably be expected to be provided by the student's local authority under a Care Plan
- auxiliary aids and services which can reasonably be expected to be provided through other public funding e.g. mobility allowances, NHS support
- treatment for a disability
- diagnostic assessments for any type of disability or health condition
- temporary illness or injury – support from the institution is appropriate here
- general learning difficulties – institution academic support is appropriate here

### **3.1 Definition of disability**

For DSAs, the Equality Act 2010 definition of disability is used to determine eligibility. Students falling within the Equality Act 2010 definition of disability are eligible to apply for support through DSAs.

The Act defines a disabled person as a person with a disability. 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 (Equality Act S6(1)).

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

[Further guidance is available](#), which is issued pursuant to section 6(5) of the Equality Act 2010.

### **3.2 Time limits for applying for DSAs**

[The NHS Bursary Scheme](#) New Rules Fifth Edition and Old Rules Seventeenth Edition require that student support must be applied for on an annual basis. Generally a time limit for bursary applications is set at six months from the start of the academic year (Section 12, Para12.2). For disabled students this can be extended as long as the application has been made as soon as is reasonably practicable. Students are advised to apply as soon as possible, to enable support to be put in place by the start of the academic year.

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

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

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

### **3.3 Evidence of a disability**

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

The DSAs 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 institutions, as appropriate. Nor are DSAs intended to provide assistance to students with general learning difficulties.

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

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

Students with a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia will need to provide evidence of this by submitting a diagnostic assessment from a practitioner psychologist or suitably qualified specialist teacher (see [Annex A](#) for more information on diagnosing and assessing students with SpLD). The diagnostic assessment must have been carried out after the student's 16<sup>th</sup> birthday to be valid for DSAs purposes. Institutions may be able to offer assistance to students requiring a post-16 diagnostic assessment.

Cases may arise where the evidence that the student has a disability is deemed insufficient by the NHSBSA. In such cases, the student should be invited to provide further evidence, perhaps in the form of a diagnosis undertaken by a professional body or another acceptable person or their EHC Plan. In making such an invitation, it must be made clear to the student that they will normally be liable to meet the cost of providing the necessary evidence. This cost cannot be met through DSAs, however, some institutions may consider providing help with the costs of diagnostic assessments e.g. for dyslexia.

Once satisfactory evidence is received, the student will be notified to book a DSAs needs assessment to identify the appropriate course-related support. The cost of the assessment is met from the general allowance of the DSAs. Once the initial

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

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

### **3.4 Students diagnosed after the start of their HE course**

Students who are diagnosed with a disability, including a SpLD, after the start of their HE course of study may apply for DSAs once they have received their diagnosis or diagnostic assessment or have medical evidence confirming the presence of a disability.

### **3.5 English students studying in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland**

Some English students who intend to study in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland may attend a DSAs needs assessment in their home area before they start their course. This should be carried out by a DSA-QAG registered or accredited assessment centre.

However, there will be some occasions when students who are domiciled in England but study in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland require a DSAs study needs assessment during term time. In these circumstances, the NHSBSA may accept needs assessments carried out by centres used by the Students Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) and the Department for Employment and Learning (Northern Ireland). Students studying in Wales are covered by the DSA-QAG administered list of assessment centres.

SAAS operate a 'Toolkit of Quality Indicators for Needs Assessments' under which institutions and centres become validated as assessors recognised by SAAS. A list of institutions and centres validated by SAAS to undertake DSAs needs assessments can be found on the SAAS website: [www.saas.gov.uk](http://www.saas.gov.uk) (click on 'disabled students', and then 'needs assessment').

Centres in the devolved administrations must have regard to the NHS Bursary Scheme rules and this DSAs guidance when recommending support for English students.

### 3.6 DSAs applications received in the final stages of a course

Students are permitted to apply for DSAs at any stage of their course and DSAs funding can be considered for support needs from the date of the application onwards, irrespective of the time left on the course. It is advised that students requiring support near the end of their course should contact their disability adviser in order for reasonable adjustments to be considered.

Disability Advisers may be able to arrange institutional support, such as exam support, study support or revision skills, or loan equipment. This support is unlikely to be funded through DSAs. It is also unlikely that specialist equipment will be provided through DSAs towards the end of a course and institutions will be asked to consider reasonable adjustments in the first instance. Institutions may be able to arrange for the loan of equipment. However, if that is not possible, DSAs may be considered for rental equipment, if rental is better value for money. Assessment centres can offer information on equipment suppliers who provide equipment for hire or rental.

### 3.7 Students who become eligible during the course

Under NHS Bursary Scheme Fifth Edition rules Section 9 (9.41) a student may become personally eligible for NHS Bursary funding, including DSAs, part way through a year. Examples of events that may change a student's eligibility include:

- The State of which the student is a national accedes to the **EU**.
- The student starts or ceases to work in the UK in one of the categories of workers, employed persons and self-employed persons in Table 1 entries (i) to (l), or is a **family member** of such a person.
- The person becomes a **family member** of an **EU** national.
- The person becomes the **child of a Swiss national**.
- The person becomes the **child of a Turkish worker**.
- The person acquires the **right of permanent residence in the UK**.
- The student, or the student's spouse, civil partner or parent is recognised as a **refugee**, or whose refugee status is cancelled, ceases or is withdrawn.
- The student, or the student's spouse, civil partner or parent is granted humanitarian protection, or their humanitarian protection is revoked or is not renewed.

However, such a student is not eligible for DSAs retrospectively. With the exception of the allowance for major items of specialist equipment, a student is not eligible for DSAs for quarters falling before, or in which, the date eligibility was acquired due to

an event listed above. A student is not eligible for DSAs for academic years of the course falling before the academic year in which the events listed above occur.

### 3.8 Maximum DSAs for full-time and part-time students

There are four elements to the DSAs, which are available for students attending full-time or part-time courses:

- Major items of specialist equipment allowance
- NMH allowance
- General allowance
- Travel allowance

The maximum allowances that such students may receive in 2016/17 are given in the table below. There is no provision to pay more than the maximum allowances set out in the NHS Bursary Scheme. It is not possible, therefore, to use unspent DSAs from a previous academic year or anticipate grant entitlement for a future academic year to pay more than the maximum allowances in the current academic year. Moreover, only the general allowance may be used to supplement expenditure on specialist equipment and non-medical helpers should the student's needs exceed the maximum allowances under the NHS Bursary Scheme. The specialist equipment allowance, non-medical helper allowance and the travel allowance should be used for the sole purpose as named and should not be used to supplement other DSAs.

Maximum allowances for full-time and part-time students	
Non-medical helper allowance (each academic year)	£20,725
Specialist equipment allowance (for the duration of the course)	£5,214
General allowance (each academic year)	£1,741
Travel allowance	Uncapped

#### Work placements

When a student is going on a work placement as part of their course, the DSAs study 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. The institution and the provider of the work placement should consider what reasonable adjustments are required to support the student during their work placement.

## **Section 4: The DSAs non-medical helper allowance**

*NHS Bursary Scheme Fifth Edition Section 6 6.1(a)*

*NHS Bursary Scheme Old Rules Seventeenth Edition Section 6 6.1(a)*

The non-medical helper allowance is to provide funding for additional support which the student requires, because of a disability, to undertake their course on an equal basis to other students. Institutional reasonable adjustments should be considered in the first instance, before a recommendation for DSAs funding is made.

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

### **4.1 Using the non-medical help support roles**

The activity titles which have been used in this document are those generally agreed to be the most widely used and understood and should be the ones referred to by providers when communicating with the NHSBSA.

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

Assessors, institutions and NMH providers must use the support activity titles set out here when making recommendations or submitting invoices for payment.

#### **Scope**

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

#### **Exceptions**

Where this section refers to DSAs funding being available by exception only, this means the support will be considered on an individual basis through the Exceptional Case Process – see below and [Section 8.5](#). Any general exceptions that are identified in the future will be stated within the individual roles.

