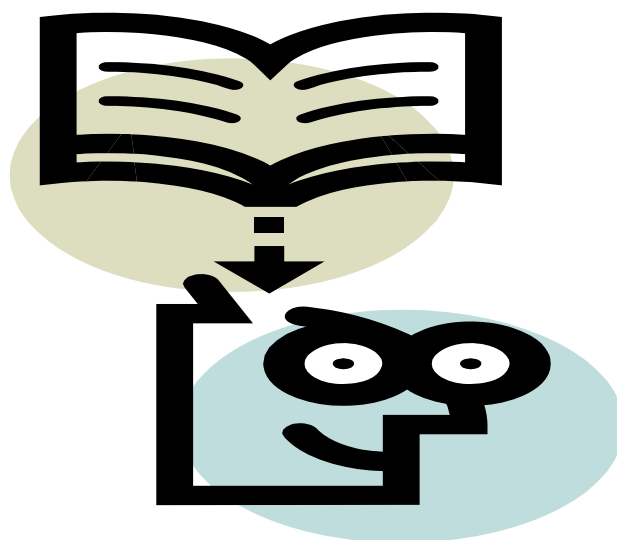


STUDENT AWARDS AGENCY FOR SCOTLAND

GUIDE TO THE DISABLED STUDENTS' ALLOWANCE FOR DISABILITY ADVISORS 5th Edition Session 2013/2014



Author: Leia Fitzgerald
Last updated: 14th May 2013

Disclaimer: *The information in this guide offers general guidance only and is not legally binding, nor does it constitute any right of eligibility for, or entitlement to, funding. We will assess each student's applicant on his or her individual circumstances in accordance with the information provided with his or her completed application form/s*

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Contact Us

The contact details for the DSA team are as follows:

Telephone: 0300 300 3135 (press option 2)
Minicom 0131 244 5107
Fax number: 0131 244 5109
Address: DSA team
Room 101
Gyleview House
3 Redheughs Rigg
Edinburgh
EH12 9HH

Website: www.saas.gov.uk

Email: saas_4@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
(for enquiries relating to specific students)

saas_4dsa@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
(DSA advisors only email address: to be used for general enquires about the rules and policy surrounding DSA).

DSA key personnel

DSA Section Leader	John Cameron	0131 244 5154	john.cameron@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
DSA Team Leader	Russell Renton	0131 244 5161	russell.renton@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
DSA Specialised Caseworker	Jackie McCaskell	0131 244 4396	Jackie.mccaskell@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
DSA Specialised Caseworker	Avril Wood	0131 244 4165	avril.wood@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
DSA Caseworker	Colin Peter	0131 244 4460	colin.peter@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
Policy Manager	Alan Scott	0131 244 5883	alan.scott@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Further information, advice and guidance

SAAS

Information for Students – Copies of SAAS guidance notes and booklets can be found on our website at - http://www.saas.gov.uk/forms_and_guides/dsa.htm

Scottish Government

Information for Students – The Scottish Government has produced a number of booklets and information guides for students which explain the support that is available to them when they start college or university: – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Funding-Support-Grants/FFL>

DSA Stakeholders Group – Further information about the work of the DSSG including minutes of previous meetings can be found on the Scottish Government website at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Funding-Support-Grants/FFL/stakeholdergroups>

A

Allied Health Profession (AHP) Students

Students from England, Wales and Northern Ireland on 4 year undergraduate AHP courses e.g. physiotherapy, speech therapy, Radiography etc apply to SAAS for their DSA and not their local funding authority. Students on 2 year accelerated graduate entry degree courses should apply to their local funding authority for support.

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Allowances – basic allowance

This is an annual allowance. In 2013/2014 the rate for full time students is £1725. For part-time students the allowance is pro rata, e.g. a student studying for 50% of the length of a full time course would be entitled to £863 (50% of the basic allowance).

The basic allowance is intended to cover small items of equipment and consumables such as:

- Dictaphones
- Photocopying costs
- Printer cartridges
- Internet
- Braille Paper

We do not pay for:

- Adaptations to course handouts

A student may also claim the extra cost of medically-certified special dietary needs under this allowance – see the section Special Dietary Needs on [page 45](#) for more information.

Any unspent portion of the basic allowance can also be used to top up the Non Medical Personal Help (NMPH) or Large Items allowance if necessary.

We cannot pay more than the maximum basic allowance in any given academic year.

Students cannot carry any unspent portion of the basic allowance forward from one academic session to another.

Students cannot anticipate a DSA award i.e. they cannot use a proportion of their DSA entitlement from a future academic year to top up their support in the current academic year.

If a students' disability related expenses exceed the maximum allowed under the basic allowance they can apply for extra support from their institutions Discretionary Funds.

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Allowances – large items allowance

This allowance is available to eligible students and covers their whole programme of study, but we can make exceptions if there has been a significant gap between courses – see the section: Change of Course – Large Items Allowance on [page 5](#) for more information. For students commencing In 2013/2014 the rate for is £5,160. This allowance is not proportioned down for part-time students. The Large Items Allowance can include items such as:

- Disability related software (e.g. Dragon voice recognition software)
- Other appropriate software (e.g. Microsoft Word)
- Printers
- Scanners
- Personal computers (PCs)
- Laptops
- Disability loops
- Radio aids
- CCTV to enlarge book print

We do not normally pay for:

- Equipment that we have not approved or that has not been recommended by a validated needs assessor
- Phone line installation or rental
- Any equipment that we feel an institution should be reasonably expected to provide
- Equipment that is required by all students on the course e.g. cameras for students on photography courses or DVD players required by Open University students
- Wheelchairs
- Scooters

If a student requires a piece of equipment for their course, that because of their disability is more expensive than that the standard piece of equipment that all students require, we can pay for the difference in price between the two.

Case study

Student A is on an Open University computing course. It is a compulsory requirement of the course that all students own a PC with a minimum specification. The PC recommended has a 14 inch screen and standard keyboard and mouse and costs approximately £500. However, due to Student A's visual disability he requires a PC with a 20 inch monitor and a specialised keyboard and mouse. These extra disability required changes take the price of the PC up to £800. SAAS agrees to pay £300 to the student because this is the difference between the standard specification that all students require and the higher specification that the student needs because of his disability.

Any unspent portion of the allowance cannot be used to top up the other two allowances.

We cannot pay more than the maximum large items allowance in any given academic year.

Students cannot anticipate a DSA award i.e. they cannot use a proportion of their DSA entitlement from a future academic year to top up support in the current academic year.

If necessary any unspent portion of the basic allowance can be used to top up the large items allowance.

If a student's disability related expenses exceed the maximum allowed under the large items allowance they can apply for extra support from their institutions Discretionary Funds.

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Allowances – non medical personal help (NMPH)

This is an annual allowance. In 2013/2014 the rate for full time students is £20,520. For part-time students the allowance is scaled down pro rata e.g. a student studying for 50% of the length of a full time course would be entitled to £10,260 (50% of the basic allowance).

The NMPH allowance is intended to cover personal support such as:

- Readers
- Sign Language Interpreters
- Note takers (including text help operators)
- Scribes
- IT Training
- Study skills support
- Mentors
- Proof readers
- Helpers providing support for students to move around campus or access specific areas such as the library

We do not pay for:

- Subject specific tuition
- Personal help that is required outside class time e.g. help with getting dressed in the morning
- Any support that would normally be provided by Social Services
- Any services such as counselling or study support that the institution makes available to all its students
- Asfedic tuning or similar diagnostic services
- NMPH for scribing or similar support during exams – see section: Exams on [page 25](#) for more information

Any unspent portion of the NMPH allowance cannot be used to top up the other two allowances.

We cannot pay more than the maximum NMPH allowance in any given academic year.

Students cannot carry any unspent portion of the basic allowance forward from one academic session to another.

Students cannot anticipate a DSA award i.e. they cannot use a proportion of their DSA entitlement from a future academic year to top up support in the current academic year.

If necessary any unspent portion of the basic allowance can be used to top up the NMPH allowance.

If a student's disability related expenses exceed the maximum allowed under the NMPH allowance they can apply for extra support from their institutions Discretionary Funds.

If a student has been recommended both IT equipment/software and NMPH which provide the same type of support we would expect a student's needs assessment form to clearly outline a strategy to enable the student to become an independent learner.

Case Study

Student A has mild dyslexia and is starting an English Literature course. In the first year his needs assessment report recommends that he be awarded DSA for a laptop with specialised dyslexia software, study skills support for two hours per week, proof-reading support for 3 hours per week and a note taker for 10 hours per week.

In his needs assessment it is noted that as he becomes familiar with his specialised software and is able to take on board the strategies developed in his study skills classes, the amount of NMPH he will need will go down. As part of the long term strategy that has been developed between the student and his disability advisor he is going to learn to touch type so that he can take his own notes instead of relying on a note-taker.

As a result of this planning when he goes into second year student A has fully developed his touch typing skills and no longer requires a note-taker. The amount of study skills support he requires has also decreased and is also down to 1 hour a fortnight. [Back to contents page](#)

Allowances – non medical personal help (NMPH): admin charges

Institutions who recruit and employ their own support workers can add an admin charge, up to a maximum of 25%, onto the hourly rate that they charge us.

The admin charge can be used to cover the following areas only:

- Annual leave
- Maternity leave
- Sick leave
- Pension contributions
- National insurance
- Line management of support staff

Case study

Institution A employs a pool of support workers to work as readers, proof readers and note takers for their own disabled students. The hourly rate they pay the support worker is £10 per hour. However, their HR team calculate that the costs they incur meeting their legal employer obligations with regards to annual and sick leave, costs an additional £1.50 per hour (15% of the hourly rate). Therefore, the rate they can invoice us is £11.50 per hour (£10 + £1.50).

Students who employ their own support workers can seek reimbursement from us for any admin charges they incur if they use a professional payroll company to pay their support worker. They will need to provide us with documentary evidence from their payroll company to claim this.

We will not pay the student for any costs they incur with regards to the following:

- Producing an employment contract
- Disclosure Scotland checks
- Training for their support worker
- Travel for their support worker
- Materials for their support worker e.g. pens and paper
- Employers national insurance costs

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Allowances – non medical personal help (NMPH): who we can pay it to

If a student uses a support worker employed by their institution or a private company, we can pay the institution or agency direct. If a student employs their own support worker we can only pay the student who will then have to pass the money onto their support worker.

If we are made aware that the student is not reimbursing their support worker we will seek to recover all monies paid out to the student.

There may be certain cases where, due to the student's disability, they are unable to handle any financial transactions themselves; in those cases we can consider paying the student's helper directly. The student's disability advisor would have to provide evidence under our exceptional cases procedure before we could consider this. However, we would expect that as most students already deal with their own finances for example paying rent, mobile phone contracts etc they should also be capable of paying their support worker too.

To prevent conflicts of interest we cannot pay NMPH to an individual if that individual also carried out the student's needs assessment report.

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Allowances – non medical personal help (NMPH): rates of pay

In session 2010/11 we introduced guidelines on suitable rates of pay for personal helpers. These rates of pay were decided after researching the various rates currently being charged by Institutions, private companies and students employing their own helpers. The rates of pay will be looked at each year to ensure that they are appropriate.

