

# DSA ONLINE GUIDANCE NOTES FOR DISABILITY ADVISORS SESSION 2024-2025

**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 based on the individual circumstances in accordance with the information provided on a completed DSA application form/s*

# CONTENTS

Section 1 – About the Disabled Students’ Allowance .....	5
Introduction .....	5
Eligibility .....	5
Residency eligibility .....	5
Course eligibility .....	5
Course length and delivery methods .....	6
Work-based learning courses, PhDs and Research Masters .....	6
The Allowances .....	7
1. Consumable Items .....	7
2. Equipment, Software and Accessories .....	8
3. Travel expenses .....	8
4. Non-Medical Personal Help (NMPH) .....	9
NMPH exceptions .....	9
Reasonable adjustments .....	10
Section 2 – The application process .....	10
Introduction .....	10
How has the process changed? .....	10
Using the new online application service .....	11
Applying for DSA .....	11
Student support application .....	12
Evidence - Diagnosis/Identification/Medical Evidence .....	12
Payment of diagnosis .....	14
Needs Assessment Reports .....	15
Paying DSA .....	18
Purchasing equipment .....	19
Receipts .....	19
Processing times .....	20
DSA SAAS Award Notice .....	21
Overpayments .....	21
Fraud .....	22
Our complaints and appeals procedures .....	22
Contact Us .....	22
Section 3 – What is covered under DSA .....	22
Accommodation .....	22
Consumables .....	23

Course specific materials.....	23
Digital Hearing Aids and Cochlear Implants .....	24
Loan of equipment .....	24
Exams.....	24
Extensions .....	24
Extracurricular activities .....	25
Furniture .....	25
Installation and set up costs .....	25
Insurance and Warranty .....	25
PCs and laptops .....	26
Portable Digital Devices (PDDs) .....	26
Portable Digital Devices (PDDs) – Applications (apps).....	26
Reformatting and transcription costs .....	27
Study Abroad .....	27
Study Skills Support.....	27
Summer Schools .....	28
Tinted Lenses .....	28
Travel.....	29
Work Placements.....	33
Zoom Accounts.....	33
<b>Section 4 – Additional information for advisors .....</b>	<b>34</b>
Allowances – non medical personal help (NMPH) .....	34
Allowances – Non-Medical Personal Help (NMPH) – Admin charges .....	34
Allowances – Non-Medical Personal Help (NMPH): Who we can pay it to .....	34
Allowances – Non-Medical Personal Help (NMPH): Cancellation.....	35
Applying for DSA – Applications received near the end of a course or academic year.....	37
Change of course – Equipment, Software and Accessories .....	37
Eligibility – Additional information .....	37
Equipment – What happens after a student finishes their course? .....	38
Repeating a period of study .....	38
Retrospective claims.....	38
Temporary disability or illness .....	39
Visual impairments .....	39
Withdrawals and non-attendance .....	39
Annex A – Needs assessment pro forma.....	40
Annex B – DSA Allowances .....	41
Annex C – Non-Medical Personal Help (NMPH) rates .....	43
Annex D – SAAS Contacts.....	44

Annex E - Exceptions.....	45
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# Section 1 – About the Disabled Students' Allowance

## Introduction

The Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) is a non-income assessed allowance to support disabled students and those with additional learning needs, who are studying higher education.

The fund is to cover any extra costs or expenses a student might have while studying which arise because of their impairment. Students do not need to be claiming tuition fees and/or living-cost support from SAAS in order to claim DSA.

## Eligibility

To be eligible for DSA students must:

- meet our residency eligibility criteria
- be studying an eligible course
- have a recognised disability or additional learning needs

There is no age limit for DSA.

## Residency eligibility

See the relevant guide on residence conditions on the [SAAS guides webpage](#).

Please note that EU students who are receiving a tuition fee only award are not eligible for DSA funding.

## Course eligibility

### Eligible courses

Students may be eligible for DSA if they are studying one of the following courses:

- HNC
- HND
- degree or equivalent level courses
- foundation year of a degree - students must be enrolled on the full course and not the foundation year only
- Diploma or degree in paramedic science, nursing or midwifery
- PGDE/PGCE
- Postgraduate Diplomas
- Masters level programmes, for example, MSc, MRes, Mphil
- PhD or Postgraduate Certificate courses – providing the student is not receiving support from another source, for example, a Research Council or an employer

DSA funding is not available for Professional Development Awards (PDAs) or Graduate Apprenticeships.

## Course length and delivery methods

Part-time students must be undertaking at least 50% of the length of the full-time equivalent course to be eligible for DSA. For example, if the full-time equivalent course is 1 year in length, part-time students must take no longer than 2 years to be eligible for DSA.

Where a postgraduate course is only offered at part-time with no full-time equivalent, we would offer DSA support to eligible students for a PGDIP or Masters course up to 3 years.

Open University students must be undertaking a minimum of 60 credits per year to be eligible for DSA.

Students who are studying via distance learning may be eligible for DSA if they meet our residency conditions and they are studying an eligible course. Part-time distance learning students must be undertaking at least 50% of the length of the full-time equivalent course to be eligible for DSA.

DSA is not subject to SAAS previous study rules. There is no upper limit to the number of years of support a student can receive.

## Work-based learning courses, PhDs and Research Masters

Students who are studying a work-based learning course may be eligible to receive disability related support from their employer. For example, the student may already have access to a laptop or disability related equipment through their employer.

Disability Advisors and Needs Assessors should consider any support the students employer may be able to provide when completing an application for DSA. Details of any employer based support, or the absence of such, should be noted in the students' Needs Assessment Report and captured on the Employer Support Form

PhD and Research Masters students who are receiving financial support from a Research Council will not be eligible to receive DSA support from SAAS. Students should contact their respective Research Council for further information and guidance on the support available to them.

We do fund DSA for PhD students who are not being supported by a research council (i.e. self-funding) provided they meet all the other eligibility criteria.

[\(back to contents\)](#)

## The Allowances

DSA is made up of 4 allowances:

1. Consumable items
2. Equipment, software and accessories
3. Travel expenses
4. Non-Medical Personal Help (NMPH)

As of 2024-2025, Basic Allowance is now called Consumable Items and Large Items Allowance is called Equipment, Software and Accessories.