## Exceptions to the role descriptors

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

### Exceptional Case Process (ECP)

The ECP has been established to safeguard the interests of students where a student is in dispute with their HE provider about the provision of an adjustment. The ECP will consider circumstances where a reasonable adjustment might be expected but the institution fails to provide it. The ECP is triggered once the student enters into a formal dispute with their institution.

The Student Services Policy Team (SSPT) will consider whether the support falls within the scope of DSAs, and if so, whether interim support should be provided, or whether the needs of the student are so exceptional that DSAs funding should be awarded for the duration of the course. See [Section 8.5](#) and [Annex B](#) for more details.

**DSAs should not be used for charges for support, counselling or tutorial services which the institution makes available to all students.**

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

Where an institution makes special adaptations to course hand-outs 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.

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

It is important that students receive good quality support that is provided by individuals who are trained to provide the right level and type of support and recognise and respect the boundary between supporting a student to access their studies and providing academic support. DSAs NMH services should also be provided by support workers who have the appropriate employed or self-employed status.

For this reason a quality assurance framework has been introduced for non-medical help from 2016/17. Any supplier wishing to provide DSAs funded non-medical help services from 2016/17 will be required to register with DSA-QAG, agree to comply with the quality assurance framework and will be subject to a periodic audit to measure compliance against the registration requirements and quality assurance framework. Any student receiving a type of NMH support for the first time after the launch of the NMH quality assurance framework (whether a new or continuing DSAs student) will only be permitted to receive support from a NMH worker registered with DSA-QAG.

In parallel, cost ranges and cost maximums are now in place setting out the amount that DSAs will generally cover in respect of NMH support. This guidance sets out the support roles and the corresponding cost range, DSAs will not be available to pay for support that exceeds the cost framework, other than by exception.

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

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

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

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

DSAs funding will not be available for individuals without an appropriate employment status i.e. they must be registered with HMRC to pay tax and National Insurance on

their earnings. DSAs funding will not be provided for family members or friends to provide NMH support unless they are appropriately registered with DSA-QAG and comply with the quality assurance framework and audit arrangements. Evidence of appropriate qualifications and employment status will be required.

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

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

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

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

A fundamental review of costs should be undertaken by institutions/providers periodically to ensure that the service continues to provide value for money (for example, that efficiency improvements are effectively managed, to avoid a "last year plus x per cent" approach, and to assess whether the level of resources used to

provide the service remain appropriate in the light of changing demand and other factors) and to avoid double-counting.

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

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

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

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

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

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

However, in all scenarios, DSAs funding will not be provided for NMH provision that is repeatedly not being used once booked, or cancelled with less than 24 hours' notice, when they could have cancelled the support session with sufficient notice or where students indicate that they no longer need or want NMH support. Repeatedly may be if more than two sessions have been missed per term.

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

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

#### **4.7 Non-medical helper 'sessions'**

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

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

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

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

Booked session 1 BSL + note-taker

Booked session 2 BSL + note-taker + library assistant

Booked session 3 BSL + mentoring

Booked session 4 note-taker + study skills support.

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

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

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

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

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

At the first missed session, the support worker or service provider should make all reasonable efforts to contact the student to find out the reason for the student missing the session and confirm arrangements for the next session booked. The support worker should not attend the next session until the arrangement is confirmed

with the student. If the student states they no longer require the support, support should be terminated and the NHSBSA informed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Where there is consent to share information with the institution, support workers may wish to liaise with the disability adviser if it appears that the student is not managing their sessions effectively and sessions are regularly being cancelled or missed

without cancellation. This may indicate other problems or may indicate that the student does not require, or is not satisfied with the support they have been recommended. Early intervention in such cases may result in different support being offered.

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

#### **4.12 Costs incurred during vacation periods**

Study skills support, AT support or AT installation and training provided during the long vacation may be considered through DSAs, if the NHSBSA are satisfied that the support is reasonable and appropriate with regard to the circumstances of the student. Any such support undertaken outside term-time does not count as attendance and therefore would not attract DSAs funding.

#### **4.13 Payment of invoices**

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

#### **4.14 Band 1 support assistance**

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

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

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

- providing practical support around the campus
- providing practical support in the library, laboratory or workshop/studio etc
- reading aloud
- scribing
- text checking (pointing out errors but not providing corrections)

Roles which might provide this support include:

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

### **Practical Support Assistant: cost range £15 - £24**

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

Skills required:

- some experience/understanding of providing support for disabled adults
- thorough knowledge of the campus
- good interpersonal skills

Qualifications/training:

- no mandatory qualifications or professional body membership has been identified for this support
- generic non-medical help training
- those whose support activity includes supporting wheelchair users will also need to have had specific health and safety training relevant to the physical demands of their activity

**The primary responsibility for providing this support lies with the HE provider. DSAs funding remains available by exception only.**

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

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

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

This support is provided to help students search library catalogues, locate materials, collect materials, photocopying etc. Access to libraries and information available through libraries to support students in their study can be supported in many ways. Libraries should particularly consider the provision of e-books and alternative format publications to assist disabled students. This would reduce the need for the provision of hard copy publications and scanners/photocopying. See information on e-books and accessible format publications at [Section 7](#).

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

Skills required:

- good working knowledge of the library

Qualifications/training:

- no mandatory qualifications or professional body membership has been identified for this support
- generic non-medical help training required
- understanding of the HE context

**The primary responsibility for providing this support lies with the HE provider. DSAs funding remains available by exception only.**

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

### **Reader: cost range £15 - £25**

A reader provides support for students whose disability makes reading or other forms of accessing text impossible. There are now many forms of assistive software that provide this facility and appropriate alternatives should be considered. Assistive

software may enable students to become independent, autonomous learners in many cases and therefore should be considered where this barrier exists and where students will not require additional support to use systems that aren't accessible to assistive technology.

Skills required:

- clear reading voice
- sufficient skills to cope with the demands of the text including any technical jargon

Qualifications/training:

- no mandatory qualifications or professional body membership has been identified for this support
- generic non-medical help training
- some understanding of the HE context

**The primary responsibility for providing this support lies with the HE provider. DSAs funding remains available by exception only.**

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

**Scribe: cost range £15 - £27**

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

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

Skills required:

- clear handwriting and/or accurate keyboarding skills
- good spelling and punctuation
- sufficient skills to cope with the area of work being followed by the student including any technical jargon
- understanding of the boundaries of this activity including personal integrity
- 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:

- no mandatory qualifications or professional body membership has been identified for this support
- generic non-medical help training
- competency in English
- understanding of the HE context

**The primary responsibility for providing this support lies with the HE provider. DSAs funding remains available by exception only.**

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

**Workshop/Laboratory Assistant: cost range £15 - £26**

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

Skills required:

- knowledge and experience of the particular educational setting e.g. laboratory or workshop

Training/qualifications:

- no mandatory qualifications or professional body membership has been identified for this support
- generic non-medical help training
- sufficient knowledge in the requisite practical area
- health and safety training relevant to the particular workshop context

**The primary responsibility for providing this support lies with the HE provider. DSAs funding remains available by exception only.**

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

**Sighted Guide: cost range £15 - £25**

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

Skills required:

- thorough knowledge of the campus
- good interpersonal skills

Qualifications/training:

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

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

**Proof Reader/Text Checker: cost range £15 - £28**

Text checking, often referred to as proof reading in this context, is provided for a range of students to help identify and point out the types of errors that the student has been made in grammar/spelling/structure etc. and to give advice on ways of rectifying such errors in the future.

This type of support is valuable for the general student body and institutions will wish to consider how best to meet the needs of all their students. For disabled students there are now alternative forms of assistive software that can provide some support in this area. Assistive software may enable students to become independent, autonomous learners in many cases and therefore should be considered where a particular barrier exists and where assistive technology would fully meet the support needs of the student.

Skills required:

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

Qualifications/training:

- no mandatory qualifications or professional body membership has been identified for this support
- generic non-medical help training with particular emphasis on boundaries of activity

- understanding of the HE context

**The primary responsibility for providing this support lies with the HE provider. DSAs funding remains available by exception only.**

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

#### **4.15 Band 2 – Enhanced Support Assistants**

These are activities which demand an enhanced level of skill, knowledge and training to Band 1 activities.