- Classroom/library assistants: £6 - £9 per hour (for students employing their own support worker)
- Classroom/library assistant: £10 - £18 (if using a support worker from an agency or institution)
- IT trainers: £11.50 - £45 (depending on qualifications/level of experience)
- Mentor: £10 - £45 (depending on qualifications/level of experience)
- Note-taker: £6 - £9 per hour (for students employing their own support worker)
- Note-taker: £10 - £18 (if using a support worker from an agency or institution)
- Personal support assistant: £10 - £18 depending on qualifications/level of experience)
- Proof-reader: £6 - £9 per hour (for students employing their own support worker)
- Proof-reader: £10 - £18 (if using a support worker from an agency or institution)
- Reader: £6 - £9 per hour (for students employing their own support worker)
- Reader: £10 - £18 (if using a support worker from an agency or institution)
- Sign language interpreter: £11.50 - £45
- Study support assistant: £11.50 - £45 (depending on qualifications/level of experience)

We recognise that some continuing students may be using helpers whose rate is higher than what we will now pay. In these cases, as long as the rate charged is not excessive, these students can continue to employ their helper at their current rate. However, if they change their helper, the rate of pay for the new helper should fall within our specified range.

There may be exceptional cases where the recommended cost of the recommended support worker is higher than our normal rates e.g. if a student is in a remote area there may only be one agency supplying the support that they need. In these cases we can consider paying a higher rate under our exceptional cases procedure, providing we have supporting evidence from the student's disability advisors.

The rates of pay that we will consider fall into two categories; rates for students employing their own, non specialist support worker, and rates payable to institutions and private companies where the helper is suitably trained and qualified. These different pay scales reflect that fact that where students employ their own helper e.g. a reader, the individuals carrying out this work are usually unqualified family members or friends, whereas the support workers used by private companies and institutions are usually trained and qualified in their specific area of support. However, if a student employs their own and that support worker is trained/qualified in carrying out the required support we can consider paying them at the higher rate.

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Appeals – appealing to SAAS

An appeal is a formal request to review a decision we have made on a student's entitlement to financial support and/or our assessment of how much they should get. An appeal must allege an error on our part and will only be considered if it is based on us having made an incorrect assessment of a student's factual circumstances and/or an erroneous interpretation of the law.

You or the student can make a formal appeal by writing to tell us why you think our decision or assessment is wrong. Address the envelope to "SAAS Appeals" at the address in Annex A and clearly mark the letter "Formal Appeal". Please put the SAAS reference number on any correspondence.

What we will do

A senior member of staff will consider your appeal and will aim to reply to you within 10 working days of receipt. If we cannot do so, we will write to explain why and to tell you when you can expect a full response.

If you are unhappy with the reply you receive, you may write to our Chief Executive asking for a review of your case (please write to the Chief Executive, SAAS at the address below). You will normally receive a reply within 10 working days. The Chief Executive's decision is final in terms of the Agency's procedures.

If you are not satisfied with the reply from the Chief Executive, you have the right to refer your case to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) for consideration. The Ombudsman can investigate claims of maladministration but will normally only do so once you have exhausted the Agency's procedures as detailed above. You should contact the Ombudsman, preferably in writing, within 12 months after the day you first became aware of your grounds for complaint. The SPSO's office is based at 4 Melville Street, Edinburgh, EH3 7NS.

The SPSO's contact details are:-

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman www.spsso.org.uk

Freepost EH641

Edinburgh

EH3 0BR

E-Mail:ask@spsso.org.uk

Tel: 0800 377 7330

Fax: 0800 377 7331

Text: 0790 049 4372

Recording, monitoring and reviewing appeals and complaints

If appeals reveal shortcomings on our part, we use this information to review and improve our procedures.

Appeals – Students Appealing against a needs assessment

If a student wishes to appeal against the recommendations in their needs assessment they should first of all appeal directly to the institution or Access Centre that carried out their assessment. The institution or Access Centre that provided the assessment should provide the student with a copy of their appeals process. If they are not happy with their response we can appoint an Independent Arbitrator to look at the assessment.

If they are unhappy with the reply they receive from the Independent Arbitrator, they can write to our Chief Executive asking for a review of the case. They will normally receive a reply within 10 working days. The Chief Executive's decision is final in terms of the Agency's procedures. If they are still not satisfied with the reply from the Chief Executive, the student (or their representative) has the right to refer their case to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) for consideration.

The Ombudsman can investigate claims of maladministration but will normally only do so once the student has exhausted the Agency's procedures as detailed above. They should contact the Ombudsman, preferably in writing, within 12 months after the day they first became aware of the grounds for complaint. The SPSO's office is based at 4 Melville Street, Edinburgh, EH3 7NS and their contact details are:

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman www.spsso.org.uk

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Edinburgh

EH3 0BR

E-Mail:ask@spsso.org.uk

Tel: 0800 377 7330

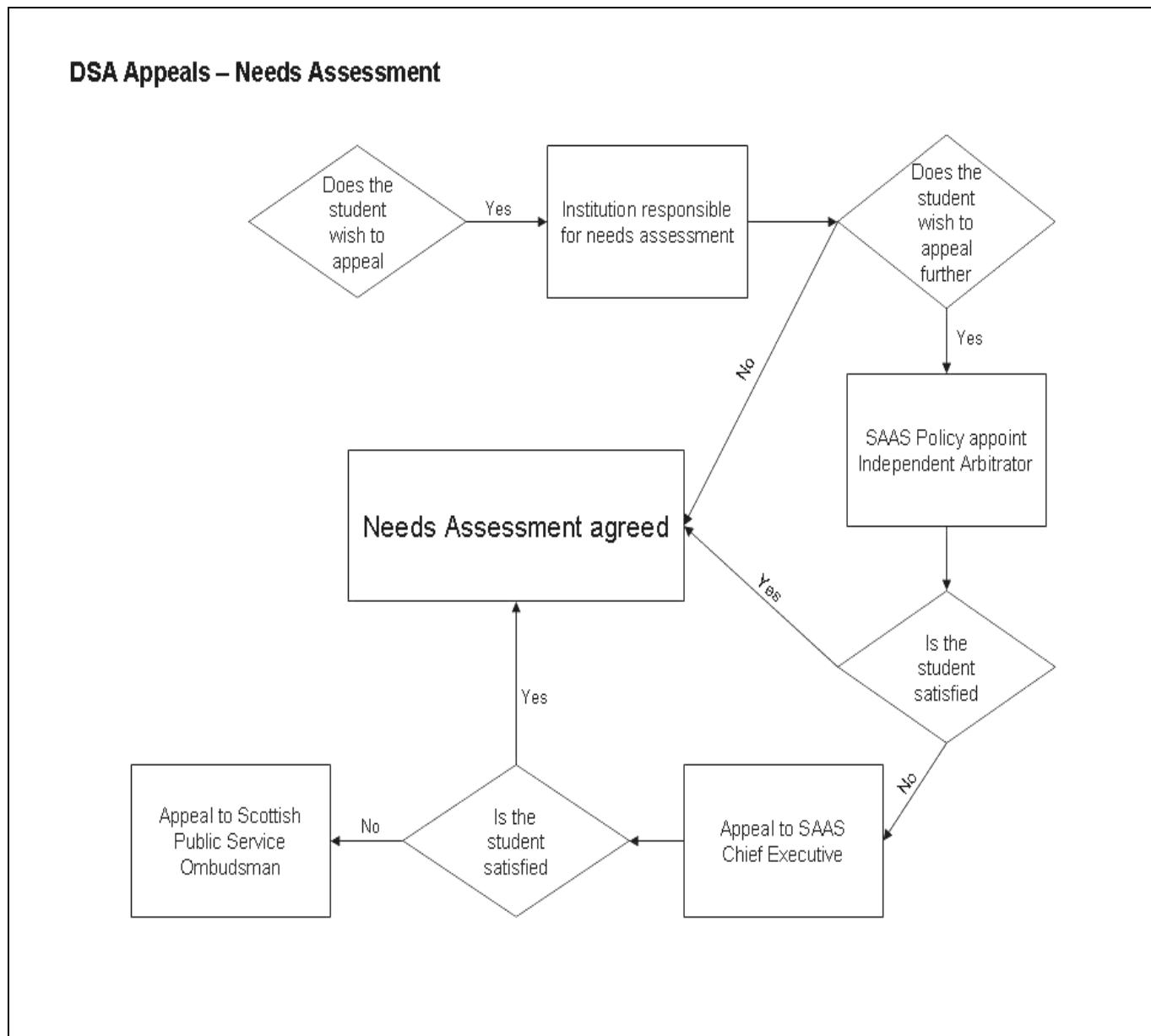
Fax: 0800 377 7331

Text: 0790 049 4372

Recording, monitoring and reviewing appeals

If appeals or complaints reveal shortcomings on our part, we use this information to review and improve our procedures.

The following flowchart summarises the full appeals process:



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Applying for DSA

Applications and guidance notes for DSA are available from the beginning of April each year. Applications are available directly from us and on our website at www.saas.gov.uk. We also send an allocation to every college and university in Scotland at the start of the session.

There are two DSA forms:

- DSA FT – for full time DSA students who are claiming living cost and or tuition fee support from SAAS
- DSA O – for part-time, distance learning and full time students not claiming tuition fees or living cost support.

We also produce a set of guidance notes for students explaining the kind of support they may be entitled to under DSA.

When applying new students must:

- Ensure that their DSA form has been signed (and endorsed if studying part-time) by their institution and themselves
- Enclose medical evidence/confirmation of their disability
- Enclose any other applicable supporting documents e.g. quotes from taxi companies
- Enclose a copy of their needs assessment if this has already been carried out

Continuing students must:

- Ensure that their DSA form has been signed (and endorsed if studying part-time) by their institution and themselves.
- Enclose a letter from their disability advisor confirming what support and/or equipment they require
- Enclose any other applicable supporting documents e.g. quotes from taxi companies

Students who are also applying to SAAS for tuition fees and/or a student loan must also ensure that they have submitted their application for main support either along with or before they submit their DSA application. We cannot assess their entitlement to DSA until this form has been processed.

Needs assessments reports/DSA application forms should always:

- Sufficiently justify the recommendations and how they relate to the student's study
- Demonstrate what reasonable adjustments have been made by the institution to support the student
- Clearly relate to how the support will enable the student to become, within reason, an independent learner and ultimately help to prepare them for their vocational end goal
- Relate to the needs of the student as a result of their impairment
- Demonstrate how the DSA will provide the support that is required for the student to be on a level playing field with their peers
- Fully complete the application form/needs assessment. If a particular section has been left blank a brief explanation should be given

The closing date for DSA applications for session 2013/2014 is 31st March 2014 for courses that start between the 1st August 2013 and 31st January 2014. For courses that start between 1st February and 31st July 2014 we will except DSA applications up to 3 months after the course start date.

We will not normally except applications for DSA received after the closing date, however, we can consider late applications on an exceptional basis. Please see the section on Exceptions on [page 25](#) for more information.

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Applying for DSA – applications received near the end of a course or academic year

The closing date for DSA applications for session 2013/2014 is 31st March 2014 for courses that start between the 1st August 2013 and 31st January 2014. For courses that start between 1st February and 31st July 2014 we will except DSA applications up to 3 months after the course start date.

We will not normally except applications for DSA received after the closing date, however, we can consider late applications on an exceptional basis. Please see the section on Exceptions on [page 25](#) for more information.

However, if students apply for items of equipment or NMPH towards the end of their course or academic year we might restrict the DSA we pay out or look to provide alternative forms of support instead.