We have provided a brief summary of the allowances in the tables below. Please refer to our [“What is covered under DSA”](#) section and [Annex B](#) for further information on what we can pay for under the DSA allowances.

### 1. Consumable Items

Consumable Items	
<b>Frequency</b>	Allowance for consumable items can be claimed on an annual basis.
<b>What is covered? (examples)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• photocopying</li><li>• printer cartridges</li><li>• Braille or Livescribe paper</li><li>• USB memory sticks</li></ul>
<b>What is not covered? (examples)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• adaptations to course hand outs</li><li>• general stationery items such as pens and folders</li><li>• internet (new students)</li><li>• special dietary requirements (new students)</li></ul>
<b>How much is available?</b>	<p>Full-time students - £1,725 per year.</p> <p>Part-time students - the allowance is pro rata.</p> <p>For example, if the student is studying 50% of the full-time equivalent course each year, they will be entitled to a maximum of £863 per year.</p>

## 2. Equipment, Software and Accessories

Equipment, Software and Accessories	
<b>Frequency</b>	The allowance for Equipment, Software and Accessories covers the student's whole programme of study.
<b>What is it for? (examples)</b>	<p>The allowance can include the purchase or hire of items such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• disability related software (for example, Dragon voice recognition software)</li> <li>• laptops or Personal Computers (PCs)</li> <li>• printers and scanners</li> <li>• ergonomic equipment (for example, desks or chairs)</li> </ul>
<b>What is not covered? (examples)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• course specific equipment, for example, camera equipment for photography students</li> <li>• course specific software</li> <li>• wheelchairs or mobility scooters (including attachments and accessories)</li> <li>• any equipment or facilities that a college or university would be reasonably expected to provide under the Equality Act (2010), for example, wheelchair access</li> </ul>
<b>How much is available?</b>	The maximum allowance for full-time and part-time students is £5,160.

## 3. Travel expenses

Travel expenses	
<b>Frequency</b>	Travel expenses can be claimed on an annual basis for the duration of your studies for students who are unable to use public transport as a result of their disability.
<b>What is covered? (examples)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• taxis</li> <li>• own car – 1 return journey per day</li> <li>• lift from partner or family members – 2 return journeys per day</li> </ul>
<b>What is not covered? (examples)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the cost of taxi journeys without receipts or an invoice</li> <li>• more than 1 return journey per day for own car or 2 return journeys for lift</li> <li>• car maintenance</li> <li>• parking or road traffic fines</li> <li>• tax and car insurance</li> <li>• accidental damage to vehicle, loss or theft</li> <li>• journeys to and from places other than the student's address, institution or work placement location</li> <li>• travel expenses for Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedic Science students claiming travel expenses through the Paramedic, Nursing and Midwifery Student Bursary (PNMSB)</li> </ul>



	Scheme
<b>How much is available?</b>	There is no fixed amount for this allowance.

#### 4. Non-Medical Personal Help (NMPH)

Non-Medical Personal Help (NMPH)	
<b>Frequency</b>	NMPH can be claimed on an annual basis.
<b>What is covered? (examples)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Sign Language interpreters (BSL)</li> <li>• Tactile BSL interpreters</li> <li>• note takers and scribes</li> <li>• proof readers</li> <li>• mentors</li> <li>• IT training</li> <li>• study skills support</li> <li>• mobility support</li> </ul>
<b>What is not covered? (examples)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• subject-specific tuition</li> <li>• support that would normally be provided by Social Services</li> <li>• Asfedic tuning (TintaVision) or similar diagnostic services</li> </ul>
<b>How much is available?</b>	<p>Full-time students - £20,520 per year.</p> <p>Part-time student - the allowance is pro rata.</p> <p>For example, if the student is studying 50% of the full-time equivalent course they will be entitled to a maximum of £10,260 per year.</p>

#### NMPH exceptions

Students can seek additional support under NMPH should their disability require additional support which exceeds the upper limit.

The maximum that SAAS will exceptionally pay for complex DSA cases for full-time study will be £20,520 (being double the NMPH allowance). Part-time students will be eligible for an exceptional award of up to £10,260.

Additional information and supporting evidence should be provided in such cases.

For example, if a student requires a significant amount of support in order to undertake their studies, such as requiring 2 British Sign Language interpreters for lecture support and assignment support with the additional need for an interpreter for ad-hoc meetings.

## Reasonable adjustments

The [public sector Equality Duty](#) came into effect across the UK in 2011. It means that public bodies, including colleges and universities, have to consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

It also requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

Colleges and universities should continually anticipate and address the general requirements of disabled people with a wide range of impairments and health conditions, for example, ensure that facilities have appropriate wheelchair access for staff and students, include covering on or near campus and halls of residence parking charges.

If any part of a DSA claim is something that should be considered as a 'reasonable adjustment' for a college or university, we may refuse that element of support.

For example, if a student requires the use of a specially adapted desk or chair while at college or university or if they require course material in a non-standard format such as brail.

[\(back to contents\)](#)

## Section 2 – The application process

### Introduction

### How has the process changed?

Previously, students would apply for DSA using a PDF application form, signed by their Disability Advisor at their HEI, who would send SAAS the Needs Assessment Report along with any medical evidence.

The new online service is advisor-led and the Disability Advisor applies on behalf of a student. They complete an application using a secure online platform, and following this, the student signs in to their SAAS Account to check the details on the application and submit it to SAAS for processing.

DSA applications are only valid for 1 academic year. Advisors should apply on behalf of their students each year of their studies. Students should [contact us](#) as soon as possible if there are any changes to their circumstances as this may affect their eligibility to support. For example, if the student decides to [change course](#) or [withdraw](#) from their course completely

## Using the new online application service

### Applying for DSA

To fully assess a DSA application we need an online application completed and endorsed by the Disability Advisor, and the application to be submitted to SAAS by the student. We also need details of the needs assessment fee so that we can reimburse the HEI.