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

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

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

Roles which might provide this support include:

- Study Assistant
- Examination Support Worker
- Note-taker

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

This role does not refer to the specialist one-to-one skills support which is provided under Band 4 support.

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

#### Skills required:

- an enhanced level of skill and experience of working with disabled students and an understanding of the barriers which disabled students may have in accessing learning, but not the specialist experience and knowledge of those working at Band 4, One to One Study Skills Support or Specialist Mentors
- knowledge of the way the institution/organisation works and the demands of studying in HE
- excellent interpersonal skills
- clear understanding of issues of confidentiality

#### Qualifications/training:

- no mandatory qualifications or professional body membership has been identified for this support
- generic non-medical help training and also a level of specialist training relevant to the demands of the activity
- understanding of the HE context

**The primary responsibility for providing this support lies with the HE provider. DSAs funding remains available by exception only.**

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

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

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

#### Skills required:

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

Training/qualifications:

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

**The primary responsibility for providing this support lies with the HE provider. DSAs funding remains available by exception only.**

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

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

**Note-takers: cost range £20 - £28**

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

Skills required:

- clear and legible handwriting at speed if providing handwritten notes
- accurate spelling and grammar skills
- familiarity with subject specific vocabulary and technical language
- disability awareness

Qualifications/training:

- A Level 2 qualification in note-taking is required
- a standard of education to at least second year degree level is expected
- the undertaking and completion of specialist note-taker training (may be in-house training) which includes the formal assessment and evaluation of skills and suitability
- the successful achievement of that assessment and evaluation

**The primary responsibility for providing this support lies with the HE provider. DSAs funding remains available by exception only.**

Institutions should consider what reasonable adjustments can be put in place to meet the need for capturing information from lectures, seminars etc. or for providing note-taking 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 note-taking, which should be discussed with the student. There are many forms of assistive technology that can provide some support in this area, for example recording devices, and these should be considered as an alternative to note-taking where possible. Assistive software is likely to enable students to become independent, autonomous learners in many cases and therefore should be considered where a particular barrier exists.

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

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

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

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

Note-taking costs should be clear on the invoice. Typed notes should be invoiced as manual note-taking (typed). This is a Band 2 activity. Where the notes have been taken by hand and typed later, the invoice should set this out clearly as manual note-taking (written) + typing up fee. The subsequent typing up of notes is not a Band 2 activity and therefore, an appropriate reduction in the amount charged for typing up

after the session is expected. Typing up charges should be no more than half the amount charged for the actual note-taking session (and half the time of the note-taking).

**Example:** A session of note-taking 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 (i.e. an additional £5).

**The typing up of written notes by the note-taker or a third party is not electronic note-taking or specialist transcription services and should not be recommended or charged as such ([see Section 4](#)).**

#### **4.16 Band 3 – Specialist Enabling Support**

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

From 2016/17 DSAs funding remains available for these support roles, with the exception of specialist transcription services, which become the primary responsibility of the HE provider. Where DSAs funding is available by exception for specialist transcription services, funding will be provided only within the cost ranges that apply to the activity and within the scope set out within the role.

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

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

Roles which might provide this support include:

- Communication Support Worker
- Electronic Note-taker
- Specialist Transcription Services
- Mobility Trainer

#### **Communication Support Workers and Lip Speakers: cost range £35 - £44**

This support is provided to translate sign language into voice and vice versa although not at the level of competence required by a trained and qualified British

Sign Language (BSL)/English Interpreter, or to convey a speaker's message to lip readers accurately using unvoiced speech. The support worker is required to work flexibly with an individual deaf student in workshop and seminar situations as well as providing general one to one support. **This does not include academic support.**

Skills required:

- competent signing/lip-speaking and experience of working with deaf learners in an HE context
- understanding of how deafness affects learning

Qualifications/training:

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

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

**Specialist Note-takers for Deaf and Visually-impaired Students: cost range £35 - £40**

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

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

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

Some students may wish to receive the information simultaneously on their own computer using for example NoteED or Stereotype software; in these cases the second laptop could belong either to the student or service provider. For some students ENT may be delivered remotely, using live captioning services.

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

be saved by the student at the end of the session. *Note: This activity is not to be confused with that of Specialist Transcription.*

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

This may include the information appearing simultaneously on the student's computer using either Speedtext or Stereotype specialist software. 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 if using the specialist software described above.

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

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

## Further information

### Electronic Note-taking

Electronic note-taking (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 (for example a tutorial where it is important to capture discussions in real-time)
- AND
- the student has a high fluency in English

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

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

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

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

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

Skills required:

- familiarity with a range of specialist office packages and equipment
- knowledge of how to transcribe into various alternative formats

Qualifications/training:

- no mandatory qualifications or professional body membership has been identified for this support
- relevant specialist IT training

**The primary responsibility for providing this support lies with the HE provider. DSAs funding remains available by exception only.**

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

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

The Mobility Trainer provides a professional assessment of the campus location and then carries out a time limited programme of training. This training is particularly applicable for blind or visually impaired students who will require an individually

developed programme based on agreed assessment of needs and who will need to learn with their coach safe routes around the campus, either making use of a long cane or with a guide dog.

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

For on-going support around campus a sighted guide might be a more appropriate response ([see 4.14](#)).

Skills required:

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

Qualifications/training:

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

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

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

## **4.17 Band 4 – Specialist Access and Learning Support**

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

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

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

Roles which might provide this support include:

- Specialist Mentor
- Specialist One to One Study Skills Support
- BSL Interpreter
- Language Support Tutor for deaf students
- Assistive Technology Trainer

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

Specialist mentors provide highly specialist, specifically tailored, one to one support which helps students address the barriers to learning created by a particular impairment. This support is primarily provided for students with mental-health conditions or autism spectrum disorders.

The support could address a range of issues, for example, coping with anxiety and stress situations, how to deal with concentration difficulties, time management, prioritising workload and creating a suitable work-life balance. Specialist Mentors should not act as advocates or counsellors.

Their role is to help students recognise the barriers to learning created by their impairment and support them in developing strategies to address these barriers, particularly at times of transition e.g. when starting at university or when planning to move on from it. For some students this support will need to be on-going while for others it might be gradually phased out or only be required at certain points of their course.

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

Skills required:

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

Qualifications/training:

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

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

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

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

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

Skills required:

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

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

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

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

Qualifications/training:

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

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

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

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

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

Skills required:

- interpreters should be trained and have experience of working in a HE setting
- they should also have some knowledge of the academic area being followed by the student

Qualifications/training:

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

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

**Language Support Tutor for deaf students: cost range £50 - £72**

This support is to provide one to one specialist English language enhancement to deaf students – either those whose first language is BSL or those who communicate orally. This does not include academic support.

#### Skills required:

- significant experience of working in the area of language support with deaf students
- very good knowledge of both English and BSL
- understanding of the language difficulties faced by deaf students

#### Qualifications/training:

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### Skills required:

- Assistive Technology (AT) trainers require knowledge and skills in strategies to support learning and a broad understanding about the range of existing products and technological solutions to learning challenges

Knowledge and understanding of students' learning requirements is fundamental to this activity alongside an understanding of how to address learning challenges. These challenges might include organisational skills, planning and time management or concentration, or gaining access through, for example, vision or hearing. Solutions include assistive technology, software programmes such as mind mapping, text to speech and speech to text, Microsoft Windows and Mac accessibility options and features to support learning such as the use of Outlook for organisational skills and digital recorders to aid memory. They require significant experience of working in a

training capacity with people with a disability and an understanding of the kind of work required by a student at higher education.

Qualifications and training:

- there are no specific qualifications for DSAs IT training, although IT trainers should have a thorough knowledge of assistive technologies

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

## **Section 5: Major items of specialist equipment allowance**

*NHS Bursary Scheme New Rules Fifth Edition Section 6 6.1(b)*

*NHS Bursary Scheme Old Rules Seventeenth Edition Section 6 6.1(b)*

The specialist equipment allowance is to provide funding for additional major items of specialist equipment which the student requires, because of a disability, to undertake their course effectively. Institutional reasonable adjustments should be considered in the first instance, before a recommendation for DSAs funding is made.

The specialist equipment allowance is for the duration of the course. Where the allowance is increased in subsequent years, a student who had received the maximum grant for specialist equipment can receive additional funding up to the new maximum amount, if required.

DSAs funding can provide specialist equipment to enable students to overcome the barriers to learning that arise due to their disability. Specialist equipment and assistive technology should encourage independent, autonomous learning. Consideration should be given to the feasibility of utilising the student's existing equipment, before recommending that new equipment is purchased through DSAs.

### **Student leaves a course after receiving equipment**

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

#### **5.1 Equipment supplied before the student starts the course/delivered after the student has left the course**

A DSAs study needs 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 DSAs-funded equipment before the start of term where training on the equipment is necessary before the student starts their course. However, if the student subsequently does not start the course, this will constitute an overpayment for the purposes of the NHS Bursary Scheme New Rules Fifth Edition rule 10.1(g) and the NHS Bursary Scheme Old Rules Seventeenth Edition rule 10.1(g).

Similarly, a student may start their course, then abandon it and then receive DSAs funding or equipment after they have abandoned the course (possibly because the NHSBSA had not been notified that the student had left the course). This will

constitute an overpayment for the purposes of the NHS Bursary Scheme New Rules Fifth Edition rule 10.1(g) and the NHS Bursary Scheme Old Rules Seventeenth Edition rule 10.1(g).

The NHSBSA can accept the return of the equipment to the supplier, a monetary repayment or a combination of both against the overpayment. For example, where the student has received two items of equipment through DSAs 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.

Assessors 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.

### Exceptions

Where this section refers to DSAs funding being available by exception only, this means the support will be considered on an individual basis through the Exceptional Case Process (ECP) – [see Section 8.5](#). Any general exceptions that are identified in the future will be stated within the individual support type.

## 5.2 Computers

**DSAs funding is not available for the first £200 cost towards a computer.**

DSAs are only paid to eligible students for the purpose of assisting with the additional costs which a student is obliged to incur in connection with undertaking a course because of their disability. Therefore, funding for computers will only be provided, and subject to the £200 contribution, where the computer is required solely because of their disability.

It is the responsibility of institutions to consider how a student will access their course and part of that will be a consideration of the communal equipment available to their student body. Consideration should be given to providing the most commonly used types of assistive software as standard on networked computers and the provision of quiet rooms where necessary for the effective use of some software (e.g. speech to text). Consideration should also be given to ensuring the functionality of assistive software is active and that networked computers have roaming profiles with the facility to set student's personal preferences. Flexible arrangements for use should be considered, including priority use and longer time slots. Institutions may also consider what support they might provide on an individual basis, for example through bursaries to low-income groups.

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

### **Entry-level computers**

**DSAs funding is not available for entry level computers.**

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

### **Standard computers**

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

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

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

DSAs study needs assessors should refer to separate guidance <http://www.dsa-qag.org.uk/docman-public/assessors-tab/1458-dsas-guidance-changes-to-it-arrangements-from-2015-16/file> on establishing whether a student's existing computer is suitable for running their assistive software effectively.

### **High cost computers**

**DSAs funding is not generally available for high-cost computers** (see [Section 8.5](#) for details of the Exceptional Case Process).

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

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

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

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

### **Low weight computers**

**DSAs funding is available for low-weight computers, subject to a £200 student contribution (considered through the Exceptional Case Process – [see 8.5](#)).**

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

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

### **Tablet devices**

**DSAs funding is not generally available for tablet devices (but see [Exceptional Case Process at Section 8.5](#))**

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

If the student does not need the assistive software which requires extra processing power then it is expected an entry level computer, or a device with equivalent functionality like a tablet, would meet the student's needs. It is expected that an entry-level computer will provide the same functionality as a tablet in the majority of cases and will not be funded through DSAs.

### **Insurance and warranties**

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

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

### **Devices for printing and/or scanning**

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

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

Recommendations for separate individual printers or scanners will only be considered in exceptional circumstances, where there is a clear disability related need for separate items in place of a multifunction unit (see Exceptional Case Process at [Section 8.5](#)).

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

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

Assessors are advised to use the following three-step approach in evidencing need, and provide this in the report:

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

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

### **Audio capture equipment**

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

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

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

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

### **5.3 Other equipment**

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

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

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

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

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

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

- screens and monitors
- keyboards and mice
- specialist equipment for visually impaired people (e.g. viewing equipment, Braille equipment)
- magnifying equipment
- ergonomic equipment and furniture
- handheld dictionary and spelling equipment
- scanning pens

DSAs funding is available for laptop carry cases as a matter of course, up to a maximum price of £20 for those students being provided with a laptop computer. The laptop carry case should form part of the quote for equipment.

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

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

A 'bundle' of standard computer peripherals will no longer be funded as standard. The need for each item must be individually evidenced.

### **Assistive and Standard Software**

DSAs funding is available for assistive and standard software where the provision of the individual item is required for the student solely due to their disability and the software is not available for free through site licences or other means.

#### **DSAs will fund:**

- assistive software
- standard software (but only where it is essential for the effective use of assistive software alongside it - otherwise standard software is considered a mainstream participation cost and outside the scope of DSAs)

### **Course Specific Software**

**DSAs funding is not available for course specific software.**

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

### **Wheelchairs/mobility scooters**

**DSAs funding is not generally available for wheelchairs/mobility scooters** (but see [Exceptional Case Process at Section 8.5](#)).

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

### **Radio aids for deaf students**

**DSAs funding is available for a radio aid.**

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

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

## **5.4 Course transfers and specialist equipment allowance**

If a student transfers their eligibility to another course, any amount awarded for specialist equipment in relation to the first course will be taken into account as the period of eligibility has not been broken. For example, a student receives £3,000 from the specialist equipment allowance but then transfers their eligibility to another course. Their specialist equipment entitlement for the second course should not exceed £2,212, as £3,000 has already been awarded for specialist equipment and given that £5,212 for 2016/17 is the maximum specialist equipment allowance.

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

## **Section 6: Travel allowance**

*NHS Bursary Scheme New Rules Fifth Edition 6 6.1(c)*

*NHS Bursary Scheme Old Rules Seventeenth Edition Section 6 6.1(c)*

The travel allowance may be used to pay additional expenditure for travel in the UK, reasonably incurred by reason of the student's disability, to attend or participate in the course or a practice placement arranged as part of the course.

### **6.1 Attending the institution**

The travel allowance is calculated as the excess between public transport costs and the mode of travel the student is required to use because of their disability e.g. a taxi. For example, if a student needs to travel by taxi rather than by public transport because of mobility or visual difficulties, then the DSAs will cover the additional expenditure that represents.

Some students may be required as a result of a disability to use a private car to travel to and from the institution. In this instance, the amount of travel allowance should be any excess between public transport costs and the cost of the same journey by car. The cost of a journey by car is calculated by using the rates of reimbursement set out in the NHS terms and conditions of service handbook. For financial year 2016/17 this is set at 28p per mile. Suitable parking facilities should be arranged by the institution as a reasonable adjustment.

Generally, where the student has opted to use a mobility element of their Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) to lease a Motability car, they will be expected to use that car to attend their institution and travel costs will be calculated using the rates of reimbursement set out in the NHS terms and conditions of service handbook set at 28p per mile (as above). Suitable parking facilities should be arranged by the institution as a reasonable adjustment. Exceptions may arise where the car cannot be driven by the student themselves. In such instances the study needs assessor must consider the cheapest travel options, taking into account the availability of the Motability car where possible (e.g. for travel to the local bus or train station).

The study needs assessor will need to be satisfied that the travel expenditure is related to the student's study and arises in each case solely by reason of a disability to which the student is subject. A disabled student may still qualify for Practice Placement Expenses (*NHS Bursary Scheme New Rules Fifth Edition, Section 7* and *NHS Bursary Scheme Old Rules Seventeenth Edition, Section 7*) in the same way as any other student.

Travel allowance is not available to enable the student to attend appointments, or other travel needs, that are personal needs e.g. hospital appointments, travel to

home address. This is the case irrespective of whether the travel is required because the institution is not in the locality of the appointment or student's home address.

## **6.2 Attending a work placement**

The site of a student's work placement will be treated as being 'the institution' for the purposes of journeying to and from the site at the start and end of the day.

Institutions and the employer providing the work placement should consider additional travel needs, for example, off-site meetings during the day, as part of their reasonable adjustments.

Assistance provided through other government funding for the purposes of attending a work placement should be taken into account when calculating the excess costs that can be funded through DSAs.

## **6.3 Attending a field trip**

The site of a student's field trip will be treated the same as being 'the institution' for the purposes of journeying to and from the site at the start and end of the day.

## **6.4 Taxi firm accounts**

DSAs funding for taxi fares only relates to appropriately licensed taxi providers. Students are required to set up an account with an appropriate taxi firm and payments will be made direct to the company, on receipt of an invoice. Students may need to make ad-hoc taxi journeys from time to time with a company that they do not hold an account with. These will be treated exceptionally and be reimbursed on receipt of a valid itemised company receipt.

## Section 7: General allowance

*NHS Bursary Scheme Fifth Edition Section 6 6.1(d)*

*NHS Bursary Scheme Old Rules Seventeenth Edition Section 6 6.1(d)*

The general allowance may be used both for miscellaneous expenditure not covered by the other allowances and to supplement the specialist equipment allowance and non-medical helper allowance, if necessary. The cost of a DSAs study needs assessment is drawn from the general allowance. Any reasonable costs associated with the use and ownership of equipment needed to attend or participate in the course, such as training, insurance, warranty, repair or modification.

### 7.1 The DSAs general allowance

This section sets out information on the type of support that is funded through the general allowance and details where support will be provided in more limited circumstances. Throughout this section exceptions are identified. These should not be taken as an exhaustive list. Where no exceptions are currently identified, exceptions will still be considered on a case-by-case basis.

### 7.2 DSAs study needs assessments

**DSAs funding is available for the initial DSAs study needs assessment and the cost of travel to the DSAs study needs assessment.**

The cost of a DSAs study needs assessment is drawn from this allowance. Assessment centres have agreed a fee framework which sets out the level of service a student can expect to receive as part of the initial assessment fee. The one-off fee paid in respect of the DSAs study needs assessment will cover much of the contact the student has with the assessment centre for the duration of the course.

From 1 January 2016 the maximum amount available for a full study needs assessment is £660 (+ VAT where applicable). Assessment centres charging above that rate will not be reimbursed any amount above this through DSAs.

For students being assessed by assessment centres that were charging less than that rate on the date of notification ([see communication first sent by DSA-QAG to assessment centres in September 2015](#)) the maximum amount available for their assessment will continue to be frozen at the amount charged by the assessment centre on the date of notification.

Additional funded-reviews can be arranged for certain changes of circumstances. Further guidance on when a funded-review, single fee review or a rolling over of existing support is available [at Annex C](#). The DSAs study needs assessment fee will be paid, even if the study needs assessor identifies that no support is required by the student. No additional fee will be payable without the prior approval of the NHSBSA.

The DSAs study needs assessor will consider the nature of the student's disability and the impact of that disability on the student's ability to access their chosen course. The assessor will set out any recommendations for DSAs funded support and indicate where support may be required that falls outside the scope of DSAs within a Needs Assessment Report. The Report will be sent to the NHSBSA and the student. The student will be advised to pass a copy of the relevant section of the needs assessment report to their institution's disability adviser, in order to discuss what adjustments might be appropriate.

Once a student has started their course, it may become apparent that additional or different support may be needed. Students should contact their assessment centre to discuss varying the support recommended. Assessment centres will also be asked by the NHSBSA to consider requests made by the institution to vary the support recommended. Additional DSAs-funded support will only be agreed by the NHSBSA once the view of the assessor has been received and taken into account.

Subsequent DSAs study needs assessments will only be funded from DSAs where the NHSBSA has given express authorisation for a further DSAs study needs assessment to proceed. Students are advised to contact their study needs assessor if they require further help or advice during their course of study.

### **7.3 Living Accommodation**

DSAs are not available towards the additional costs of accommodation where the accommodation is provided, managed or controlled by the institution or its agent, by which we mean an organisation or individual acting on behalf of the institution for the provision of accommodation.

DSAs remain available for the additional costs of accommodation not provided by the institution or its agent, but only where the additional costs are incurred solely because of the student's disability.

Institutions should not pass any additional costs of specialist accommodation on to the student.

Assessors should consider the student's accommodation needs for the duration of the course, so that students do not need to have a further assessment if they move from HE provider accommodation to private accommodation in subsequent years of their course.

The NHSBSA will consider the status of the accommodation provider and will also make a judgement on a suitable comparator for costs. Generally where only one type of accommodation is available e.g. where all accommodation provided by the institution or a large private provider is en-suite, then the student will not incur

additional costs in relation to the provision of en-suite accommodation when compared to their fellow students.

Sometimes an institution will have a range of accommodation available and a certain type is specifically selected to meet the student's needs. In such cases a comparator might be from outside the locality of the allocated accommodation. The assessor should seek information on how the particular accommodation was selected by the student or allocated by the institution to enable the NHSBSA to determine the appropriate comparator. It would also be helpful if a map of the institution's campus is supplied, in order to identify suitable comparators for accommodation costs in the area.

## **7.4 Consumables**

**There is no standard 'consumables allowance'.**

Consumables, for example, paper and ink supplies, will continue to be funded where the assessor has a) evidenced that the student has a need for hard copy materials that is additional to that of a non-disabled peer and b) a printer has been provided to meet that additional need, or the student already owns a suitable printer.

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

If the need for additional consumables is identified, assessors should consider carefully what consumables are required and to what level. An estimate of usage should be provided to the NHSBSA, along with the factors that have been taken into account when considering that usage, including the usage that a non-disabled student might have. A standard estimate should not be used by assessors, given the wide variation in the needs of individual students.

## **7.5 Books**

**DSAs funding is not generally available for books.**

Funding for general living costs, including books, equipment etc is already provided through the maintenance support available to full-time undergraduate students.

Core books are a standard expense faced by all students and DSAs funding is not available for core books. If a disabled student requires access to a core book in an alternative format they should contact the library services at their institution to arrange for assistance.

Non-core books are optional for students and will not generally be considered essential for DSAs purposes. However, books will continue to be funded where they are essential and the needs of the student cannot be met through other solutions – examples of alternative solutions are set out below.

Wherever possible, students should be assisted by their institution to access materials in alternative formats if needed or through long library loans or other similar arrangements.

For a free source of accessible textbooks and images already provided by publishers go to: <https://load2learn.org.uk/>

For help finding key contacts for publishers in order to source electronic formats of textbooks for disabled students go to:

<http://www.publisherlookup.org.uk/index.php>

The e-book platforms to which institutions subscribe should be as accessible as possible (e.g. enable adjustments to font size and display colour and enable text to be read by text-to-speech tools) see useful guidance at:

<http://www.jisctechdis.ac.uk/techdis/keyinitiatives/libraries> .

When producing reading lists, it would be good practice for institutions to consider how accessible the textbooks on those lists are.

This would mean identifying books on the reading list that:

- are readily available in electronic format on the e-book platform(s) to which the institution subscribes
- if not available or accessible using assistive technology through the institution's e-book platforms, the books could a) be obtained in an accessible format directly from publishers or b) be scanned in-house by the library service

Where reading lists contain books that are neither available nor accessible using the institution's e-book platforms, it would be good practice for institution's library services to obtain files direct from the publisher in a timely manner.