In order to pay DSA near the end of a student's course or academic year we would require the following from the student's disability advisor:

- An explanation of why the application has been made so late in the year
- Confirmation of why the support is required now
- Information on how the student had managed on their course prior to their application
- Confirmation that there is no support available from other sources e.g. loan of equipment from the institution for the remainder of the academic year
- Confirmation of what forms of reasonable adjustment have been made by the institution to support the student and why the student still requires additional support through the DSA

If we are satisfied that the student does require the equipment recommended we might look at paying for the hire of equipment instead of purchase, particularly if the student is nearing the end of their final year, or alternatives such as NMPH instead.

Where we agree to the purchase of equipment for students who are nearing the end of an academic year we must be satisfied that the student intends to return to their studies after the summer break. Where students subsequently do not re-enrol we may seek to recover the monies paid out.

We will not pay for any equipment that the student purchased prior to attending a needs assessment – see the section retrospective claims on [page 44](#) for more information.

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Applying for DSA – completing the DSA form

SAAS operates a paperless office system and electronically scans all forms and correspondence onto our student support database (StEPS). To enable us to scan and process documents as quickly as possible all forms and correspondence should be sent in the following format:

- Use original DSA forms (either the yellow paper forms issued to all institutions or the PDF version which can be downloaded from our website)
- Complete the DSA form using black ink
- Send us clear photocopies of any documents we ask for (e.g. Educational Psychologist reports) not original documents. We destroy all documents after 30 days

Do not:

- Use highlighter pens as this shows up as blank text on our system
- Send original copies of documents e.g. Educational Psychologists reports
- Use coloured ink as it does not always show up clearly on our system and means that we have to photocopy the documents before scanning them
- Use your own in-house version of the DSA form

Remember to:

- Enclose all supporting documentation with the form whenever possible, do not send them separately
- Ensure that the form has been signed by both the student and the disability advisor
- Ensure that for part-time and distance-learners the endorsement box has been completed
- Use our pro-formas (where appropriate)

Once the disability advisor has signed the SAAS DSA form it should not be passed back to the student. This is one of our audit requirements and it is to ensure that the student does not add extra items or support to the form that have not been agreed by the disability advisor.

When required, we can provide alternative versions of the DSA forms and notes in the following formats:

- Braille
- Large print
- Audio
- Microsoft Word

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Applying for DSA – continuing students

Continuing students do not need to have a new needs assessment for each year of their course, however, if they have a change of circumstances then it may be necessary to carry out a new assessment, for example:

- They have changed to a completely new course or institution
- There has been a change in their medical condition

Where there is no change in the student's circumstances, if the student is claiming a continuance of their support e.g. non medical help or photocopying costs, they should simply provide the following:

- The appropriate DSA form, signed by themselves and their disability advisor
- A letter from the their disability advisor confirming what support they require e.g. if they require NMPH the letter should state the number of hours and the cost per hour
- A third party agreement form if payment for any equipment recommended is to be made direct to the institution

In the case of NMPH the support should be reviewed each year to ensure that the level of support received in previous years is still appropriate.

Once we have processed their application we will send a letter to the student to confirm the level of support they will receive, as well as payment for any additional equipment or consumables that have been requested.

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B

Bankruptcy

If a supplier of specialist equipment goes bankrupt before supplying the equipment, under insolvency law a student could become a creditor of the bankrupt's estate and potentially recover the money they have paid out or receive the equipment if the supplier still has it.

If the student is unable to obtain their equipment or recover their money we can make another award under DSA subject to the maximum payable under the allowance. If the amount of DSA they have left is not enough to meet the full cost of their equipment they would have to pay any difference themselves.

However, before we could consider payment the student would have to provide us with written evidence stating that they had not received the original goods and would not be able to recover the equipment or funds from the supplier.

Case study

A student is awarded £3500 under the large items allowance to purchase a computer and software. However, the company goes bankrupt before their equipment arrives and they are advised that they will be unable to claim the money back. As the student still needs the equipment to do their course we can award the student £1,660 (the remainder of their large items allowance) and £1,725 (the unspent portion of their basic allowance for that session) making a total of £3,385. As this is £115 less than the cost of the equipment the student will have to make up the shortfall themselves.

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Books

We will not normally pay for books as this is something that all students are required to buy regardless of their disability. We would expect an institution to make some reasonable adjustments to support students who may need to borrow a book from their institution library but because of their disability requires a copy for a significantly longer period of time. Once evidence has been provided that all other reasonable adjustments have been made and a need still exists, then we may consider payment in the following circumstances:

- Where students require books in an alternative format e.g. large print or audio we can pay the difference in cost between the standard and alternative format only. We will not pay for the full cost of a large print or audio book.
- Books that aid students with study difficulties e.g. study skills books for dyslexic students

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C

Change of course – large items allowance

The large items allowance is awarded for the duration of a student's **course of study** not for an individual course. Therefore, if a student changes courses without a break in study e.g. from year one of a BA in English to year one of a BA in Drama or progress from one course straight to another, e.g. from a BA to a Postgraduate Diploma they will not receive a new large items allowance.

Case study 1

Student A is on a BA Mathematics course. She applies for DSA and we award her £4,500 under the large items allowance for a computer and software. However, after a year she decides to change to a MEng and as a result requires some additional software and a scanner costing £2,000. Although she only has £660 left of her large items allowance she can use £1,340 from the basic allowance for that session to make up the remainder of the £2,000. If she requires any further equipment during her course she will have to use her small items allowance as her large items allowance has now been exhausted.

If a student starts a new course after a short break in study they may be entitled to a new large items allowance but we would need confirmation that the equipment they had received was no longer adequate. If a student returns to education after a significant break in study they will normally be entitled to a new large items allowance.

Case study 2

Student B is enrolled on a one year HNC course for which we award them £2,000 for a computer. After a year away from education working in industry he decides to return to college to do an HND. As he has only had one year outwith education and as all the original equipment he received under DSA is still working he is not entitled to a new large items allowance. However, he still has £3,160 of his original large items allowance left which he can use to extend the warranty on his computer and to purchase any additional equipment and software that he requires for his HND course.

Case study 3

We award student C £3,000 to buy a laptop computer, printer, scanner and software while on a BA course. Five years after graduating she gets accepted onto a PGDE course. As it has been five years since she was last awarded DSA and her original equipment is no longer working she is entitled to a new large items allowance for her new course.

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Complaints against SAAS

We have a formal complaints procedure which is published in our annual guides and also posted on our website. The full complaints procedure is copied below:

Stage 1 - How to make a complaint to SAAS

You can make a formal complaint by writing to tell us what has gone wrong. Clearly mark your letter 'Formal Complaint' and include your SAAS reference number. Please send this, along with all the relevant documentary evidence to support your complaint, addressing the envelope to 'SAAS Complaints' and send it to:

Gyleview House
3 Redheughs Rigg
Edinburgh
EH12 9HH

Stage 2 - What we will do

A senior member of staff will consider your complaint and will aim to reply to you within 14 days of receipt. If we cannot do so, we will write to explain why and to tell you when you can expect a full response. If your correspondence is not classed as a complaint, we will treat it as general correspondence and reply within our general correspondence target time.

Stage 3

If you are unhappy with the reply you receive, you may write to our Chief Executive to ask for a review of your complaint. Again, clearly mark your letter 'Formal Complaint' and include your SAAS reference number. Address the envelope to the Chief Executive, SAAS and send it to the above address. You will normally receive a reply within 14 days. The Chief Executive's decision is final in terms of the Agency's procedures.

Stage 4

If you are not satisfied with the reply from the Chief Executive, you have the right to refer your case to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) for consideration. The Ombudsman can investigate complaints of maladministration but will normally only do so once you have completed the Agency's procedures as detailed above. You should contact the Ombudsman, preferably in writing, within 12 months after the day you first became aware of your grounds for complaint. The SPSO's office is based at 4 Melville Street, Edinburgh, EH3 7NS.

The SPSO's contact details are:

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
Freepost EH641
Edinburgh
EH3 0BR

Website - www.spsso.org.uk
Tel: 0800 377 7330
Fax: 0800 377 7331

Recording, monitoring and reviewing complaints

We keep a record of all the complaints we receive and if they reveal shortcomings on our part, we use this information to review and improve our procedures.

Our Management Board reviews the complaints we have dealt with every 3 months to assess whether there are any patterns or trends that suggest we ought to change our procedures and publish details in our annual reports.

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Consumables

We can pay for the cost of consumables such as paper, ink and photocopying costs if a student incurs additional charges directly related to their disability.

As all students will generally have some costs associated with this we will only pay for consumables when it can be demonstrated that because of their disability a student has incurred extra costs e.g. a visually impaired student who needs to print documents in a bigger font or with double spacing. In these cases we will only reimburse costs that are over and above the expenses that a non disabled student would reasonably be expected to pay.

When submitting a request for consumables institutions should provide us with an estimate of the costs for a non disabled student as well as the additional costs incurred by the disabled student. Clear supporting evidence must be provided to explain why the student will incur the extra costs.

Students must send in receipts for all consumables purchased whenever possible. If they are unable to provide receipts – e.g. if they are using a photocopier which does not issue receipts – they should send us a covering letter explaining why.

If a student does not use all of their consumable allowance they must return any unspent portion of it to us at the end of the academic year.

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Course related software

We will not normally pay for any course related software as this is something that institutions should make available to all of their students. Where students have a disability institutions should make reasonable adjustments to ensure that they can access the appropriate software in the manner best suited to their needs.

Case study 1

Student A has ADHD and is studying for an HNC in music composition. For part of his course he needs to use specialised software to produce an original music score. The college makes this software available in its computer labs for all students, however, because of his disability student A is unable to work there as the noise of the other students distracts him and prevents him from concentrating. As a reasonable adjustment his college agree to set up a PC with the appropriate software in a quiet room that the student can study alone in.

Case study 2

Student B has mobility difficulties and is on a BA Architecture course. As part of his course he has to produce technical designs of buildings using specialised drafting software. The university makes this software available to all architecture students in a specialised computer lab, however, the student is due to have an operation on his spine and will be unable to attend college for 3 months. So that he doesn't fall behind with his course work his university lend him a laptop which has the specialised software installed on it so he can do the work from home.

Where you feel that there is a strong disability related requirement for purchase of subject specific software and the student's institution has made all reasonable adjustments you can make an application to the DSA under our exceptional cases process.

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D

Digital Hearing Aids

We do not normally pay for digital hearing aids as they are something that students normally require regardless of their attendance on their course and are usually available through the NHS. However, we can consider paying for them in exceptional circumstances. To enable us to consider paying for them we require the following:

- Confirmation that the student requires digital hearing aids solely because of their attendance at college or university
- Confirmation that they cannot get them on the NHS or that if they are on a waiting list that they will not be able to get them within the next academic year
- An explanation of why other forms of support e.g. note takers, induction loops etc are not suitable alternatives

For more information about how to make an application for an exceptional or non standard piece of equipment see the section - Exceptions on [page 25](#)

Partnership Matters provides further information about the roles and responsibilities of other agencies such as the NHS that are involved in supporting students with additional support needs see the section – Partnership Matters on [page 37](#) for more information.

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Distance Learning Study

DSA is available to Distance Learning, including Open University (OU) students who are studying at course a HNC level or above.

Distance-learning students should fill out the form DSA O.

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Distance Learning study – DSA rates

For distance-learning students the basic items allowance and NMPH are scaled down pro rata e.g. a student studying for 50% of the length of a full time course would be entitled to £863 and £10,260 (50% of the basic allowance and NMPH respectively).