#### Documentation we need

We **do not need** to see a Needs Assessment Report or medical evidence to process a DSA application. However, advisors still need to obtain a needs assessment and medical evidence for the following reasons:

- the Disability Advisor applying on behalf of the student must sign an online declaration stating that the student has undertaken a needs assessment
- the Disability Advisor must sign a declaration stating that they have seen and verified medical evidence
- the student may find the contents of the needs assessment helpful for their reference and for purchasing items
- the student may need to pass their needs assessment on to other agencies or for future DSA claims
- SAAS may need this information for auditing purposes

To process a DSA online application, SAAS requires:

- an online application completed by a Disability Advisor within the secure DSA platform
- an online application checked, signed and submitted by the student within the secure DSA platform

If we require any documentation to process a DSA application or to verify additional funding requests, this can be sent to SAAS via the Document Uploader, including:

- quotations for consumable items, equipment, software and accessories
- quotations from taxi firms
- additional documentation required to process an application or to make changes to an existing application

Students can send documentation we need via the Document Uploader in their SAAS Account, including:

- receipts for equipment purchased
- travel receipts
- quotes and receipts for NMPH (if paying directly to the supplier)
- additional documentation required to process an application

## Student support application

Full-time students who also wish to apply for tuition fees and living cost support must provide a student support application before we can assess their eligibility for DSA. We will not be able to process the student's DSA application until we have processed their main student support application.

Students can apply online at [www.saas.gov.uk](http://www.saas.gov.uk) from **April**. The closing date for applications is **31 March**.

Students who are claiming DSA only are not required to submit a main student support application. However, the online application can only accept applications from students who have main funding in place, or if their main funding application is still being processed.

[\(back to contents\)](#)

## Evidence - Diagnosis/Identification/Medical Evidence

Although we no longer require evidence submitted to process an application, first time applicants will be asked to provide diagnostic evidence to confirm their disability or learning difficulty as part of their needs assessment. The Disability Advisor will be signing a legal declaration to confirm they have seen and verified any medical evidence.

If a student's disability changes during their course and they require additional support as a result, their Disability Advisor will need to see further evidence to confirm their circumstances.

It is not always necessary for evidence to be recent if the nature of a condition will not change. However, they may need to provide evidence to confirm the current status of a student's condition if necessary.

Please note, SAAS will only consider recommendations made by the student's Needs Assessor or Disability Advisor. SAAS will not take into consideration any recommendations for support which are made by a third party.

We have provided some examples of the diagnostic evidence that a student will need to provide as part of their needs assessment:

### Dyslexia or specific learning difficulties (SpLD)

A written statement or report from one of the following:

- psychologists who are registered with Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC)
- an appropriately qualified professional – this includes those who meet the following conditions:
  - hold an SpLD Assessment Practising Certificate (APC) a suitable Postgraduate qualification of a level which would be acceptable for Associate Membership of the British Dyslexia Association (AMBDA), Level 7
  - are a General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) registered teacher working in or supporting the school in Scotland which the student attended and who has

completed the [Dyslexia Scotland & Open University 'Dyslexia: Identification and Support' \(Module 3\)](#).

The student's needs assessment **must** have taken place while they were at school within the context of the local authority's [Collaborative Assessment Pathway for Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties](#) – available on the [Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit](#).

Statements or reports provided by a psychologist or appropriately qualified individual (as described above) **must** contain a clear conclusion or summary, which confirms formal identification of dyslexia or SpLD. If the statement/report does not confirm a diagnosis, these cannot be used as evidence.

If the student is unable to undertake a diagnostic assessment or an evaluation of needs assessment, in exceptional circumstances, until a formal diagnosis can be provided, a Needs Assessor can accept **screening tools**, such as Quick Screen that:

- provide clear indicators of an SpLD
- have been carried out by a DSA Advisor, Needs Assessor or a qualified individual from a previous school or college

Advisors must include the findings of the screening tool and the reasons why the student was unable to access a diagnostic assessment in the Needs Assessment Report.

If the student is unable to provide the evidence described above, include a written statement from a previous educational establishment. The statement must confirm formal identification of dyslexia or a SpLD and that identification was carried out by a psychologist or an appropriately qualified professional.

## Other medical conditions

Diagnostic evidence which confirms the student's disability or medical condition. Include a written statement or [Medical Evidence Form](#) which has been provided by a qualified professional such as:

- GP
- nurse or psychiatric nurse
- Occupational Therapist
- Physiotherapist
- Audiologist

Please note that the above is not a complete list. If the student's evidence is not listed, [contact us](#) for advice.

## ADHD/Autism

You can accept a working diagnosis from a GP or other medical professional in place of a formal diagnosis for students who are awaiting a full assessment for ADHD or Autism. The working diagnosis will be sufficient to award DSA support in subsequent sessions, however once the student receives a formal diagnosis, this must be included in the Needs Assessment Report.

## Other evidence exceptions

Evidence of medical conditions or impairments:

Apply precedence to written statements or [Medical Evidence Forms](#) which have been provided or completed by a qualified medical professional such as:

- GP
- nurse or psychiatric nurse
- Occupational Therapist
- Physiotherapist
- Audiologist

However, if a student is unable to provide any of the above or is awaiting full diagnosis, you can consider additional evidence on a temporary and case-by-case basis, which provides clear indication of their medical condition or impairment. For example:

- previous letters or reports from a GP, Consultant or Health Care Professional
- medical records or prescription details
- evidence of medical appointments pertaining to an existing medical condition or impairment
- letter of support from another suitably qualified practitioner, for example, Counsellor

Please note that the above is not a complete list. If the student's medical evidence is not listed contact us for advice.

Once the student receives a formal diagnosis, include this in the Needs Assessment Report.

Future applications:

In cases where DSA has been approved under the Covid-19 or another exceptions process, you do not need diagnostic evidence in future academic sessions unless the nature of the student's disability or learning difficulty changes.

Students who were awarded funding based screening tools, such as Quick Screen must provide evidence once a formal diagnosis has been confirmed.

The student will continue to be eligible to apply for DSA from SAAS.

## Payment of diagnosis

SAAS will not cover any costs associated with a diagnosis. This includes doctors' letters, educational psychologists' reports or Medical Evidence Forms. However, the student's college or university may be able to contribute towards these costs from their Discretionary Funds.

[\(back to contents\)](#)

## Needs Assessment Reports

A Needs Assessment is a report carried out by a qualified individual which outlines the type of support and/or equipment a student requires to undertake their course. Although we do not require a copy of the Needs Assessment Report, a student is not eligible for support unless they have undertaken a needs assessment.

### The Role of the Needs Assessor

The role of the assessor is to:

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

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

Assessors should set out clearly in the SAAS needs assessment pro-forma what recommendations they are making for DSA funded support. Any recommendations for DSA support will require clear and robust evidence-based justification.

We will not accept a student's preference as justification for a recommendation.

DSA support should not be recommended where support is available from another source, for example, the institution (through reasonable adjustments), the NHS, local authority or other relevant organisation.

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

### Needs Assessment - Frequency

All students applying for the DSA for the first time must have a needs assessment. However, a new needs assessment may be necessary if:

- a significant period of time has passed since the original assessment took place
- the student's disability or medical condition has changed
- the student significantly changes course, or starts a new course, and their needs have changed as a result of this
- the student has been diagnosed with a new disability

If a new needs assessment is required, assessors should include an explanation for the reassessment on the needs assessment pro-forma (see [Annex A](#)).

## **Needs Assessment – Referrals**

Many colleges and universities are validated to carry out needs assessments on behalf of their own students. However, if your college or university is not validated to do so, SAAS can refer students to validated Access Centre close to where they live or study.

Referrals can be requested using the DSA application forms (DSAFT and DSAO). DSA Advisors should complete section D on the DSAFT or section H on the DSAO form as appropriate.

## **Needs Assessment - Completing the report**

Assessors should complete the needs assessment report using the SAAS needs assessment pro-forma (see Annex A).

When recommending equipment, each item must be listed individually within the main body of the report.

Assessors should provide one quote detailing the student's requirements.

Refer to our "[What is covered under DSA](#)" section for further information on what we can pay for under DSA.

## **Needs Assessment - Paying for a needs assessment**

SAAS will pay the cost of a student's needs assessment. We will not take this amount from their DSA allowance. The fee must be outlined in the DSA online service on the 'Payment for Needs Assessment Report' page. We need the following information:

- name of assessment centre
- name of assessor
- hours taken to complete the assessment and report
- total cost

SAAS will cover the cost of a needs assessment providing:

- the student has a recognised disability
- the student meets our eligibility criteria
- the assessment is carried out by a validated institution or an individual who is undergoing the training and the assessment is being submitted as part of their training

SAAS cannot accept or pay for needs assessments from the following:

- qualified individuals who are working at an institution that is not validated by the Scottish Government
- assessments carried out by professional organisations such as the RNIB, though assessors may consult these organisations when undertaking an assessment



- assessments carried out by other government organisations such as Schools, Local authorities or Social Work Departments
- assistive technology or NMPH suppliers - this would be a conflict of interest and suppliers should not be involved in this part of the needs assessment process

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

## **Needs Assessment - The Fee**

Payments are made by SAAS in arrears and on receipt of an invoice. The fee is paid directly to the institution who carried out the assessment.

SAAS does not require a third-party agreement form when a needs assessment fee is claimed. This is because payments are made by SAAS and not from the student's individual DSA allocation.

When submitting an invoice for a needs assessment the fee should clearly show the information submitted on the DSA online application including:

- name of assessment centre
- name of assessor
- hours taken to complete the Needs Assessment Report
- total cost

If a home assessment is required as a result of the severity of a student's disability, SAAS will pay for the associated travel costs of the assessor. We will also cover the cost of an additional assessor to travel with them.

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

- where the student does not meet our eligibility criteria (unless SAAS has referred the student to an Access Centre or institution)
- where no equipment or support is recommended (unless SAAS has referred the student to an Access Centre or institution)
- where we decide not to award DSA for any of the recommendations made in the report (unless SAAS has specifically referred the student to an Access Centre or institution).

If you are not sure if we will accept a needs assessment invoice, [contact us](#) for further advice.

[\(back to contents\)](#)

## Paying DSA

### Paying DSA – Equipment, Software and Accessories and Consumable Items

When a student accepts the information that their advisor has submitted on the DSA online application by selecting 'I agree' on the student declaration, they will be asked for the bank account details where they would like their DSA fund to be paid. They can either use the bank account we hold for their main funding, or enter a new bank account to keep the fund separate.

In exceptional circumstances we can pay DSA into a third party account e.g. in cases where the student is unable to manage financial transactions as a direct result of their disability. Students should complete and submit a Third Party Consent form. [Contact us](#) for more information. If a student does not have access to a bank account and is unable to open one, [contact us](#) for advice.

### Paying DSA – NMPH

NMPH is paid in arrears and on receipt of an invoice and NMPH claim form. We aim to pay all NMPH claims within 21 days of receipt.

#### Students employing their own provider or providers who are self-employed:

We pay DSA directly into the student's nominated bank account. Students should provide details of a valid current or savings account when they apply for funding. Please note that we will not automatically use the same bank details provided on the student's main funding application. The student is responsible for ensuring that money is paid to the provider. Please note that we cannot pay providers who are employed by the student directly.

DSA advisors should check the suitability of the provider employed by the student, using the criteria within the [DSA NMPH Guidance](#) document.

#### **Providers employed by the institution or a private company:**

We will reimburse the provider directly and on receipt of an invoice. Invoices should include:

- the student's name and SAAS Reference Number
- the type of work carried out
- the cost per hour, the number of hours claimed and the period of the claim

[\(back to contents\)](#)

## Purchasing equipment

We anticipate that students will purchase the equipment which has been agreed and recommended by their Needs Assessor. If they are not happy with the recommendations made in their assessment, the student should discuss this with their assessor before purchasing any equipment. See the section – [appealing against a needs assessment](#) for more information.

Students may wish to upgrade some of the items recommended, such as computer hardware. This is acceptable, provided that the student's assessor or disability advisor approves the upgrade. However, any additional cost must be met by the student. Students may not use savings made through sourcing other items at a lower price to fund upgrades on another piece of equipment.

SAAS will not cover the cost if a student purchases any equipment which has not been recommended.

Refer to our "[What is covered under DSA](#)" section for further details on what we can pay for under DSA.

## Receipts

Students should provide receipts for any large items within 6 weeks of payment.

Receipts for consumable items can be submitted over the course of the academic year, or retained and submitted at the end of the academic year.

Students must submit copies of their receipts for all items purchased under DSA. Students may be asked to repay any funds which have not been accounted for by receipts. For example, if the student does not provide any receipts or if their receipts do not account for the full amount awarded to them.

Where a student has outstanding receipts from a previous academic year, or if a current overpayment has not been repaid in full, we may not approve funding for future sessions. We may also withhold payments for NMPH until the matter has been resolved.

If a student is no longer in possession of their receipts or is unable to provide receipts, [contact us](#) for advice.

[\(back to contents\)](#)

## Processing times

SAAS work to the following response times and processing targets:

### Processing times - DSA application

We aim to:

- review all DSA application forms within 21 calendar days of receipt
- review all needs assessment reports within 21 days of receipt

### Processing times - Written correspondence and emails

We aim to:

- respond to all DSA written correspondence within 21 days of receipt
- respond to all emails within 21 days of receipt
- pay all invoices for NMPH within 21 days of receipt

### Processing times - Priority applications

We operate a priority application system for students who require DSA support as a matter of urgency. We operate this system under exceptional circumstances only.

DSA Advisor can make a priority request by completing the DSA Priority Form and forwarding this to [SAAS\\_4priority@gov.scot](mailto:SAAS_4priority@gov.scot). Advisors should provide a supporting statement to demonstrate why the application should be treated as a priority.

We will disregard any priority forms where no specific reason or justification is provided.

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

### Processing times - Other

We aim to:

- deal with any requests under Freedom of Information (FOI) within 20 working days of receipt
- respond to all correspondence clearly marked 'complaint' within 5 working days of receipt
- respond to all correspondence clearly marked 'appeal' within 20 working days of receipt

## DSA SAAS Award Notice

As part of the online application process, Disability Advisors will be notified that the student has either been awarded DSA or not awarded DSA so that they can offer advice and purchasing support.

If DSA has not been awarded, we will provide the student with details of our appeals process.

[\(back to contents\)](#)

## Overpayments

We have a duty to protect the public funds we administer. By signing the DSA application, students agree to repay any funds they are no longer entitled to.

We may ask them to repay funds if:

- their circumstances, as described in their application, change
- they purchase items that are not recommended in their needs assessment report
- they do not provide receipts for items they have purchased
- they fail to meet the conditions of funding set out in the Student Support (Scotland) Regulations 2022
- Scottish Ministers decide to change the amount of their funding
- Scottish Ministers find that they should not have received funding

If a student receives funds they are not entitled to, we will ask them to set up a suitable repayment plan. They can make regular payments until the full amount is repaid.

**Students must tell us if their circumstances change as this may affect the award they are entitled to.**

## Fraud

We take all aspects of fraud seriously and have a dedicated Counter Fraud Team to deal with any cases that arise. We will aim to recover any money we have paid as the result of a fraudulent claim. We will prosecute anybody who makes a fraudulent claim for funding.

## Our complaints and appeals procedures

### Students who wish to complain or appeal against our assessment of a DSA application

If a student wishes to make a formal request to review our decision, they can submit a formal complaint or appeal directly to SAAS.

Further details regarding our appeals process are available on the SAAS website <https://www.saas.gov.uk/about-saas/appeals>

If a student wishes to make a complaint you can do so, by phone, in writing or by email. Further details regarding our complaints process are available on the SAAS website <https://www.saas.gov.uk/about-saas/complaints>

### Students disputing a needs assessment

If a student disputes the recommendations in their needs assessment and the matter cannot be resolved directly between them and the needs assessor, the student should be able to submit a complaint/ appeal directly to the organisation that carried out their assessment. The organisation that provided the assessment should provide the student with a copy of their complaints/ appeals process.

On the rare occurrence where the matter cannot be resolved directly between the student/ needs assessor and the student has exhausted the internal complaints/appeals procedure, then we may seek to have an additional needs assessment carried out by another organisation who is independent to the case.

## Contact Us

{Insert contact details for private beta DSA Team}

## Section 3 – What is covered under DSA

### Accommodation

If a disabled student requires specialised accommodation as a direct result of their disability, SAAS may be able to contribute towards any additional costs they incur. For example, the difference in cost between standard halls of residence and accommodation with specialised facilities. Please note, HEIs should consider their duties under the Equality Act in regards to reasonable adjustments and consider whether some of the additional costs should also be met by their own budgets.

Assessors should be satisfied that specialised accommodation is required and provide appropriate justification in the Needs Assessment Report. We may ask for additional evidence to support DSA claims for specialist accommodation.

## Consumables

DSA can be used to cover the cost of consumables items such as paper, ink and photocopying if a student incurs additional charges as a direct result of their disability. HEIs should also consider reasonable adjustments that should be made under the Equality Act, for example printing documents in a larger font for visually impaired students.

Receipts for consumable items can be submitted over the course of the academic year, or retained and submitted at the end of the academic year.

If the student does not use all of their consumable allowance, or cannot provide receipts, we may ask them to return any residual funds to SAAS.

## Course specific materials

### Books and reading materials:

DSA does not normally cover the cost of course specific books and reading materials. This is because all students are required to purchase these regardless of disability.

However, we may be able to consider DSA support in the following circumstances:

- Where the student requires books or reading materials in an alternative format such as large print or audio books (DSA can be used to cover the difference in cost only)
- Where the student requires specific books or reading materials to support their study skills development

### Software and equipment:

DSA does not normally cover the cost of course related software or equipment. This is because all students on the course will require access to these regardless of disability. Institutions should make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled students have sufficient access to the relevant software and equipment in a manner best suited to their needs.

However, we may consider DSA support in exceptional cases. For example, where a student is unable to access facilities or loan equipment as a direct result of their disability.

### Specialised spell checkers/dictionaries/online dictionaries/stethoscopes:

Specialist paper, electronic dictionaries and stethoscopes are not normally covered under DSA. This includes legal, engineering or medical dictionary. All students, regardless of disability, will either need to buy these as part of their recommended core texts, or would strongly benefit from owning them due to the complex and unfamiliar terminology used in certain study areas.

However, in cases where there is a strong disability related reason to support the purchase of subject specific spellcheckers or stethoscopes we may be able to offer DSA support. [Contact us](#) for advice.

## Digital Hearing Aids and Cochlear Implants

DSA does not normally cover the cost of Digital Hearing Aids as students will typically require these regardless of their attendance at college or university. They may also be available through the NHS.

We may be able to consider DSA for Digital Hearing Aids if:

- the student requires digital hearing aids for the sole purpose of attending college or university
- the student is unable to attain them through the NHS or they are on a waiting list and will be unable to access them within the academic year
- alternative forms of support are not suitable, for example, note takers, induction loops

Similarly DSA would not cover cochlear implants, however students may be eligible to receive DSA funding to pay for the accessories that would enable their ability to hear.

In all cases, suitable evidence and disability related justification must be provided before DSA support can be considered.

## Loan of equipment

In some cases we may suggest the rental of equipment rather than purchase. For example, when:

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

## Exams

Institutions should ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to support disabled students during examinations. DSA will not cover the cost of NMPH during exams. This include scribes and sign language interpreters.

However, DSA can be used to cover any additional support a student requires to re-sit exams outside of term time. For example, travel costs for students with mobility difficulties.

[\(back to contents\)](#)

## Extensions

Full-time students who need to extend their studies for disability related reasons may be eligible to receive tuition fees and living cost support whilst on extension. Students can study 1 year of a



full-time course over 2 academic years and continue to receive full support on disability related grounds.

Queries regarding an extension to study should be referred to the relevant SAAS funding team for further information. Refer to [Annex D](#) for a full list of contact details.

## Extracurricular activities

DSA may be considered for extracurricular activities which are course related and require additional support for the student to participate. For example, some students may be required to participate in field trips or excursions as part of their course.

DSA is not available for activities such as social clubs or societies.

## Furniture

DSA is available for items of furniture which the student requires in their home or halls of residence as a result of their disability. For example:

- desks for PCs
- docking stations for laptops
- ergonomic chairs or furniture

Please note, we will not pay for pre-owned ergonomic chairs or furniture.

## Installation and set up costs

DSA 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. DSA will not pay for installation or set up where it has been provided by friends or family.

## Insurance and Warranty

DSA will cover full insurance and warranty costs for IT and other equipment for the duration of a student's course. The student should be advised that some "care plans" provided by High Street retailers are not insurance and may not include cover if the equipment is lost, stolen or damaged.

If the student has been awarded funds to purchase warranty **and** insurance, it is important that they purchase **both** and provide receipts to SAAS.

Students may wish to add DSA equipment to their home contents insurance, halls of residence insurance or both. DSA will only cover the difference in cost if the student's home contents insurance premium increases as a direct result of adding their DSA equipment. Students should provide a letter or quotation from their insurance company to show any additional cost.

DSA cannot be used to replace lost or damaged equipment if unsuitable insurance, warranty, or both, has been purchased.

## PCs and laptops

DSA can be used to cover the cost of personal computers (PCs) or laptops where appropriate.

Assessors should consider whether the student can reasonably access computer equipment and/ or assistive software on campus before making a recommendation for DSA support.

If, as a result of their disability, it is not reasonable for the student to access equipment or assistive software on campus, assessors should detail this in the needs assessment report.

When recommending a laptop or desktop PC, we anticipate that equipment will be appropriately suited to the student's disability related needs. It is the DSA advisor's responsibility to ensure recommendations are based on the student's needs and should not be based on the student's preference.

If the student wishes to upgrade to an alternative brand or model they are permitted to do so. The student's Needs Assessors should provide written confirmation that the alternative is suitable for the student's needs. Any additional costs must be met by the student. This applies to any additional costs associated to hardware, software and insurance or warranty.

DSA will not pay for pre-owned or reconditioned laptops or PCs.

Requests for replacement laptops must be accompanied by an engineer's report, which states that the equipment is not fit for purpose and cannot be repaired (cost not funded by SAAS).

If the laptop is lost or stolen, we require evidence of a police report.

## Portable Digital Devices (PDDs)

DSA can be used to purchase PDDs such as Smart Phones and Tablets. In all cases there must be a clear disability related reason for recommending a PDD.

Assessors should recommend a basic model which is sufficient for the student's needs. If the student wishes to upgrade to an alternative brand or model they are permitted to do so. However, the student's disability advisor should provide written confirmation that the alternative is suitable for the student's needs. Any additional costs must be met by the student.

DSA will not normally pay for a PDD in addition to a laptop but this may be considered if there is a strong disability related reason for both. [Contact us](#) for advice.

## Portable Digital Devices (PDDs) – Applications (apps)

When submitting an assessment that includes apps, each app should be listed individually on the student's DSA form. This should include:

- the price of each app in £ sterling
- an explanation of the app's function and benefit to the student's disability related needs

- confirmation that the app does not replicate any pre-existing functionality on the students device(s), for example, voice memos or notes

DSA may not be used for apps which:

- duplicate pre-existing functionality on the students device or other DSA equipment, for example, recording apps for students who own a digital recorder
- are subject specific, for example, medical or legal dictionaries

## Reformatting and transcription costs

DSA will not cover the cost of reformatting or transcription (including production of material into Braille) of 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.

## Study Abroad

Students who study abroad for part of their course will remain eligible for DSA support.

Students on the Turing Scheme who are eligible for DSA should not apply for Turing SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) support for a disability-related cost that will be incurred as a result of a placement which is DSA-fundable.

Students can still apply for Turing Scheme SEND support to cover eligible types of costs that would not ordinarily be covered by DSA.

## Study Skills Support

DSA can be used for individual study skills support for students with specific learning difficulties or other conditions which impact their ability to study, for example, mental health conditions.

Study skills support will generally consists of a number of sessions which are designed to help students:

- plan and organise their work
- develop study skill and revision techniques
- become more confident using resources such as libraries and the internet for course work purposes

The content of these sessions should be tailored specifically to the individual's learning requirements. When recommending study skills support, assessors should provide details of the support required and how this will benefit the student.

Over time study skills support should help the student become more independent in their learning. As such, we would expect study skills to be awarded for a set period of time and reviewed at the end of that period to determine if further support is needed. There is no limit to the amount of study skills support DSA will pay for but it is anticipated that support will decrease over time as the student puts their newly acquired skills into practice.

In cases where there is no change or reduction to the level of support required, SAAS may request additional information to account for this.

DSA should only be recommended for specialist study skills support. It should not be recommended for general study skills support services which are available to all students at the college or university.

DSA 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.

Please see [Annex C](#) for further information.

### **Case Study**

*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 2 hours per week as he experiences difficulties when planning essays and organising revision time. In the assessment report it states that 1 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 a 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 fourth year.*

[\(back to contents\)](#)

## **Summer Schools**

Disability related travel costs and NMPH are available for students attending Summer Schools. In the majority of cases this will apply to distance learning students who are attending campus based events outwith term time. See the [Travel](#) and [NMPH](#) sections of this guide for more details on the support available.

Payments will be made in arrears and students should provide a completed Summer School Attendance form.

Please note that DSA support is not available for students attending summer transition programmes which are not a compulsory part of their course (for example, the transition programme for Autistic Spectrum students run by some institutions).

## **Tinted Lenses**

DSA may be used to cover the cost of tinted lenses under the Equipment, Software and Accessories allowance in cases where:

- the lenses have been recommended by a fully qualified optician, optometrist or medically qualified eye specialist; and
- the lenses are required for study purposes only

DSA will cover the cost of the most basic lenses and frames available to the student. A maximum of £40 is available for frames. If the student wishes to upgrade to more expensive frames or specialist lenses, such as varifocal lenses, they are permitted to do so. However, any additional costs must be met by the student.

## Travel

DSA can be used to pay for travel expenses if a student is unable to access public transport as a direct result of their disability. SAAS will typically pay travel expenses for 1 return journey per day between the student's home or term-time address and their institution or placement.

There is no maximum limit to the amount for disability related travel costs. However, assessors may wish to consider whether alternative arrangements would be more appropriate. For example, it may be more beneficial for the student to arrange term-time accommodation closer to their college or university.

SAAS will not typically provide travel costs for students who have difficulty accessing public transport due to poor service or financial hardship.

### Travel – Attending a needs assessment

DSA will not cover the cost of any travel required to attend a needs assessment. Students may wish to apply to their institution's discretionary funds for help towards these costs.

### Travel – Car (Petrol or Diesel)

If a student needs to travel by car, the following information should be entered onto their online DSA application:

- postcode of the start location (the student's term time address)
- postcode of the end location (the student's college, university or placement)
- the number of return journeys
- the number of weeks per academic year

The needs assessment must include:

- a letter from the student's doctor which confirms that they are unable to use public transport as a direct result of their disability
- a written estimate to confirm:
  - the number of miles between their home/ term-time address and their 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 (MPG estimate)
  - the cost of fuel per mile

If the student is unable to drive themselves, DSA can cover the cost for a parent, partner or spouse to drive them to and from the college or university. DSA will pay mileage costs for 2 return journeys if the parent, partner or spouse needs to return home between journeys.

For travel via their own car, DSA can cover the cost of 1 return journey per day.

## **Travel - Fuel Allowances**

When claiming travel costs for own car or lift, we need to work out the cost of fuel or electric charge. As well as the postcode of the start and end location, the number of journeys per week and weeks per academic year, we will require the following information:

For Petrol, diesel or hybrid:

- fuel cost per litre
- miles per litre

SAAS will calculate the cost per mile by:

- calculating the cost of a litre of fuel by multiplying the cost of a litre of fuel by £4.546
- dividing the cost per litre by the MPG notified by the student

For Electric:

- kWh cost (the current rate of electricity)
- kWh capacity of the vehicle (the battery size)
- range of car (the number of miles the vehicle can travel on a full charge)

We calculate the cost per mile by:

- calculating the kWh usage per mile of the car by dividing the kWh capacity of the car by the official range of the car
- multiplying this kWh usage per mile with the kWh charge cost

The formula can therefore be displayed as:

- $(\text{cost of kWh}) \times (\text{kWh capacity of the car} \div \text{Official Range of the car}) = \text{Cost per mile}$
- type of vehicle (petrol, diesel or hybrid or electric)

Where possible we will pay fuel claims in 2 instalments:

- the first instalment will typically be made at the start of the student's course or as soon as we have all of the information we require.
- the second instalment is typically made at the start of the second semester or term.

## Fuel allowance case studies:

### ***Petrol, diesel or hybrid***

*Student A has advised that they are paying £1.10 for a litre of fuel and their car gets 35 miles to the gallon (MPG). We will calculate the cost per mile as follows:*

- $£1.10 \times 4.546 = £5.0006$
- $£5.0006 \div 35 = £0.1428$  cost per mile.

*The student advises us that they are travelling 35 miles to their College and attend 5 days per week for 36 weeks of their course. We will calculate their travel costs as follows:*

- *return journey =  $2 \times 35 = 70$  miles each day*
- *number of miles per week =  $5 \text{ days} \times 70 \text{ miles} = 350$  miles each week*
- *number of miles for the whole of the course =  $350 \times 36 \text{ weeks} = 12600$  miles*
- *total travel cost =  $12600 \text{ miles} \times £0.1428 \text{ (cost per mile)} = £1799.28$*

*Payment is made in 2 instalments to the student.*

### ***Electric***

*Student A has advised that they are paying 34p per kWh and their car has a capacity of 60 and an official range of 331 miles. We will calculate the cost per mile as follows:*

- $£0.34 \times (60 \div 331) = \textbf{£0.0616 cost per mile}$

*They advise they are travelling 35 miles to their College and attend College for 5 days per week for the 36 weeks of their course their travel costs are as follows:*

- *return journey =  $2 \times 35 = 70$  miles each day*
- *number of miles per week =  $5 \text{ days} \times 70 \text{ miles} = 350$  miles each week*
- *number of miles for the whole of the course =  $350 \times 36 \text{ weeks} = 12600$  miles*
- *total travel cost =  $12600 \text{ miles} \times £0.0616 \text{ (cost per mile)} = \textbf{£776.16}$*

*Payment is made in 2 instalments to the student.*

## **Travel – Paramedic, Nursing and Midwifery Bursary Students (PNMSB)**

Paramedic Science, nursing and midwifery students may not claim travel expenses through both the DSA and the Paramedic, Nursing and Midwifery Student Bursary (PNMSB) Scheme.

Any students claiming travel through DSA will be subject to the normal DSA travel rules.