It would be good practice for institutions to make assistive technology tools, such as text-to-speech, available on all institution computer workstations so that wherever the student accesses electronic texts they have the option of having speech support.

Where books are not available in an alternative format institutions should provide long library loans or fully accessible scanned versions where appropriate (where copyright regulations allow).

Assessors should make it clear during the assessment that DSAs will only be provided to purchase non-core books where they are deemed to be essential and are not available through any other source. A 'book allowance' should not be recommended. Students should be signposted to their institution's library services to access materials for their study.

If the situation arises whereby a student is unable to access the text they require and the purchase of hard copy items is the only solution, due to the specialist nature of the text, then the assessor should set that out in the NAR if known at the time, or the assessor should use the current 'additional recommendation' process to submit the request to the NHSBSA if identified later during the course.

## **7.6 Internet connection/costs**

**DSAs funding is not generally available for internet costs.**

The wide availability of internet access through institutions, student accommodation and other venues has removed the necessity of providing individual personal internet access. In addition, the NHSBSA considers internet access a mainstream cost.

## **7.7 Special diets (for those living with allergies)**

**DSAs funding is not available for special diets.**

A student who requires a special diet will generally face the additional cost of such a diet irrespective of the fact they are studying. Therefore, funding generally falls outside the scope of DSAs.

## **7.8 Fridges (for students needing to store medication)**

**DSAs funding is available for the purchase of a small personal fridge** where it is essential that medication is stored in a fridge and communal facilities are not suitable.

## Section 8: Other

Eligible disabled students from the UK and, for medical and dental students, from England can apply for DSAs support as soon as the NHSBSA launches the application process. Students should complete their online DSAs application form and submit it to the NHSBSA along with the appropriate medical evidence. The NHSBSA may request further information from the student if needed. Applications for DSAs must be made through the Student Services Bursary Online Support System (BOSS): <http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Students/3942.aspx>

The application asks students to give their consent to the release of information about their DSAs application to third parties such as disability advisers and DSAs assessment centres.

Applications for DSAs for the current academic year should be made within the statutory time limit of six months from the start of the academic year or as soon as reasonably practicable to do so. Applications received after the six month time limit will be managed on a case by case basis and additional evidence may be requested to support a late application ([see Section 3.2](#)).

Students may wish to speak to their disability adviser before making an application and reasonable adjustments should be discussed and considered. The disability adviser may also assist the student with an application for DSAs if it appears that additional support is required. Students should be advised not to purchase equipment on the assumption that the costs will be covered by DSAs, as reimbursements are not available ([see Section 8.2](#)).

### 8.1 Needs assessment

Once the student's personal and course eligibility has been established and they have provided satisfactory evidence of their disability, they are eligible at that stage for DSAs and should be invited to arrange a study needs assessment as soon as possible. Entitlement for an award of DSAs will be determined by the NHSBSA taking into account the recommendations following the DSAs study needs assessment. Some students may choose not to apply for DSAs as they will receive sufficient support through their institutions.

When notifying students that they will need to undergo a DSAs study needs assessment, the NHSBSA should inform the student what is involved in the assessment and that if they do not attend the DSAs study needs assessment they will not be able to receive any DSAs funded support they may require. Since 2015/16 DSAs study needs assessments can only be carried out by DSA-QAG registered or accredited assessment centres (England and Wales). Students should be directed to the DSA-QAG website for an up-to-date list of accredited assessment centres. Scottish assessment centres should be validated by the Scottish Government's

Disabled Student Advisory Group in order to provide services for English-funded students. Assessment centres in Northern Ireland do not currently require accreditation.

Funding through DSAs covers the cost of only one full DSAs study needs assessment, other than in such circumstances as the NHSBSA deem a further DSAs study needs assessment is needed. Guidance is available on when a funded-review assessment, a review within the original fee or a rolling over of support is appropriate – [see Annex C](#). Students should be advised that they will not receive DSAs funding for a second DSAs study needs assessment without prior approval from the NHSBSA. Assessments arranged without prior approval from the NHSBSA will not be funded through DSAs.

The DSAs study needs assessment will help determine what support the student might require and the amount of DSAs for which the student is entitled. Assessors should consider the information contained in a young person's EHC plan and supporting documentation where the Plan is current and has been made available by the student or local authority. Similarly, the assessor will cover the disabilities/SpLDs approved as eligible by the NHSBSA, taking account of the medical evidence submitted in relation to the approved condition(s). Entitlement to DSAs for new DSAs applicants for 2016/17 will be assessed according to the NHS Bursary Scheme rules and this guidance.

During the DSAs needs assessment interview, needs assessors are requested to check that the student is aware of the disability support services in their institution. Given that the DSAs study needs assessment may be carried out some months before the start of the course, some students may subsequently attend a different institution or course. In such cases, the NHSBSA may seek further information from the assessor or disability adviser, as appropriate. Students should not be advised to attend a second DSAs study needs assessment without prior approval from the NHSBSA.

A DSAs study needs assessment report will contain information about the student's disability which is classed as sensitive personal data under the Data Protection Act. This means that the written consent of the student should always be obtained before releasing the DSAs needs assessment report or any other disability-related information to a third party. A copy of the needs assessment report should be sent to the institution's Disability Adviser and the NHSBSA by the assessment centre, once agreed.

## 8.2 Reimbursements

Reimbursements will not generally be provided for support or equipment provided or purchased before a DSAs application has been received/DSAs study needs assessment was carried out/NHSBSA approval has been provided.

Students should not be advised by disability advisers or assessors to commit to expenditure before NHSBSA approval is received on the assumption that a reimbursement will be made. The cost of previously owned/purchased equipment will not be reimbursed.

## 8.3 Procurement of NMH

The current process of exemption from the two quote process is under review by the SLC. This guidance will be updated once information becomes available.

## 8.4 Appeals

The NHSBSA has a formal process for handling complaints about their service and also appeals against a decision by the NHSBSA in regards to funding.

Students can contact the NHSBSA if they wish to make a complaint by:

Telephone: 0300 330 1345

Email: [nhsbsa.bursarycomplaints@nhs.net](mailto:nhsbsa.bursarycomplaints@nhs.net)

Further information can be found at

<http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Students/3954.aspx>

If they wish to appeal an NHSBSA decision regarding funding, they should email [nhsbsa.bursarycomplaints@nhs.net](mailto:nhsbsa.bursarycomplaints@nhs.net)

The existing appeals process should be used for DSAs cases where a Study Needs Assessor recommends support that is not available under DSAs or not sufficiently justified, and the recommendation is rejected by NHSBSA.

In addition to the existing appeals and complaints process, a new Exceptional Case Process (ECP) has been introduced to consider applications for DSAs in the circumstances set out below.

## 8.5 Exceptional Case Process (ECP)

An award of DSAs may be considered by exception in the following two circumstances:

### Scenario 1 – Equipment

#### Step 1:

A Needs assessment report recommends support for an item of equipment listed below which the NHSBSA assessor is unable to reach a conclusion on and is generally only available by exception:

- high cost computers
- lightweight computers
- tablets
- standalone printers or scanners (e.g. book scanners, A3 scanners i.e. not standard multifunction units)
- an unusual piece of equipment not ordinarily requested

#### Step 2:

- a) Equipment considered by the Student Services Policy Team (SSPT) and is agreed – end of process.  
OR
- b) Equipment is considered by SSPT and not agreed – student notified that the item is not agreed. The student may pursue an appeal through the standard NHSBSA appeals process ([see Section 8.4](#)).

### Scenario 2 – Non-provision of an adjustment (including NMH and accommodation)

#### Step 1:

The Needs Assessor should consider the barriers that need to be addressed and set out the strategies that are necessary to overcome the barrier in the NAR.

They should detail what items of equipment and/or assistive software is essential to address the barrier and, if necessary, what other additional support strategies might be needed e.g. hand-outs, notes etc.

The Needs Assessor should detail what strategies would work for the student to provide the support essential for them to access their course. Some of these strategies are likely to include support and activities with outcomes associated with NMH Bands 1 and 2 NMH activities and specialist transcription

services. It will be for the HE provider to agree with the student how to meet their needs in these areas.