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Distance Learning Study – length of study

To be eligible for support part-time students must be undertaking at least 50% of the normal length of a full time course and must not take more than twice the normal length of time to complete it i.e. a student undertaking a 4 year BA on a part time basis must take no more than 8 years to complete it. For OU students this means they must be studying at least 60 credits each year.

In exceptional cases we can fund students who have to cut back on their time in one session, due to medical reasons, providing they make up the time in any subsequent years and do not take longer than twice the length of the standard course to complete it.

For example a student on a 1 year HNC course could exceptionally do 60% of the course in year 1 and 40% in year two.

In these cases you must contact us to get approval and provide good reasons and supporting evidence.

Case study

Student A is in the fourth year of a 6 year BA at the Open University. She has to go into hospital and knows that due to the recuperation time she will only be able to complete 30 credits of her course that instead of 60. However, she feels that she will be able to make up the remaining 30 credits over the final two years of her course by studying for an additional an additional 15 credits in her remaining two years.

Her disability advisor puts a case to us with supporting evidence from the student's doctor and academic advisor confirming her circumstances. We exceptionally agree to continue funding the student in year four as the overall length of her course will not be extended beyond the original 6 years.

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Disabled Students Stakeholder Group (DSSG)

The Disabled Students Stakeholder Group was established to bring together stakeholders and key delivery partners involved in supporting students with disability related additional needs. Current members include representatives from The Scottish Government, Scottish colleges, universities and Access Centres, The National Union of Students, RNIB, RNID, BRITE as well as Directors of Education, Social Work and Student Services.

The structure and remit of the DSSG is currently under review by the Scottish Government and information about its future role will be announced shortly.

Information about the work of the DSSG including minutes of previous meetings can be found on the Scottish Government website at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Funding-Support-Grants/FFL/stakeholdergroups>

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E

Early payment of DSA

We will normally make payments to disabled students two weeks before the start date of their course. This is to ensure that they have enough time to purchase and put in place all of the equipment and support they require for the start of their course.

However, in exceptional cases we can make a payment for the 1st August in the year in which they start their course, e.g. if a student requires piece of equipment that has to be specially made for them or if they are required to attend a summer school at their institution before they start their course proper. In these cases we will require written evidence explaining why the student requires the money early.

If a student is awarded DSA in advance of starting their course and subsequently does not attend we will seek to recover all monies we have paid out.

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Eligibility

In order to claim DSA students must meet certain eligibility requirements with regards to their course and residency status, see the sections – Eligibility – course on [page 21](#) and Eligibility – residency on [page 22](#) for more information.

However, even if a student does not meet our eligibility rules institutions can still include them in their returns to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) for institutional support such as the Disabled Students' Premium (DSP). Further information about this can be obtained from the SFC.

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Eligibility - Age

Unlike the eligibility criteria for the Student Loan, there is no maximum age requirement that students must meet to be eligible for the DSA. However, students must be of at least school leaving age to apply for DSA: this is normally 16 years of age but can in some cases be 15.

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Eligibility - Course eligibility

Students on the following courses are eligible to claim DSA support:

- HNC
- HND
- Degree or equivalent level courses
- Foundation year of a degree course if the student has enrolled for the whole course not just the foundation year, and the foundation year is a necessary and compulsory part of the course
- Diploma in Nursing or Midwifery
- Honours degree in Nursing or Midwifery
- Full time Post Graduate courses providing the student is not receiving support from another source e.g. a Research Council
- Part-time Post Graduate courses providing it is at least 50% of the length of the full time course and the student is not receiving support from another source e.g. a Research Council
- Part-time undergraduate courses at HNC level or above which are at least 50% of the length of the full time course
- Distance learning courses providing the student is undertaking at least 50% of the length of a full time course
- Open University courses providing the student is studying at least 60 credits in a year

The following students **are not entitled** to claim DSA support:

- EU Students receiving a fees only award
- Part-time Students undertaking less than 50% of a full time course
- Open University students studying less than 60 credits
- Students undertaking a course below HNC level
- Students who are receiving funding from their Local Education Authority, Student Funding England, Student Funding Wales, or their Local Library Board
- Postgraduate Students receiving funding from another source e.g. a Research Council or the Social Work Department
- Students on Access courses
- Students who do not meet our normal residency regulations
- Students on HNC, HND or degree level courses that have not been designated as eligible for support from us e.g. worked based learning courses

Where students undertake 2 or more courses in an academic year we can only pay DSA for one course, even if both courses are studied at the same institution. E.g. if a student is doing a full time HNC course at college and also doing a 60 credit OU course at home they can claim DSA for one of the courses but not both. It is up to the student to decide which course they wish to apply for DSA for.

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Eligibility – Migrant workers

EU and EEA nationals who started their course prior to session 2013/2014 may be eligible for DSA if they meet our “Migrant Worker” criteria. Eligibility for support as a migrant worker is assessed at the start of each year of a student’s course and if they are found not to meet the criteria in one year of their course they will not be eligible for DSA, even if they have received DSA in a previous year.

If you have a student who has been awarded DSA as a migrant worker you should check with us at the start of each academic year to see if they will be entitled to support in the forthcoming year before you submit a DSA application.

For new students who start a course in session 2013/2014 the rules around migrant workers are different. If we award them DSA as a migrant worker at the start of their course they will remain eligible for DSA for the duration of their course: you will only have to recheck their eligibility if they change course.

More information about migrant workers can be found on our website www.saas.gov.uk .

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Eligibility - Residency

We must be satisfied that students meet the residency requirements before they can apply for DSA.

To meet our residence conditions, a student must have been ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man for the three years immediately before the relevant date (the first day of the first academic year of the course (1st August for Autumn start courses and 1st December for January start courses)). If you they are not a UK or EU national, they must also have been settled in the UK (as set out in the Immigration Act 1971) on the relevant date. Finally they must also be ordinarily resident in Scotland on the relevant date.

Eligibility at the beginning of a programme of study normally determines eligibility for the duration of a student’s studies, however in very exceptional circumstances e.g. if a student is awarded refugee status by the Home Office or the country in which they are a national becomes a member of the EU they may become eligible part way through their course. In these cases they will become eligible for DSA at the same time that they become eligible for mains support i.e. tuition fees and living cost support. They will

not be entitled to make retrospective claims for any support they received or equipment that they bought prior to their residency status changing.

Students who do not meet the usual residence conditions for support may still be eligible for support in certain circumstances. Residency is a very complicated issue and if students have any doubts at all about their eligibility for support they should phone our Contact Centre on 0300 555 0505 for advice. Further information about residency can be found on our website at www.saas.gov.uk

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Equipment hire

In some cases we might decide to pay for the rental of equipment rather than purchase. For example:

- When it is more cost effective for the student to rent rather than buy
- When a student is nearing the end of their course or academic year
- When the equipment is only required for a short period of time

Each case will be judged on its own merits and will depend on factors such as the availability of the equipment for hire or whether the student intends to return to their studies in the following academic year.

Case study

Student A had mobility problems and was enrolled on a BSc geology course. As part of his course he had to attend field trips along the Scottish coast. Although his mobility difficulties did not cause him any problems walking around campus his doctor confirmed that he would not be able to walk along the uneven coastal terrain. The student applied to the DSA for a quad bike costing £2,000 which would enable him to access the field trip sites.

As his course tutor confirmed that he was only required to go on 3 one day field trips per year we refused to pay for the purchase of a quad bike but agreed to pay for the hire of a quad bike, at a cost of £100 per day, instead.

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Equipment – what happens after a student finishes their course?

All the equipment purchased through the DSA is and will stay the property of the student. They may decide to offer the equipment to their institution, an appropriate charity or another student to use, but they do not have to do so.

For more information about what happens to equipment when a student withdraws part way through their course see the section – Withdrawal from course on [page 53](#).

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Evidence of disability – Payment of diagnosis

Although we cannot pay for the cost of any diagnosis (including doctor's letters and Educational Psychologists' reports) institutions can offer help from their Discretionary Funds. Students should contact their institution for further advice if they have to pay for evidence of their disability.

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Evidence of disability – proof required

In the first year that they apply for DSA, students must provide us with supporting documents to confirm their disability or learning difficulty (students should send us a **clear photocopy** of any documents we ask for, not original documents. We destroy all documents after 30 days).

For medical conditions (other than dyslexia or specific learning difficulties) we require evidence in the form of a diagnosis from a qualified professional including:

- GP
- Nurse/Psychiatric Nurse
- Occupational therapist
- Physiotherapist
- Audiologist

Other forms of evidence:

We can also accept evidence of receipt of support or benefits that have been provided by another agency such as the Department of Work and Pensions, providing they required the student to undertake a diagnosis of their disability. For us to be able to accept these documents as proof of disability they must state the nature of the student's disability and the date the original diagnosis was undertaken.

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Evidence of disability – proof required for dyslexia or specific learning difficulties

In the first year that they apply for DSA, students must provide us with supporting documents to confirm their dyslexia or specific learning difficulty (students should send us a **clear photocopy** of any documents we ask for, not original documents as we destroy all documents after 30 days).

The evidence submitted must be from one of the following:

- An Educational Psychologist
- An educational professional or specialised teacher who holds a current practising certificate in assessing specific learning difficulties issued by their relevant professional association e.g. the Professional Association of Teachers of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties (PATOSS)
- An educational professional or specialised teacher who holds a current qualification that allows Associate Membership of the British Dyslexia Association (AMBDA)

We can also accept confirmation from a previous educational establishment such as a school or college that confirms a diagnosis of dyslexia or specific learning difficulties has been made by a one of the professionals listed above.

If a student has evidence from a professional that we have not listed above they should contact us to check if we can accept it before their form is sent to us.

Confirmation of dyslexia or specific learning difficulties must be submitted in a separate document to the main needs assessment report.

In all cases the evidence submitted must confirm the following:

- The name of the person who carried out the assessment
- The qualification of the person who carried out the assessment
- The type of assessment carried out
- The disability or specific learning difficulty that the student has
- The impact that the student's disability or learning difficulty has/will have on their ability to study
- The nature of any additional support they have received/are likely to require as a result of their attendance on their course

Some students may have had screening tests e.g. DAST or LADS carried out which indicate dyslexia. As screening for dyslexia does not constitute a diagnostic assessment we cannot accept the results of this test alone as confirmation of a disability.

Please note that if we refer a student for a needs assessment their assessor may ask them to supply additional evidence before they can carry out the assessment. They will discuss this with the student when they arrange their assessment.

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Exams

If a student needs NMPH in an exam (including re-sits) e.g. a scribe or sign language interpreter we cannot pay for the cost under the DSA. Instead this cost should be met by the institution as a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act.

However, students already in receipt of DSA who have to resit exams outwith term time are entitled to claim for other additional support they require to undertake the exam, e.g. travel costs for students with mobility difficulties.

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Exceptions

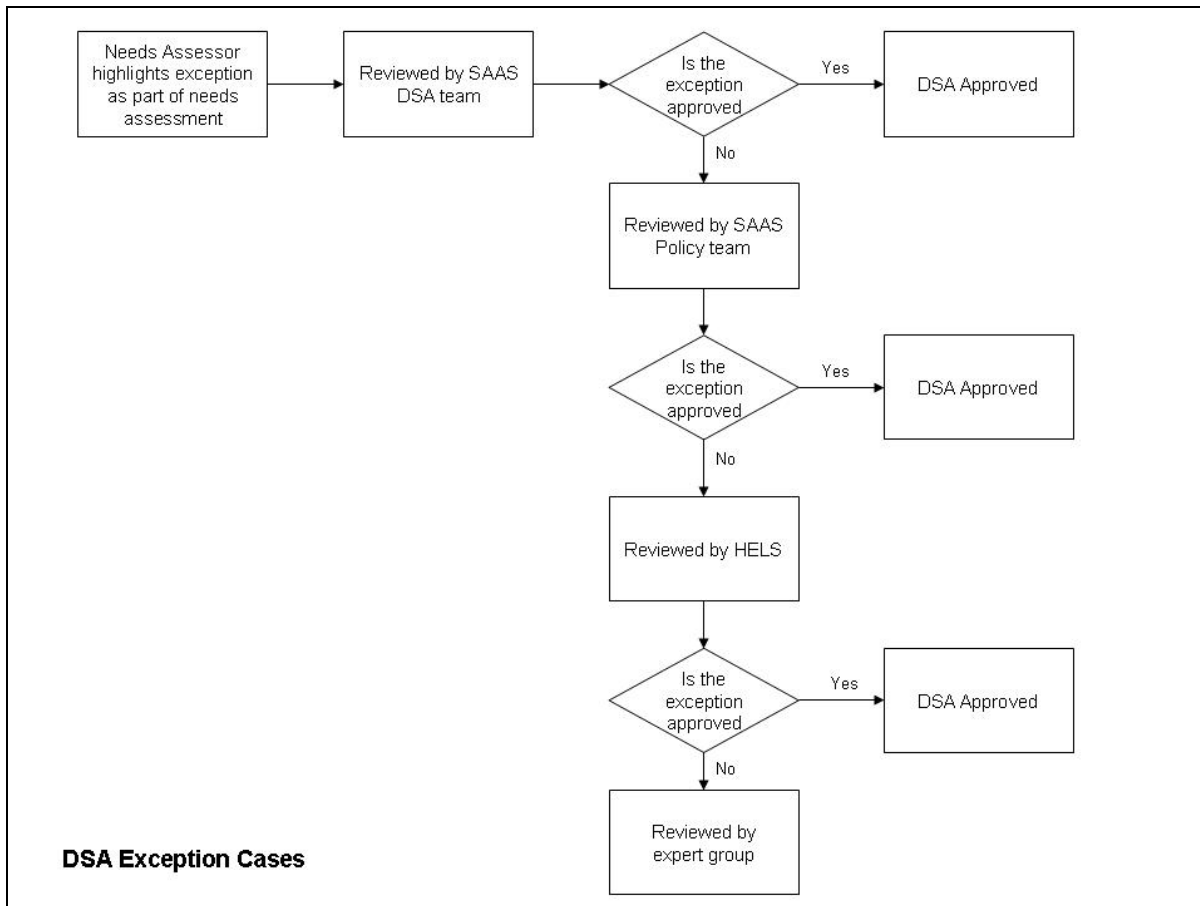
Although this guidance should cover most of the things that we can and cannot pay for there may be exceptional cases that are not covered in this guidance or things that do not easily fall within the scope of what we normally pay for. These cases are known as exceptions and we have a formal process for dealing with them.

In the first instance Disability Advisors should make sure that the equipment or support the student requires cannot be provided for by another department e.g. Social Work, NHS or a Local Authority, also that it does not fall to the institution under the Equality Act. Once it has been established that the support required cannot be provided by another organisation, to enable us to consider it under our exceptions rules the following process should be followed:

Initially the needs assessor should highlight the exception as part of their needs assessment, ensuring that they provide us with full details of why the student requires the support/equipment, why it is not available from another source e.g. Social Work department or institution and what alternatives have been looked at.

The request will go to the DSA team initially and if they cannot approve the item they will forward it to the SAAS policy team for a review. If the Policy team are unable to make a decision they will refer the case to the policy team in the Higher Education and Learning Support division of the Scottish Government (HELS). Finally if appropriate we can ask an expert panel made up of members of the Disabled Students' Stakeholders Group to review the case and provide a final opinion. The flow chart below shows the exceptions process in full and the case studies highlight some exceptional items that DSA team have recently made decisions on.

As each exceptional case is looked at on an individual basis the decision to award support should not be taken as setting a precedent with regards to similar claims in the future. There will be instances where we agree a piece of equipment or type of support for one student but refuse support for another. Similarly there will be occasions where support or equipment that we normally refuse to pay for is agreed for an individual student because their circumstances are significantly different enough to justify it.



Exceptional cases approved under the DSA

Case study 1

Student A had Crohn's disease and lives in Orkney. She was accepted by a university in Edinburgh to study a four year BA in German. Student A stayed in university halls of residence in year one of her course and also in year 3 when she undertook a compulsory year abroad at a university in Germany.

As a result of her illness she required a private en-suite room and applied to the DSA to cover the cost of her accommodation.

As evidence she sent in a letter from her doctor confirming the need for a private bathroom, a letter from her institution showing the cost of the accommodation and a letter of support from her disability advisor.

The DSA does not normally cover any accommodation related costs for disabled students as they would need to stay in accommodation regardless of their attendance on a course of study. However, as Student A required more specialised accommodation than other students as a direct result of her disability we agreed to pay the difference between the standard university accommodation and the en-suite room for the student's first year and also her year abroad. As the cost of a standard room in the university halls was £60 per week and the en-suite accommodation £80 we agreed to pay the student £20 per week.

We did not cover the full cost of accommodation as the student would need to stay in halls of residence regardless of her disability.

Case study 2

Student B applied for DSA for the purchase of a sewing machine. She was on a BA Fashion Design course at an art college and as part of her course she had to design and make a range of clothes for the college's annual fashion show.

She requested money to purchase a sewing machine as her disability meant that she was often unable to leave her house and attend college.

As evidence she sent confirmation that while her disability sometimes prevented her from attending college she would still be able to work on her clothes from home. She also sent in evidence that explained that students on her course were not required to purchase a sewing machine of their own as the practical work was normally done at college and the college provided sewing machines for all their students to use there.

We agreed to pay for the sewing machine as it was something that the student required access to at home specifically because of her disability.

Exceptional cases rejected under the DSA

Case study 3

Student C was on a BA Music course and applied to the DSA for £2,500 to purchase a harp. Because of her disability she wasn't always able to practise at university and therefore wanted to do all of her musical practice at home.

After looking into it further we got confirmation from the student's tutor that all students on this course were required to borrow, hire or purchase any instruments they needed for their course. He also confirmed that no students were able to borrow equipment from the university.

We refused the request as the purchase or lease of a harp was a cost that the student would have incurred regardless of her disability.

Case study 4

Student D had a rare learning difficulty that meant that he could not follow directions or memorise routes between different locations e.g. he could not travel from his home to his local shop without getting lost. As such he was not able to easily travel between different buildings and campuses at his university without someone accompanying him. To prevent his reliance upon the help of his fellow students he planned to buy a satellite navigation system to allow him to travel independently and he applied to the DSA to cover the cost.

His request was turned down as we felt that a satellite navigation device was something that he required for his day to day life and was not something that he needed specifically because of his attendance on his course.

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Extensions

Full student support, including tuition fees, living cost support and the DSA, can be considered in cases where students are required to extend their course by up to one year, because of their disability. This is not the same as students who are formally repeating a year. This rule applies in cases where a student remains full-time but may be undertaking a year of the course over a two year period.

Decisions regarding extension to study are taken by the team responsible for processing the student's main support application. They are not made by the DSA team.

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Extra curricular activities

DSA is not normally available for students undertaking university based extra curricular activities. However, where it can be demonstrated that the extra curricular activity is a course requirement e.g.

drama students attending a drama club or a music students taking part in a Choral society then we can consider requests for DSA.

Case Study

Student A was studying Archaeology. During her third year all the students on her course were offered the chance to take part in an archaeological dig during the summer holidays. Although not a compulsory part of their course the university actively encouraged all their students to take part as it would allow them to gain valuable experience in their chosen field.

As the student was already receiving NMPH from the DSA she applied for a continuation of that support while she was on the dig.

Although it was not a compulsory part of her course we agreed to pay DSA because it was an activity that was related to her studies and if NMPH was not available student A would be put at a disadvantage compared to the rest of her classmates.

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F

Failure to attend course

Where we pay out money to students in advance of their course and the student subsequently fails to start their course we will seek to recover any monies paid out in respect of DSA.

If a student starts their course but withdraws part way through we may ask them to repay some or all of their DSA – see the section Withdrawal from course on [page 53](#) for more information.

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Failure to buy recommended equipment

Student must buy equipment exactly as their assessor has recommended. If they are not happy with their assessment they should contact their assessor to discuss this before purchasing any equipment, see the section – Appealing against a needs assessment on [page 10](#) for more information.

If a student goes ahead and purchases different items to those recommended we will seek to recover some or all of the money paid out in respect of the DSA.

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Feedback

We continually monitor the service we provide to DSA students, their institutions and DSA advisors and are always looking for suggestions on how we can improve.

If you have other comments or suggestions about DSA in general please email the DSA Team at saas_4dsa@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

This guidance will be updated and revised each year. If you have any comments or suggestions about what you would like to see in the next addition please email Leia Fitzgerald at Leia.Fitzgerald@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

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Fraud

We require all students to submit copies of their receipts for all items purchased under the DSA with 6 weeks of the DSA award being made. When students fail to provide receipts or the amount on their receipts is less than the amount we awarded we will seek recovery of all monies that we have overpaid. We will not accept alternatives to receipts as proof of purchase such as photos of equipment or letters from friends and family stating that the items have been bought.

We also require that all invoices for NMPH, where a helper is employed directly by a student, be signed by both the helper and the student. Again where the amount claimed differs from the amount awarded we will recover any overpayments that may have occurred.

We take all aspects of fraud seriously and have a dedicated fraud team in the agency to deal with any cases that arise. We will seek recovery of any money we pay out that is subsequently found to have been paid as the result of a fraudulent claim. We will seek to prosecute any students who make fraudulent applications to us.

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Freshers' Week

Students are not normally eligible for DSA support during Freshers' week as this is not an official part of their course. However, we can award DSA for any course related activities a student may have to attend during this week e.g. inductions with tutors or campus tours.

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Fridges

Where students are living in communal halls of residence or shared accommodation we can pay for the cost of small personal fridges for students who require one specifically because of their disability e.g. diabetic students who require a separate fridge to keep their insulin in.

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Furniture

We can pay for computer furniture and other items of furniture which students require in their home or halls of residence specifically for study purposes, for example:

- desks for PCs
- docking stations for laptops
- ergonomic chairs/furniture
- lap trays for using a laptop in bed

However, we cannot pay for any adaptations a student requires to their home such as ramps, low level sinks or similar. These types of specialist furniture would be required regardless of the student's attendance on their course. Students might be able to get help for this from their local authority or Social work department.

Where students require special furniture at their institution e.g. a special desk for wheelchair users this should be provided by their college or university under the Equality Act.

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Installation and set up costs

We can pay for the installation and set up costs for IT equipment and specialised software providing it is carried out by a recognised company or suitably qualified individual. We will not pay for installation or set up where it has been provided by friends or family.

Needs assessments and/or quotes for equipment should clearly specify if these costs should be paid in advance to the student or if they are to be paid after the work is carried out.

