

**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 higher education providers;
DSA assessors, assessment centres and suppliers;
Student Finance advisors, and
The Student Loans Company

**SSIN 10/20
November 2020**

Dear Colleagues,

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

This SSIN provides an update to SSIN 04/20¹ and SSIN 08/20² 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 interview.

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 was initially extended until 31 August 2020, and extended again until 31 December 2020.

In the light of recent regional and national lockdown restrictions and related uncertainties, we have agreed that SLC will accept evaluations of need that have been undertaken up to and including 31 March 2021.

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

¹ <https://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/media/1840/ssin-0420-sasc-diagnostic-assessment.pdf>

² https://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/media/1754/sasc-diagnostic-assessment_august-2020_final.pdf

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 guidance³ to be acceptable.

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³<https://sasc.org.uk/SASCDocuments/Physical%20Distancing%20and%20SpLD%20Assessment%20SASC%20Guidance%20May2020.pdf>