Some of these strategies may be the primary responsibility of DSAs funded support (primarily NMH Bands 3 and 4).

The recommendations for DSAs-fundable items/support considered by the NHSBSA assessors and are agreed/rejected under normal processes – end of process for those items.

### **Step 2:**

Student notified of DSAs entitlement and advised to pass the relevant parts of their NAR to the institution disability officer to consider the support that has been identified as primarily the responsibility of the institution (e.g. assistance with capturing points from lectures, assistance in the library etc). The DSAs award letter will also advise the student to contact their institution, by stating, *“There are areas of support identified in your Needs Assessment Report which are primarily the responsibility of your university/college. Please arrange to speak with your disability adviser as soon as possible so this support can be put in place.”*

### **Step 3:**

The institution agrees to put support in place – end of process.

OR

### **Step 4:**

The institution and student do not agree on the type of support to be supplied and enter a formal dispute. The SSPT is notified by the student, with confirmation from the institution, that an agreement has not been reached and that the student wishes to apply for support through DSAs. This can be done completing the *Support Request Form* and email this to the DSAs Team ([nhsbsa.dsa@nhs.net](mailto:nhsbsa.dsa@nhs.net)).

### **Step 5:**

The SSPT consider the circumstances of the student and consider that the **support would fall outside the scope of DSAs** in any event. DSAs funding rejected and student notified – end of process.

OR

The SSPT team consider the circumstances of the student and conclude they **are exceptional**. Full DSAs funding is agreed for the duration of the course (with DH input if necessary) and the student is notified – end of process.

OR

The SSPT consider that the needs of the student are **not exceptional** and support through the institution is expected. Student notified that they would need to pursue the formal complaint with their institution and advise that interim support will be put in place for a limited period of time while their appeal is in progress.

OR

**Interim DSAs support is payable for a limited period of time** initially whilst the institution concludes their consideration of the student's circumstances. If the student submits evidence that the case is going to the OIA, interim support for a further limited period of time is available while the case is under consideration by the OIA.

#### **Step 6:**

Outcome of OIA review indicates that the student's complaint that the institution has failed to provide a suitable strategy, and could reasonably be expected to do so, 'justified' or 'partially justified', and may make recommendations to the institution which they are expected to comply with – institution to provide support, end of process for that support.

OR

Outcome of OIA review indicates that the student's complaint that the institution has failed to provide a suitable strategy, and could reasonably be expected to do so 'not justified' – refer back to the NHSBSA SSPT team to consider whether DSAs will continue funding support for the duration of the course. Generally, funding will be provided if the type of support is within the scope of the regulations covering DSAs.

**All exceptions are on a student basis and will not be granted at an institutional or support-type level.**

#### **Appeals and complaints against HE providers**

Institutions have a legal duty under the Equality Act to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled students. If a student requests an adjustment from their institution, and the institution determines that the adjustment is not reasonable, the student can appeal or complain through the institution's normal channels at no cost. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome to their appeal or complaint, they may make a complaint to [the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for HE \(OIA\)](#), once the internal complaints procedures are exhausted.

If the OIA determines that there has been a failure on the part of the institution and upholds the student's complaint, then the institution would need to respond to the OIA. The OIA covers institutions in England and Wales.

Institutions in Scotland are covered by [the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman](#) (SPSO). If a student has a complaint against the NHSBSA or their HE provider and have completed that organisations internal complaints process they can ask the SPSO to investigate. Unresolved disputes with a HE provider in Northern Ireland should be referred to the Department for Education and Learning (NI).

Institutions are being asked to improve the appeals process for students who have requested an adjustment which has been rejected. Institutions should seek to minimise any delay for disabled students seeking adjustments.

The OIA is listed by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) as an Entity which is compliant with the requirements of the *European Directive on Alternative Dispute Resolution* which was implemented in July 2015. One of the requirements of this Directive is that, unless a case is considered "highly complex", decisions on a complaint should be made within 90 days of receiving a completed complaint file.

## **8.6 Devolved administrations**

Students from England studying at institutions in the devolved administrations and who are eligible for student support from SFE will have the same DSAs entitlement as students studying in England.

All other arrangements, including appealing against decisions will be subject to the arrangements in place within the relevant administration/institution. Organisations in the devolved administrations that are responsible for students and student complaints include:

Student Award Agency for Scotland  
Student Finance Wales  
Office of the Independent Adjudicator – England and Wales  
Scottish Public Services Ombudsman  
Department for Education and Learning (Northern Ireland)

## **8.7 VAT**

The NHSBSA cannot give advice on VAT matters. Any queries regarding the charging of VAT should be directed to HMRC.

## Annex A: Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)

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

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

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

There are two forms of SpLD:

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

The following characteristics have been noted in connection with SpLDs:

- a marked inefficiency in the working or short-term memory system which may result in, for example, problems with reading comprehension and written composition
- inadequate phonological processing abilities (innate difficulty linking sound and symbol) which affects the acquisition of fluent reading and spelling skills
- difficulties with motor skills or coordination which might affect tasks which involve simultaneous use of several skills
- problems with visual processing which can affect reading (for example, causing the print to appear distorted or the reader to lose their place excessively) and handwriting (for example losing track of place when copying - this can be termed visual stress)
- reading problems which may include slow reading speed, difficulty extracting sense from written material without substantial re-reading, inaccurate reading, omission of words

- writing problems which may include poor handwriting and slow writing speed, omission of words, spelling problems, difficulties categorising information and sequencing ideas
- difficulties with mathematical skills and concepts: can also be seen in difficulties with abstract concepts of time and direction, following sequential instructions, sequencing events affects, ability to acquire arithmetical/mathematical skills
- lack of structure in oral presentations, seminars and discussion and difficulties with word retrieval
- short attention spans and a high level of distractibility
- poor organisation making time management very difficult

### Screening for SpLDs

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

### Full diagnostic evidence of SpLDs

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

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

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

<p><b>Diagnostic assessments carried out before September 2006</b></p>	<p>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.</p>
<p><b>Diagnostic assessments carried out between September 2006 and August 2007</b></p>	<p>Accept diagnostic assessments carried out by psychologists and suitably qualified specialist teachers as above.</p> <p>Diagnostic reports to be in the format recommended in the SpLDs Working Group's report.</p> <p>Diagnostic reports to use tests recommended in the SpLDs Working Group's guidelines or added by the SpLD Test Evaluation Committee (STEC). See p45.</p>
<p><b>Diagnostic assessments carried out between September 2007 and August 2008</b></p>	<p>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), Dyslexia Action or the British Dyslexia Association). Psychologists must hold a current practising certificate issued by their relevant professional association (for example, the British Psychological Society).</p> <p>Diagnostic reports to be in the report format recommended in the SpLDs Working Group's guidelines</p> <p>Diagnostic reports to use tests recommended in the SpLDs Working Group's guidelines or added by the SpLD Test Evaluation Committee (STEC). See p45</p>

<b>Diagnostic assessments carried out from September 2008</b>	Procedures as from September 2007 above plus the following. All training for assessing specific learning difficulties to incorporate the SpLDs Working Group's guidelines.
<b>From 2012</b>	Psychologists will be registered with the HCPC (the Health and Care Professions Council, formerly the Health Professions Council) as practitioner psychologists.