If the costs are to be paid for up front then the student must send in receipts for this along with the other receipts that they send it.

If the costs are to be paid for afterward then we will pay them on receipt of an invoice.

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Insurance

We will pay full warranty costs for IT and other equipment for the full duration of a student's course.

We will not pay for the cost of personal or home contents insurance, or for insurance for students in halls or residence. However, if a student's home contents insurance premium increases as a direct result of covering their DSA equipment we can pay the excess cost. In these cases students would need to supply a letter or quote from their insurance company which showed the extra costs.

We will not make a further payment for DSA equipment if a student loses or damages their equipment and is unable to replace it due to inadequate insurance.

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Internet

We can pay for the cost of internet connection or broadband only where there is a strong disability related justification for doing so. When recommending this disability advisors must clearly explain why the student cannot access the internet via another source e.g. their university or local library.

We will not pay for the cost of internet subscription where the student already has an existing internet connection.

We will not pay for the cost of internet subscription when the costs are included in a student's halls of residence or private rental costs.

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Invoices

We aim to process all correctly completed NMPH invoices within 3 weeks of receiving them. When submitting invoices to us to enable us to process them as quickly as possible please ensure that they include the following:

- Name of student
- Student's reference number
- Period the invoice covers
- The type of support the invoice covers

Please send invoices in monthly or termly and send individual invoices for each student.

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IT Training

We can pay for IT related training to enable students to use specialist software or equipment as follows:

- Training must be carried out by a recognised training company or suitably qualified individual
- Training will only be paid in arrears and on receipt of an invoice
- Training costs will normally be paid direct to the trainer

We will not pay for:

- Training provided by friends or relatives
- Training that is normally provided by the institution to all its students e.g. training on how to use in-house software packages or intranet sites.
- Training on basic software applications such as MS Word (unless there are exceptional circumstances)
- Subscriptions to online training tools or services e.g. Concept Live
- IT training provided by the person who carried out the needs assessment
- Training on apps for iPhones, PDDs etc

If the specialised IT training a student requires can be provided by their institution we would expect that student would use this instead of getting their training from a private company or their software provider.

It would be useful if institutions could clearly explain to students why attending IT training is beneficial to them and that institutions should consider adapting training opportunities to suit the needs of the students.

The number of recommended hours of IT training and the cost of the training should be clearly detailed on the student's needs assessment form.

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N

Needs Assessments

The cost of the assessment fee is met directly by us and does not come out of the student's DSA allowance.

We will pay for the cost of a student's needs assessment providing:

- the student has a recognised disability
- the assessment is carried out by a validated institution <http://www.saas.gov.uk> or an individual who is undergoing the BRITE training and the assessment is being submitted as part of their training
- the student is eligible for support from us, see the section – Eligibility on [page 21](#)

We cannot accept needs assessments from the following:

- BRITE qualified individuals who are working at an institution that is not validated by the Scottish Government
- Assessments by professional organisations such as the RNIB, RNID etc though assessors may consult these organisations when undertaking an assessment
- Assessments carried out by other government organisations such as Schools, Local authorities, Social Work Department etc

Where a student changes from one course to a completely different one e.g. from a BA in philosophy to a Diploma in Nursing and it is anticipated that their support needs and equipment needs will be significantly different as a result, we can pay for the cost of a new needs assessment if required.

We will not pay a needs assessment fee for short annual reviews of student support carried out for continuing DSA students.

All needs assessments must be submitted on our assessment pro forma.

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Needs assessment – change of course

A new needs assessment should not be carried out automatically every time a student changes course or institution. However, when a student changes from one course to a completely different one e.g. from a BA in philosophy to a Diploma in Nursing and it is anticipated that their support needs and equipment needs will be significantly different as a result, we can pay for the cost of a new needs assessment if it is required.

If a new needs assessment is needed assessors must explain the reasons behind the reassessment on the needs assessment pro-forma.

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Needs Assessment – completing the report

You must complete the needs assessment report using the SAAS needs assessment pro-forma. If you send us a needs assessment that is not on the correct pro forma we will not process the application and instead will contact you and ask you to resubmit it on the correct form.

When recommending equipment each item must be listed individually within the main body of the report. We will not pay for any item listed on a quote if it is not also detailed in the actual report.

When making recommendations you should only send us one quote which details clearly what the student needs. Please do not send us a second quote showing what the student would like.

Where students wish to upgrade their equipment to a better spec they cannot do so using DSA money that they have saved on other items.

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Needs Assessment – Fee

When submitting an invoice for an assessment the fee should clearly show the costs per hour, the number of hours the assessment took and a break down of the work involved (see the example below):

ACCESS Centre fee:

Assessment	= 3 hours @ £30/h
Report	= 4 hours @ £30/h
Administration	= 2 hours @ £30/h
Total	= £270

It is not expected that every needs assessment will cost the same, as the time required to undertake an assessment will vary according to the needs of the student and their disability. The maximum rate that we will pay for needs assessments is £45 per hour.

If an assessor has to carry out a home assessment, due to the severity of a student's disability, we will pay for the associated travel costs of the assessor as well as the cost of one additional assessor to travel with them. We will not pay for the cost of a home assessment simply because the student finds it more convenient than travelling to an assessment centre.

We will not meet the cost of a needs assessment in the following circumstances:

- Where an institution carries out a needs assessment and subsequently finds out that the student does not meet our eligibility criteria (unless we had specifically referred the student directly to the Access Centre or institution).
- Where we feel that there is insufficient medical evidence to allow us to pay for a claim under DSA. If you are not sure if the evidence you hold will be sufficient please feel free to contact us beforehand to discuss.
- Where no equipment or support is recommended (unless we had specifically referred the student directly to the Access Centre or institution).
- Cases where we decide not to award DSA for any of the recommendations made in the report (unless we had specifically referred the student directly to the Access Centre or institution).

Once in receipt of an invoice we will send the payment for the assessment directly to the institution that carried out the assessment. You do not need to complete a 3rd party agreement from when claiming a needs assessment fee as the money comes directly from SAAS not from the student's DSA allocation.

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Needs Assessments – How to become a validated institution

We can only accept needs assessments from validated institutions. In 2004 the Scottish Government Stakeholder group produced a Toolkit, the purpose of which was to provide a route for institutions who wished to carry out their own assessments to become validated by us.

Following the completion of the pilot and its independent evaluation, the Scottish Government has introduced a formal process to enable institutions to apply to become validated to carry out needs assessments for SAAS students.

If your institution would like to become validated by the Scottish Government you should email Neil MacLennan in the Higher Education and Learning Support Division of the Scottish Government (HELS) in the first instance. His email address is neil.maclennan@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

More information about the application and validation process is available on the Scottish Government website at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/04/0195400/54013>

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Needs Assessments – List of Scottish Access Centres and Institutions validated to carry out needs assessments

The following Access Centres can carry out needs assessments in Scotland:

- Dundee University Access Centre
- Motherwell College Access Centre
- Stevenson College Access Centre

The following institutions are also currently validated by SAAS to carry out needs assessments: http://www.saas.gov.uk/student_support/special_circumstances/dsa_needs.htm

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Non graduating students

Students enrolled on eligible courses, who because of their disability, are unable to complete certain modules and are, therefore, unable to fully graduate from their course can still apply for DSA providing:

- The course is one that is designated for by support form SAAS (see [page 21](#) for the full list)
- They are studying for at least 50 % of the length of the full time course and don't take more than twice the length of the original course to complete it
- They meet the normal residency eligibility conditions (see the section, Eligibility – residency on [page 22](#))

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Outwith term-time expenses

We will not normally pay for DSA support outwith an institutions' standard term dates. However, there may be a few occasions where DSA can be paid, for example:

- Where students need to come into their institution to visit their tutor or use facilities at their institution that they cannot access elsewhere
- Exam resits
- Proof reading or other NMPH for students who have to produce a dissertation or other extensive course work in the summer break
- Field trips

In these cases we can consider paying DSA providing we have written evidence explaining why the student requires the additional support.

Please also see the following sections for more information about outwith term time expenses:

- Early Payments of DSA ([page 21](#))
- Exams ([page 25](#))
- Extra Curricular activities ([page 27](#))
- Freshers' week ([page 30](#))

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P

Partnership Matters

Partnership Matters is a document produced by the Scottish Government that provides information and guidance about the roles and responsibilities of other agencies such as the NHS and local authorities that are involved in supporting students with additional support needs. It is available on the Scottish Government website at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/05/08155445/0>

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Part-Time Study

DSA is available to part-time students who are studying a course a HNC level or above.

Part-time students should fill out the form DSA O.

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Part time study – DSA rates

For part-time students the amount of NMPH and the basic items allowance is reduced on a pro rata basis based on the percentage of the course they are doing or in the case of Open University students, the number of credits that they are studying.

- E.g. students undertaking 50% of the length of a full time course will receive 50% of the NMPH and basic allowance i.e. £863 (50% of £1,725)
- Open University students taking 90 credits will be entitled to receive 75% of the NMPH and basic allowance i.e. £1294 (50% of £1,725)

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Part Time Study – length of study

To be eligible for support part-time students must be undertaking at least 50% of the normal length of a full time course and must not take more than twice the normal length of time to complete it i.e. a student undertaking a 4 year BA on a part-time basis must take no longer than 8 years to complete it. For OU students this equates to at least 60 credits per year.

In exceptional cases we can fund students who are have to cut back on their time in one session providing they make up the time in subsequent years and do not take longer than twice the length of the standard course to complete it. E.g. a student on a 1 year HNC course could exceptionally do 60% of the course in year 1 and 40% in year two.

In these cases Disability Advisors must contact us to get approval and provide good reasons and supporting evidence.

Case study

Student A is in the second year of a 4 year HND. He has to go into hospital part way through the academic year for an operation and knows that due to the recuperation period he will only be able to complete 30% of his course that year instead of 50%. However, he is confident that he will be able to make up the remaining time over the final two years of his course.

Their disability advisor puts a case to us with supporting evidence from the student's doctor and academic advisor. We exceptionally agree to fund the student as the length of their course will not be extended beyond the original 4 years. [Back to contents page](#)

Paying DSA - equipment

We pay the DSA directly into the student's nominated bank account. From session 2013/13 due to a change in Scottish Government Policy we can no longer make DSA payments by cheque. Students must therefore hold a valid current or savings account when they apply for support.

In exceptional circumstances we can pay a student's DSA into a 3rd party account e.g. in cases where a student is unable to undertake their own financial transaction and a family member has power of attorney for them (evidence must be provided).

If a student does not have access to a bank account and is unable to open one please contact us for advice.

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Paying DSA – NMPH

We pay the DSA directly into the student's nominated bank account. From session 2013/13 due to a change in Scottish Government Policy we can no longer make DSA payments by cheque. Students must therefore hold a valid current or savings account when they apply for support.

In exceptional circumstances we can pay a student's DSA into a 3rd party account e.g. in cases where a student is unable to undertake their own financial transaction and a family member has power of attorney for them (evidence must be provided).

If a student does not have access to a bank account and is unable to open one please contact us for advice.

Payment is normally made monthly in arrears on receipt of a fully completed invoice, however, we can pay invoices more frequently in exceptional circumstances. In these cases we would require supporting evidence to explain why this was required.

Where NMPH is not being provided by a registered service provider e.g. an institution or taxi company, students must use our DSA claim form. The invoice must be signed by both the student and their helper.

If there is any dispute with the invoice e.g. the invoice covers more hours than we agreed, we will not settle the invoice until the dispute has been resolved.

We aim to pay all fully completed NMPH claims within 21 days or receipt.

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PCs, laptops and Macs

We can pay for the cost of a laptop or computer as appropriate, however, there should be a clear and detailed explanation provided on a student's needs assessment form as to why the student may require a desk top computer or a laptop. The explanation should also clarify why the student cannot reasonably access a computer which may be in their own home or available within their own institution.

If a student's institution provides assessable PCs and with assistive software provision on campus then we would expect students to use this and not apply to the DSA for a PC unless there was a strong disability related reason that prevented them from doing so.

When making a decision on whether to award funding for a laptop or desktop PC the decision should be based purely on the most appropriate piece of equipment for the student's disability and not because a student has expressed a preference for one piece of equipment over another.

The needs assessment form should also detail evidence that a student has had the opportunity to trial equipment before purchase and information relating to the insurance costs of the items.

Case Study

Student A has mild dyslexia and has difficulties with handwriting and spelling. It is recommended that he has a scribe during exams and that he use a computer to produce his essays and coursework. As the university provides laptops with dyslexia software for students to use on campus, and as the student will have no difficulty using these PCs or accessing them for the required length of time, no computer equipment is recommended for him.

We will not normally pay for a Mac computer instead of a PC unless there are extremely strong disability related reasons for doing so. When recommending a Mac needs assessors should make it clearly state in the assessment report all the reasons why a PC would not be suitable and explain what functionality is contained within the Mac that the student could not access in a PC.

We will not pay for a Mac computer simply because the student prefers Macs, has more experience using them or because it is the standard model used at their HEI.

We cannot pay for a Mac simply because the student prefers the functionality on them e.g. the way calendars, file management, emails etc are presented on a Mac,

If a student wants to purchase a Mac and pay the difference themselves we will need confirmation from their disability advisor that the Mac is suitable for their needs and can run all of the assistive software that they have been recommended. If the assistive software required for the Mac is more expensive than the PC version the student will have to pay the difference in cost for that too.

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Placements

Students who undertake a placement as part of their course (regardless of whether the placement is paid, unpaid, voluntary, compulsory, full year or part year) can claim DSA.

However, we will not pay for anything that their placement providers could reasonably be expected to provide under the Equality Act e.g. special chairs or IT equipment.

Students who are on paid placements may be entitled to support through the Government's Access to Work scheme and they should apply to this first before they apply for DSA. If they are not eligible for support from this scheme they must provide us with written confirmation of this before we can consider support.

More information about this scheme can be found on the YouGov website -

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/Employmentsupport/WorkSchemesAndProgrammes/DG_4000347

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Portable Digital Devices (PDDs)

We can pay for the cost of PDDs (including Blackberrys, Smart Phones, iPhones and iPads) under the DSA, however, we must have clear evidence that the student cannot use alternatives such as paper diaries or Filofaxes or the calendar and notes functions on their own mobile phone.

We will not normally pay for a PDD for a student if we are also providing them with a laptop. In cases where a student requires both a claim must be made under the exceptional cases process.

When paying for a PDD we will only pay for the most basic suitable model and we would expect the student to use the PDD for course related study only.

We will not pay for the cost of a student to upgrade their own phone to a PDD as the PDD should only be used by the student for study purposes.

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Portable Digital Devices (PDDs) – Applications (apps)

When submitting an assessment that includes apps you must list each app individually on the form along with:

- the price of the app
- an explanation of the function of the app
- confirmation that the app does not replicate any functionality the student has on an existing piece of equipment (if the student already has this functionality on another device a claim must be made under the exceptional cases process)

We will not process a claim for apps where the student is recommended a general amount to cover apps or the apps are not clearly listed in the format above.

We will not pay for apps in the following circumstances:

- Apps that duplicate features that are available on another piece of DSA equipment owned by the student e.g. a recording app for a student who owns a digital recorder or an app that replicates functions the student can carry out on their laptop
- Subject specific apps e.g. medical or legal dictionaries
- Apps that institutions make available to all their students or recommend all their students to purchase
- Apps that simply provide a different version of a function that a student already has on their PDA e.g. we will not pay for a notes or organiser app if their phone or PDA already has one installed on it
- Apps that are not study related e.g. maps of local areas, travel information etc

We will not normally pay for any training on how to use apps.

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Priority applications

We aim to process DSA applications (providing we have all the necessary supporting documents) within 21 days of receipt.

However, there may be exceptional cases where the student requires their application for support to be approved more quickly. For these types of cases we operate a priority application system. To treat an application as a priority, along with the DSA form and supporting documents, Disability Advisors must provide the following:

- A completed Priority Form giving clear supporting evidence to show why the application should be treated as a priority.

The priority form should not be used for students who require a referral to an Access Centre as we already prioritise these applications.

We keep a record of all priority applications received to ensure that the system is being used fairly.

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Prisoners

Prisoners are not eligible to claim DSA. The only support they are entitled to claim from us is payment of their tuition fees (where appropriate).

Each prison has its own education budget and prisoners requiring additional disability related support should apply to that for help. [Back to contents page](#)

R

Reasonable Adjustments

The purpose of the DSA is to remove any disadvantages a student may have when undertaking their course because of the effect of their impairment. In other words the DSA is there to help address the needs of the student which arise from the inaccessible elements of their course, such as providing specialist equipment, and non medical personal help.

The Equality Act, which came into force in 2011, places a specific duty on colleges and universities to develop and implement a Disability Equality Scheme. The purpose of this scheme is to narrow the gap between the outcomes and experiences of disabled and non-disabled people. An institution's scheme should include an action plan, arrangements for monitoring progress and an impact assessment. Institutions will have a duty to report annually on the scheme's progress and to review it every three years. The process requires active engagement with and involvement of disabled people in its development and review.

It is expected that institutions should continually anticipate the general requirements of disabled people with a wide range of impairments and health conditions rather than simply waiting until a disabled person requests an adjustment.

If we feel that any part of a DSA claim is something that should be considered as a 'reasonable adjustment' for an institution then we may refuse that element of support.

Case Study

Student A has Bi Polar Disorder and is undertaking a BA in History. Despite her institution having fully accessible library facilities and specialist IT equipment within the library she avoids using it because she finds it too noisy and there not any private spaces available. Student A applies to the DSA to purchase reference books she needs for research because she cannot enter the university library to access them.

We refuse support for this on the grounds that we would expect the institution to make alternative arrangements to support the student i.e. allow her to borrow the text books on a short term loan so she can read them at home or provide a quiet room in the institution for students to use.

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Receipts

We require all students to submit copies of their receipts for all items purchased under the DSA with **6 weeks** of the DSA award being made. When students fail to provide receipts or the amount on their receipts is less than the amount we awarded we will seek recovery of all monies that we have overpaid.

Where students still have receipts outstanding for a previous session we will not pay out any money in session 2013/2014 for any new large or small items of equipment until we receive such receipts. In addition if students continue to refuse to provide copies of their receipts we made stop any NMPH payments until the matter has been resolved.

If they are unable to provide receipts – e.g. if they are using a photocopier which does not issue receipts – they should send us a covering letter explaining why with 6 weeks of us requesting them.

We will not accept alternatives to receipts as proof of purchase such as photos of equipment or letters from friends and family stating that the items have been bought.

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Reformatting/transcription costs

We will not pay for the cost of reformatting or transcription (including production of material into Braille) of any documents, text books or journals.

If a student requires this service they should speak to the disability advisor at their institution to find out the best way of accessing this.

Discretionary funds cannot be used to cover Reformatting or transcription costs.

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Regulations

The payment of DSA is governed by the Students' Allowances (Scotland) Regulations 2007. A copy can be found on our website at http://www.saas.gov.uk/about_us/legislation.htm

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Repeating a period of study

We can pay DSA for students who have to repeat a period of study providing they are studying for at least 50% of the length of the full year.

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Response times

We have the following response times and processing targets:

DSA forms

- Process all fully completed DSA application forms within 21 calendar days
- Refer all students requiring a needs assessment to their nearest Access Centre straight away
- Notify all students who have incorrectly completed their DSA form or who we require further straight away
- Process all fully completed needs assessment reports within 21 calendar days

Written correspondence and emails

- Respond to all DSA written correspondence within 21 calendar days
- Respond to all emails within 15 calendar days
- Pay all invoices for NMPH within 21 calendar days

Other

- Deal with any requests under Freedom of information (FOI) within 20 working days
- Respond to all complaints within 10 working days
- Respond to all appeals within 10 working days

If students do not receive a reply from us within 28 calendar days they should contact us to ensure that we have received their form or correspondence.

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Retrospective claims

We will not reimburse students for any items of equipment that they buy prior to a diagnosis of disability and/or a needs assessment being carried out.

If a student has to wait for an appointment for a needs assessment their institution may be able to loan them equipment or provide them with additional support until receive their allowance from us.

Where there is a long waiting list for an assessment and an institution decides to provide NMPH to a student in the meantime, we can reimburse the cost of the NMPH they receive provided that it is recommended in the needs assessment and the amount of NMPH that they received was not more or of a higher cost to the support recommended in their assessment.

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S

Scoptic Sensitivity

We will only offer support to students with a Scoptic sensitivity/Merles Irlen syndrome or a visual disability/visual disturbance if the initial diagnosis is carried out by a suitably qualified optician/optometrist or equivalent medically qualified eye specialist.

This is the same for the discretionary funds, the funds can only be used to pay for a diagnosis of any visual disability if the diagnosis has been carried out by a qualified optician/eye doctor.

Glasgow Caledonian University have a specialised eye clinic that carries out test and diagnosis of visual stress conditions and this can be paid for under the discretionary funds and be accepted as a diagnosis of a disability/medical condition.

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Special Dietary Needs

We can pay a maximum of £23.95 per week to for extra dietary costs incurred as a result of their disability. We can only consider payment if the student incurs extra costs as a result of undertaking a course of study. If they would normally incur these costs regardless of their attendance at college or university if then will not pay for their extra food related costs. In these circumstances we would expect Social Services or the NHS to help the student meet the cost.

If eligible, the cost of special dietary needs is paid out of the small items allowance.

In order to claim special dietary needs a student must provide the following:

- A letter from their doctor or dietician confirming that they require a special diet as a result of their disability and their attendance on their course and which confirms what special items they need
- A letter from the student with an estimate of their weekly food costs broken down into standard items and those that are required only as a result of their disability

We will not pay for the following:

- Items that the student can get on prescription i.e. gluten free bread
- Dietary supplements e.g. protein shakes

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Specialised spell checkers/Dictionaries/online dictionaries

We can't pay for specialist paper or electronic dictionaries under the DSA e.g. legal, engineering or medical dictionary as this is something that all students, regardless of disability, will either need to buy as part of their recommended core texts, or would strongly benefit from owning due to the complex and unfamiliar terminology used in certain study areas.

However, where a student requires a specialised dictionary in a non standard format and this costs more than the standard dictionary price, we can pay the difference in cost. For example if a student required a large print version of a legal dictionary due to a visual disability and this cost more than the standard print version recommended to students on the course, we would pay the excess.

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Study Abroad

Students who study abroad for part of their course whether on a voluntary or compulsory continue to be eligible for DSA support.

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Study Skills Support

The aim of this support is to maximise a students' ability and remove any barriers caused by their impairment.

We can pay for individual study skills support for students with specific learning difficulties or other conditions which may impact on a person's ability to study e.g. certain mental health conditions.

Generally study skills support consists of a number of sessions designed to help students plan and organise their work, develop study skills and exam revision techniques and become more confident using resources such as libraries and the internet for course work purposes. However, the exact content should be tailored specifically to each individual's unique learning requirements. When recommending study skills support assessors or Disability Advisors should make it clear exactly what kind of support will be given and how the student will benefit.

Such support should, over a period of time, impart generic skills which together with any specialist equipment that has been provided, allow the student to become an independent learner. As such we would expect study skills to be awarded for a set period of e.g. 10 - 30 weeks and then reviewed at the end of that period to see if any further support is required. Although we do not have a set limit on the amount of study skills support that we will pay for we would expect that over time the amount of support a student requires will decrease significantly as they learn to put their newly acquired skills into practice.

If there is no change or reduction to the level of support recommended year on year we will require a letter from the student's disability advisor explaining why the student still requires a high level of support and what the continuing study support sessions will entail.

We will only pay for study skills support where the student is not able to access any general study skills support available through their institutions e.g. if these classes do not take into account different learning skills and methods of acquiring information.

We will only pay for study skills support carried out by suitably qualified individuals. The rate charged for study skills can vary, however, we would expect the rate to be in the region of £15 - £45 per hour.

Case Study 1

Student B has asperger syndrome and is studying for a BA in Law. In her first year her needs assessment report recommends that she be awarded study skills support for two hours per week as she experiences a lot of difficulties with timetabling, interpreting essay questions and structuring course work.

Although the student makes good progress and her planning and organising skills improve she still requires a lot of ongoing support. When she applies for DSA in second year her disability advisors sends in a covering letter explaining that her study support has been reviewed but due to the level of her difficulties she still requires support for 1 hour per week. The letter also confirms that her support will be reassessed again at the end of second year.

Case Study 2

Student A has mild dyslexia and is starting a BA Business course. In the first year his needs assessment report recommends that he be awarded study skills support for two hours per week as he experiences difficulties planning essays and organising revision time. In the assessment report it states

that one of the aims of the study skills class is to enable him to develop the skills to become an independent learner.

As he becomes familiar with planning and organising methods and is able take on board the strategies developed in his study skills classes he finds that he needs less support and is able to successfully put what he has learned into practice.

As result the amount of study skills he requires decreases to 1 hour a fortnight in second year and then is further reduced to 1 hour a term in third and forth year.

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Summer Schools

We can pay for disability related travel costs and NMPH for distance learning students attending Summer Schools.

Travel and NMPH is assessed and paid for under the normal rules governing this support, see the section – Travel – OU and distance learning students on [page 50](#) and Allowances – NMPH on [page 9](#) or more information.

In cases where students require overnight stays we can only pay for support during class hours. If the student requires any additional help or support outwith these times e.g. help with evening meals or getting dressed in the mornings these costs should fall to social services.

Payment will only be paid in arrears and students must provide the following:

- A completed Summer School attendance form

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Summer Transition programmes

There is no funding available from us for students attending summer transition programmes (e.g. the transition programme for Autistic Spectrum students run by some institutions) as these courses are not a compulsory part of the student's degree. Student's attending these courses may be eligible for support from their institution's discretionary funds.

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T

Temporary disability or illness

We will not normally pay DSA for students who have a short term disability or illness e.g. a broken arm.

Where there is evidence that although temporary in nature a student's disability or illness is going to last for a significant proportion of their studies then we can consider paying DSA on an individual basis under the exceptional cases rules, see the section – Exceptions on [page 25](#) for more information.

Case study 1

Student A is in year two of a four year BA. She breaks her leg and is expected to be in a plaster cast for 6 weeks. Whilst in plaster she experiences mobility difficulties and is unable to walk the 10 minutes to her nearest bus stop and so needs to take taxis to university instead.

As the disability is temporary in nature she is not eligible to apply for the DSA. However, she can apply to her university Discretionary Funds for money to cover the costs of her taxis.

Case study 2

Student B is in year one of a two year HND course and is involved in a road traffic accident. As a result of his injuries he is temporarily confined to a wheelchair. Although expected to make a fully recovery he submits evidence from his physiotherapist that confirms that it will be at least 18 months before he regains full mobility.

We agree to pay DSA on the basis that although temporary, the nature of the student's injury is such that it will have a significant impact on his ability to study throughout the duration of his course.

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Tinted Lenses

We can pay for the cost of tinted lenses providing:

- the lenses have been recommended by a fully qualified optician/optometrist or medically qualified eye specialist
- the student is required to wear tinted glasses solely for study purposes and does not require them for other purposes e.g. reading newspapers or books for leisure, driving etc.

In addition we will also pay for a basic set of lenses and the cheapest frame available. If a student wants a more expensive frame or a special type of lens e.g. ultra thin they will have to pay the additional cost themselves.

As a guide a basic pair of single vision lenses and frames costs between £30 and £40, therefore, we will query any claims above this amount.

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Travel

We do not normally pay travel expenses for students attending college or university.

However, some students because of their disability may be unable to use public transport e.g. students with visual or mobility difficulties. In these cases we can consider payment of travel by private car or taxi.

We will normally only pay for travel for one single return journey per day between a student's home and institution during term time. However, we can consider paying for travel outwith term time in certain circumstances for example:

- If a student has to attend their institution for resits
- If a student has to come in to their institution to meet with their course tutor

In these cases we would require a letter from their disability advisor confirming the reason for the outwith term time travel.

We can pay travel costs for students on voluntary and compulsory placements and for students studying a voluntary or compulsory period abroad subject to all the normal travel rules.

There is no maximum limit to the amount that we can pay for disability related travel costs. However, in cases where the amounts claimed are extremely high we would require information on why alternatives such as staying in term time accommodation were not appropriate. There may also be a case for travel costs being covered by the student's local authority. Partnership Matters provides guidance on this matter and on issues relating to Motability allowances, see the section - Partnership Matters on [page 37](#) for more information.

We cannot pay for travel by taxis or car under the DSA for disabled students who experience travel problems simply because they live in a rural location or have difficulty accessing public transport due to poor service in their area.

Where a student, as a result of their disability needs to use both public and private transport we will only pay for the private transport element.

Case study 1

Student A has mobility difficulties. To travel to college he gets a train from his home to the city centre, however, there is no public transport available from the train station to the college. As the journey is uphill and over uneven terrain his disability means that he is unable to manage the journey. He therefore, gets taxis from the train station to his college.

As he needs to use taxis because of his disability we will reimburse the cost under DSA. We will not pay for the cost of his train journey, however, as this journey is not a result of his disability.

Travel – attending a needs assessment

We cannot reimburse any travel costs a student might incur attending a needs assessment. Students may be eligible to apply to their institutions discretionary funds for help towards these costs.

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Travel – Car

If a student has to travel by car because of their disability they must provide the following:

- A letter from their doctor that confirms that as a direct result of their disability they are unable to use public transport
- A written estimate **from the student** confirming:
 - The number of miles between their home and institution,
 - The number of journeys that they make per week
 - The number of weeks they are claiming for
 - The cost of the journey per mile
 - The total cost of travel claimed

The maximum mileage rate that we will pay is 40p per mile. This is based on the highest range of the AA motoring costs and includes an element for wear and tear on the car. However, students should not claim this amount automatically, instead they should work out the actual mileage rate and use that for their claim. We will restrict any claims that we deem to be excessive.

When trying to work out their mileage rate students might find the following link helpful http://www.theaa.com/motoring_advice/running_costs/index.html

We will not pay for:

- The cost of a car or equivalent vehicle if the student does not already own one
- Insurance or MOT
- Driving lessons
- Repairs
- Any fines or parking tickets that a student incurs whilst travelling to their institution

If a student is unable to drive themselves and is instead getting help from a parent or partner we can pay for the mileage rate for two return journeys between the home and institutions if the parent or partner returns home in between journeys.

We cannot pay travel by car under the DSA for disabled students who experience travel problems simply because they live in a rural location, have difficulty accessing public transport due to poor service in their area or who find it hard to pay for travel because of financial constraints.

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Travel – Nursing and Midwifery Bursary Students (NMSB)

The normal DSA travel rules apply: as well as paying travel between their home and term time address we can also pay for travel between their home and any clinical placements they have to attend.

We cannot pay travel under the DSA for disabled students who experience travel problems simply because they live in a rural location, have difficulty accessing public transport due to poor service in their area or who find it hard to pay for travel because of financial constraints.

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Travel – OU and distance learning students

We can pay for the cost of travel between the student's home address and institution if they attend any compulsory tutorials or summer schools or voluntary tutorials that are directly related to their course of study.

To be eligible for support students must provide the following:

- A letter from their doctor that confirms that as a direct result of their disability they are unable to use public transport
- At least two quotes from registered taxi companies for the cost of a single journey between their home and institution if they are travelling by taxi A written estimate of the number of miles between their home and institution and the cost of the journey per mile if they are travelling by car (see section: Travel – car on [page 49](#) for more information)
- A 3rd party agreement form if they wish us to pay the taxi company direct
- Receipts or invoices for all taxi journeys undertaken
- A signed form from their tutor for any voluntary tutorials that they attended

We cannot pay travel under the DSA for disabled students who experience travel problems simply because they live in a rural location, have difficulty accessing public transport due to poor service in their area or who find it hard to pay for travel because of financial constraints. [Back to contents page](#)

Travel – Taxis

If students have to travel by taxi they must provide the following:

- A letter from their doctor that confirms that as a direct result of their disability they are unable to use public transport
- At least two quotes from fully registered taxi companies for the cost of one single journey between their home and institution or place of work, if they are on a course related placement
- A 3rd party payment form if they wish us to pay the taxi company direct
- Copies of receipts or a weekly or monthly invoice for all journeys undertaken

We will not normally:

- Reimburse the cost of any taxi journeys without appropriate receipts or invoices
- Pay for more than one return taxi trip per day
- Pay for taxis to and from places other than the institution or placement location
- Pay for taxi journeys outwith term time

We cannot pay travel by taxi under the DSA for disabled students who experience travel problems simply because they live in a rural location, have difficulty accessing public transport due to poor service in their area or who find it hard to pay for travel because of financial constraints.

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V

Voluntary Tutorials

We can pay for disability related travel costs and NMPH for distance learning students who attend voluntary tutorials providing the costs are directly related to their course of study.

Travel and NMPH is assessed and paid for under the normal rules governing this support, see the sections – travel on [Page 48](#) and – Allowances – NMPH on [Page 6](#) for more information.

In cases where students require overnight stays we can only pay for support during class hours. If the student requires any additional help or support outwith these times e.g. help with evening meals or getting dressed in the mornings these costs should fall to social services.

We will only make pay for support in arrears and students must provide the following:

- A completed Voluntary tutorial attendance form

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W

Withdrawal from course

If a student withdraws from their course we may seek to recover some or all of the money paid out. It will depend on at what point they withdraw from their course and whether or not they have received money for support or equipment that they have not already bought or received.

We will not normally ask students to repay money for equipment that they have purchased and been using prior to their withdrawal.

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Work Placements

Students who undertake a work based placement for part of their course whether on a voluntary or compulsory basis continue to be eligible for DSA support.

However, under the Equality Act employers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments, therefore, consideration should be given to what support a student's work-placement provider could reasonably be expected to provide before an application is made for DSA.

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