

**STUDENT SUPPORT INFORMATION NOTE
(SSIN)**

**ARRANGEMENTS FOR STUDENTS FUNDED
UNDER THE EDUCATION (STUDENT
SUPPORT) REGULATIONS**

**SSIN 01/15
April 2014**

To:

Student Finance administrators and practitioners in institutions of Higher Education in England;
DSA assessors, assessment centres and suppliers in England;
Student Finance advisors in England, and
The Student Loans Company

Dear Colleague

**CHANGES TO DISABLED STUDENTS' ALLOWANCES (DSA) FOR
STUDENTS APPLYING FOR DSA FOR THE FIRST TIME IN RESPECT OF AN
ACADEMIC YEAR BEGINNING ON OR AFTER 1 SEPTEMBER 2015**

Introduction

On 7 April David Willetts, the Minister for Universities and Science, made a Written Ministerial Statement concerning changes to DSA for English domiciled students. This change will apply to all full-time, full-time distance learning, part-time and postgraduate students applying for DSA for the first time. The purpose of this SSIN is to give information about those changes.

Background

The support offered to students through DSA has not been reviewed for nearly 25 years. During that period there have been a number of key changes in higher education: rapid technological advances, increases in the use of technology and the introduction of the Equality Act 2010. In light of these developments BIS has considered whether the current system of DSAs provides the right balance of support between institutions, students and government and whether it offers value for money.

Who do the changes affect?

This change will apply to all full-time, full-time distance learning, part-time and postgraduate students applying for DSA for the first time in respect of an academic year beginning on or after 1 September 2015. Existing DSA students and DSA students for 2014/15 entry will remain on the current system of support for 2015/16.

The changes

DSA funding will no longer be provided for the following products and services:

- **DSA funding will no longer be provided for standard specification computers, software, and associated peripherals.**

Almost all students now own or have access to a computer (96% of students own a laptop or net book – Endsleigh, August 2013).

Standard specification computers will no longer be provided via DSA.

Additionally, DSA will no longer fund software and peripherals that are now standard to most students.

- **DSA funding will no longer be provided for warranties and insurance associated with standard specification computers.**
All students (i.e. disabled and non-disabled) with a standard computer should expect to meet the cost of warranties or insurance, and this will no longer be paid for via DSA.

- **DSA funding will no longer be provided for higher specification and/or higher cost computers where they are required solely because of the mode of delivery of the course.**
DSA will no longer pay for higher specification and/or higher cost computers simply because of the way in which a course is delivered, as all students (i.e. disabled and non-disabled) who undertake those courses will be accessing them in the same way. Institutions will need to consider the way in which they deliver their courses to ensure all students can access those courses equally.

DSA will continue to pay for higher specification or higher cost computers where a student needs one solely by virtue of their disability. Additionally, DSA will continue to meet the cost of any warranties and insurance for IT specifically purchased through DSA.

- **DSA funding will no longer be provided for non-specialist non-medical help (NMH) support**
DSA will continue to fund the most specialist Non-Medical Help (i.e. as outlined in the SLC NMH manual bands three and four, and specialist roles).

However, it is expected that HEIs will consider how best to support students requiring less specialist non-medical help. HEIs are expected to consider how they will deliver support for these students, including looking at how information is delivered to their student body.

- **DSA funding will continue to be provided for support for students with Specific Learning Difficulties that are more complex.**

HEIs are expected to consider how they deliver courses and information to reduce the reliance on individual DSAs and help mainstream support.

- **Funding will no longer be provided for additional costs of accommodation where the accommodation is provided by the HEI or an agent of the HEI.**

HEIs are expected to provide accommodation suitable for disabled students as part of their duties under the Equality Act. Institutions should be able to meet the needs of the vast majority of students with disabilities. The cost of such accommodation should not be passed onto the student.

In exceptional circumstances DSA will meet the additional costs of specialist accommodation.

- **Funding will no longer be provided for general consumable items**
DSA will no longer fund consumables that are standard to most students. More information on this will follow in due course.

We no longer expect assistive technology and non-medical helper support to be provided for the same purpose. This is regarded as double-funding. The DSA study needs assessor should identify which form of help is the most suitable for the student, taking into account the aim of enabling the student to become an independent, autonomous learner.

Maximum Disabled Students' Allowances will be maintained at 2014/15 levels in 2015/16.

Implementing the changes

BIS will be engaging with HEFCE and sector colleagues on how to deliver these changes. This will take place through the usual channels (i.e. via the SLC, SLC's Disabled Students Stakeholder Group (DSSG) and sub groups, BIS' Student Support Stakeholder Interest Group (SIG), and via the Disabled Students' Allowances Quality Assurance Group (DSA QAG)).

Full guidance will be provided once sector engagement has taken place, and in good time for the changes to be implemented in the sector.

Further information

Colleagues wishing to read the full Ministerial statement can access this via the following address:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/hansard/commons/todays-written-statements/>

Any questions regarding this SSIN should be addressed to disabledstudentsallowances@bis.gsi.gov.uk

Paul Higgs
Higher Education Student Funding Policy
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills