

STUDENT SUPPORT INFORMATION NOTE (SSIN)

Arrangements for students funded under the Education (Student Support) Regulations

DISABLED STUDENTS' ALLOWANCES (DSAs)

To: Student Finance administrators and practitioners in institutions of higher education, further education or specialist colleges providing HE, and alternative providers;
DSA assessors, assessment centres and suppliers;
Student Finance advisors, and
The Student Loans Company

**SSIN 08/20
August 2020**

Dear Colleagues,

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

This SSIN provides an update to SSIN 04/20 regarding the acceptance of evaluations of need for students with SpLDs to demonstrate eligibility for DSAs.

As noted in SSIN 04/20, the SpLD Assessment Standards Committee (SASC) has taken the view that a full diagnostic assessment for SpLDs cannot be carried out remotely, but that it is possible for assessors to produce a professional interim evaluation of need based on a remote screening and diagnostic interview¹.

While under normal circumstances we require a full diagnostic assessment of an SpLD to be submitted as evidence of eligibility for DSAs, we did not wish there to be a delay in students accessing the support they need through DSAs. We therefore announced in May 2020 that DSAs applicants who did not already have a full diagnostic assessment for an SpLD would temporarily be able to submit an evaluation of need carried out in line with the SASC guidance, and that SLC would accept this as evidence of eligibility for DSAs.

This policy initially extended until 31 August 2020, and we have now undertaken a review of this policy in relation to the current situation. We understand that full diagnostic assessments have now started to be carried out face to face. However, while generally it is preferable for students to have a full diagnostic assessment, and we would advise students to do so where possible, we understand that in the short term this will not be feasible in all cases. We have therefore agreed that SLC will

¹ The relevant SASC guidance is available at <https://sasc.org.uk/SASCDocuments/Diagnostic%20assessment%20online-SASC%20position%20paper%20March%202020%20final.pdf> and <https://sasc.org.uk/SASCDocuments/Physical%20Distancing%20and%20SpLD%20Assessment%20SASC%20Guidance%20May2020.pdf>

accept evaluations of need that have been undertaken up to and including **31 December 2020**.

As previously, students who have their eligibility for DSAs agreed on the basis of such an evaluation of need will not be expected to provide a full diagnostic assessment later on to confirm their eligibility, unless they make a new application for DSAs (for example, if they are currently on an undergraduate course and later on apply for DSAs for a postgraduate course).

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

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