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

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

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

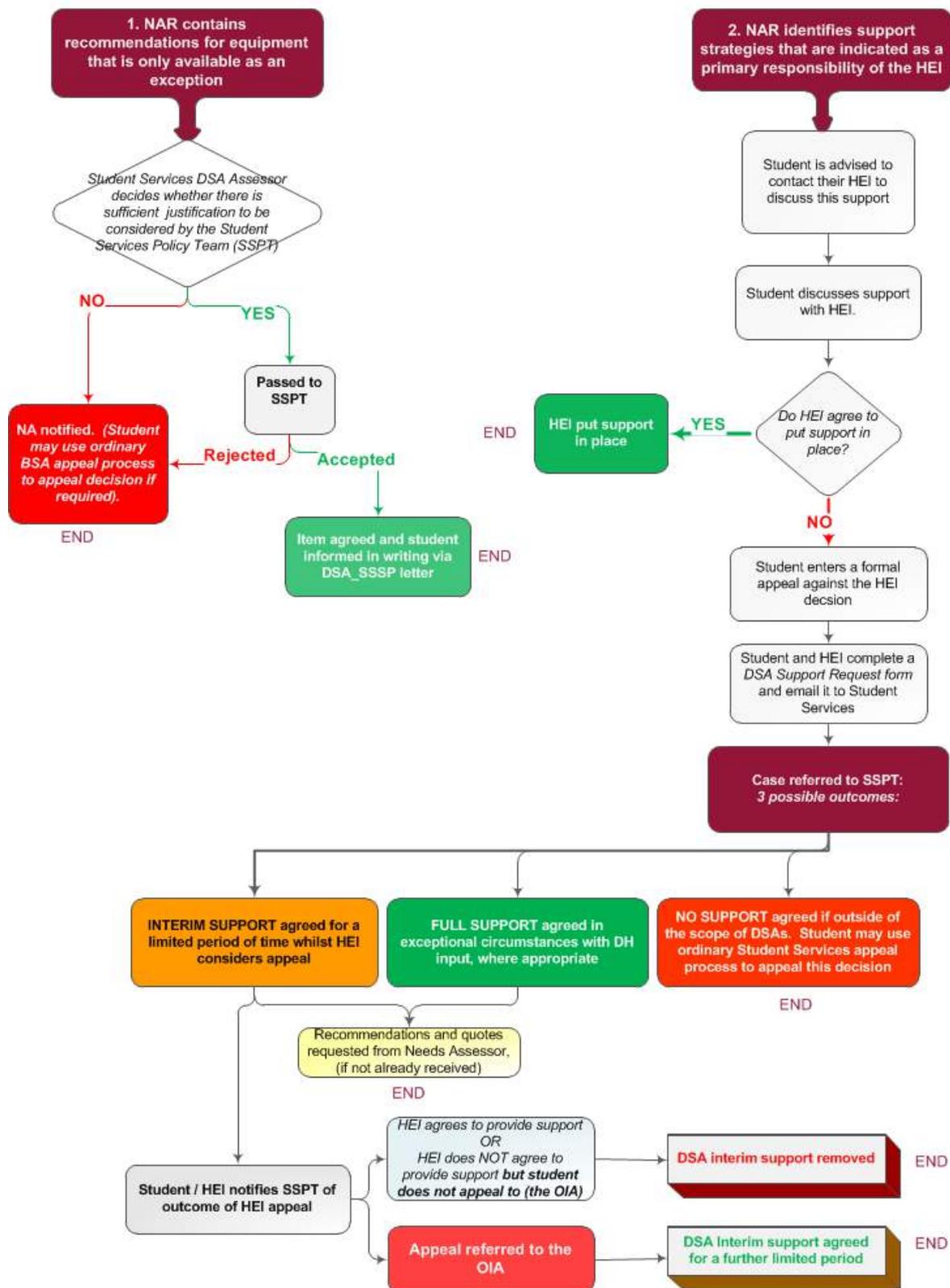
Further testing may be indicated if many years have passed since the last assessment (e.g. assessment at 40 following diagnosis at 16). A post-16 diagnostic assessment should be based on tests recommended in the Specific Learning Difficulties Working Group's guidelines and updated by SASC and its SpLD Test Evaluation Committee (STEC). See [SpLD Assessment Standards Committee \(SASC\)](#) and the *SpLD Test Evaluation Committee*, p45. This post-16 assessment is part of the diagnosis and the cost should be met by the student, although an application may be made to the institution's discretionary funds to meet the cost. This assessment should be carried out by a qualified specialist assessor as noted in the table above.

The Diagnostic report should state that because the student has a specific learning difficulty they should receive extra support to compensate for these difficulties. The study needs assessment will then determine the nature of the support that is required. The judgement on eligibility made by a qualified professional should be

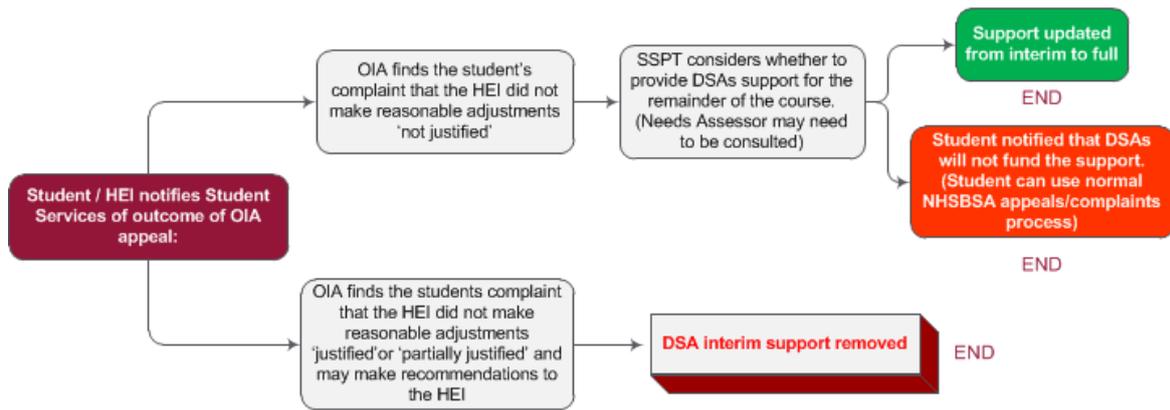
accepted unless it can be shown that the supporting evidence is inadequate to have reasonably formed a view; for example, the evidence is out of date or very cursory. In such circumstances further information should be sought.

# Annex B: DSAs Exceptional Case Process (ECP)

## Student Services – DSAs Exceptional Case Process



## OIA OUTCOME



## **Annex C: Arrangements for assessment reviews from 1 September 2016**

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

The new arrangements apply to all students (both new and existing) from 1 September 2016.

The available outcomes are:

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

### **Funded reviews**

Students will qualify for a funded review:

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

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

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

Significant change to the student's course will no longer be a criterion that prompts a review. Also, a worsened existing disability or condition will no longer be a criterion that prompts a review.

## Reviews undertaken within the single fee arrangement

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

## Full fee assessments

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

## Missed appointments

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

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

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

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

## Example A

Student A was assessed on a physiotherapy course in 2015/16. Student A changes to an occupational therapy course at the same HEI in 2016/17.

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

## Example B

Student B was assessed on a nursing course in 2014/15. Student B transfers to a nursing course at a different HEI in 2016/17, but can attend the same assessment centre.

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

### Example C

Student C was assessed on a nursing course in 2014/15. Student C changes to a nursing course at a different HEI in 2016/17, but cannot attend the same assessment centre because of geographical distance.

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

(1) If it is less than five years since the previous assessment and the change can easily be managed, **rolling over of support/single assessment fee** applies.

(2) If it is less than five years since the previous assessment and change cannot be easily managed because of the geographical location of the new HEI, then the student should be directed to a new assessment centre, which may then charge a **full fee**.

(3) If five years or more has passed since the previous assessment, the student wants a new review and cannot attend the original assessment centre, they should be directed to a new assessment centre, which may then charge a **full fee**.

### Example D

Student D was assessed on a midwifery course in 2015/16. Student D is on the same course but presents a new disability in 2016/17.

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

### Example E

Student E was assessed on a six year medical undergraduate course in 2013/14. Student E is still on the same course in 2018/19 (having received Student Finance England funding in years 1-4) and has not met the criteria for a funded review during that time.

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

### Example F

Student F was assessed on a course in 2012/13. Student F suspended study for 2014/15 and returns to the same course in 2016/17.

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

### **Example G**

Student G was assessed on a midwifery course in 2012/13 and finished the course in 2014. Student G starts a nursing course in 2016/17.

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