## **Travel – OU and distance learning students**

DSA can pay for the cost of travel if the student is attending campus based tutorials, seminars or summer schools directly related to their course of study.

## **Travel – Outside of term-time**

SAAS can consider paying for travel outside of term-time in certain circumstances. For example:

- the student is attending their institution for resits
- the student is required to attend a meet with their course tutor

Additional information may be required to evidence the requirement for travel expenses outside of term-time.

## **Travel – Taxis**

If a student needs to travel by taxi, the following information should be entered onto their online DSA application:

- postcode of the start location (the student's term time address)
- postcode of the end location (the student's college, university or placement)
- the number of return journeys
- the number of weeks per academic year

The following information will need to be included in the Needs Assessment Report:

- a letter from their doctor confirming they are unable to use public transport as a direct result of their disability
- a minimum of 2 quotes from fully registered taxi companies detailing the cost of a single journey between the student's home or term-time address and their institution or placement. If the HEI has an approved taxi firm only 1 quote is required
- a third-party payment form if they wish for us to pay the taxi company direct

Taxi costs will be paid in arrears and on receipt of an invoice or receipt. We strongly encourage students to set up an account with a taxi company and would request that the Disability Advisor should assist the student with this. We firmly believe that most students would benefit from using an account with taxi companies that we can reimburse directly but are aware students may need support with this - they may also be asked to pay a deposit to set up the account and SAAS will consider paying this on request. Receipts and invoices should confirm the date, time, cost and start and end location of the journey at a minimum.

SAAS will not normally:

- reimburse the cost of taxi journeys without appropriate receipts or invoices
- pay for more than 1 return taxi trip per day
- pay for taxis to and from places other than the student's address, institution or placement location

**Disability Advisors should ensure students are made aware of the above points prior to claiming any travel.**

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, for example, travel costs



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

## Work Placements

Students who undertake a work 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, 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.

Please note, nursing and midwifery students may not claim travel expenses through both the DSA **and** the Paramedic, Nursing and Midwifery Student Bursary (PNMSB) Scheme.

## Zoom Accounts

SAAS will not pay DSA for the cost of Zoom accounts. Institutions should make reasonable adjustments to cover costs in instances where a Pro Zoom account is required.

[\(back to contents\)](#)

## Section 4 – Additional information for advisors

### Allowances – non medical personal help (NMPH)

#### ***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.

The admin charge can be used to cover the following 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 SAAS 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.

SAAS are unable to 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, for example, pens and paper
- employers National Insurance costs

#### ***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. It will then be their responsibility to pay the support worker.

If the student does not reimburse the support worker, SAAS will seek to recover any monies paid to the student on behalf of the support worker.

There may be certain cases where, due to the student's disability, they may struggle to manage financial transactions themselves; in such cases we can consider paying the support worker directly.

## ***Allowances – Non-Medical Personal Help (NMPH): Cancellation***

**We're aware that some students are repeatedly cancelling last minute for reasons that aren't related to medical or compassionate reasons. This guidance has been strengthened to try to ensure there is a process in place for that scenario.**

There will be occasions where a student does not attend a booked NMPH session and does not give the required notice of cancellation. When this occurs it is understood that the NMPH provider has arranged for a worker to attend the session and so has incurred a cost for arranging the support. The cost of these booked support sessions will be met from the student's NMPH allowance as it is understood that the student booked the session expecting to attend (subject to the repeated cancelled sessions rule below).

The fee SAAS will pay depends on the notice provided, as detailed in the table:

Notice period (working days only)	Less than 1 working day (24 hours)	2 working days	3 working days	Over 3 working days' notice (72 hours +)
Compensation	Payment in full	50%	25%	No payment

\*Please note a working day is defined as 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays

**Disability Advisors should inform students and NMPH providers of the cancellation policy and ensure every effort is made to provide notice well in advance of the appointment in the event of cancellation.**

In all scenarios, DSA funding will not be provided for NMPH provision that is repeatedly not being used once booked, or cancelled with less than 24 hours' notice, or where students indicate that they no longer need or want NMPH support. For the purposes of DSA funding, the standard of "repeatedly" is considered to be more than 2 sessions which have been missed per term. SAAS consider that it is unlikely that most students would need to cancel their NMPH session with less than 24 hours' notice more than twice per term\*. If there is more than one cancelled session per day, SAAS will count this as the same instance.

DSA funding will not be provided where the HEI is responsible for cancelling the lecture or tutorial that the session was booked for. The HEI must take responsibility for notifying the student that the lecture or tutorial is cancelled to enable the student to cancel the session with the NMPH provider.

Cancelled sessions will be carefully considered by SAAS before payment. Where more than 2 sessions have been cancelled at short notice per term\* SAAS will ensure that all parties understand their responsibilities and reasons for missed sessions are being investigated and documented.

Please note this guidance sets out what SAAS will or will not pay. It is not for SAAS to determine who pays outside of this guidance.

\*Term will be defined as 1 August - 31 December, 1 January - 30 May and 30 May - 1 August.

*What action should be taken when a session is cancelled?*

At the first cancelled session, the NMPH provider should make all reasonable efforts to contact the student to find out the reason for the student missing the session and confirm arrangements for the next session booked. The NMPH provider should not attend the next session until the arrangement is confirmed with the student. If the student states they no longer require the support, support should be terminated and the disability adviser informed. The same process should be followed for the second missed session and they should contact the disability adviser to discuss ongoing support where possible.

SAAS will not suspend support after 2 cancelled sessions. It is assumed that the need for support continues and that sessions are being managed by the support worker and the student. However, payment will not be made for any cancelled sessions occurring beyond the first 2 per term, other than in exceptional circumstances.

The disability adviser should work with the student if it appears that the student is not managing their sessions effectively and sessions are regularly being cancelled or missed without cancellation. This may indicate other problems or that the student does not require, or is not satisfied with the support they have been recommended.

Early intervention in such cases may result in different support being offered. SAAS will separately consider what action might be taken if the nature of the student's disability is such that they might regularly need to miss booked sessions without warning. DSA needs assessors should indicate on their needs assessment if they identify that this is likely to occur.

[\(back to contents\)](#)

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

For applications received towards to the end of a student's course or academic year, we may suggest alternative forms of support instead.

For example, we may suggest DSA for the loan of equipment instead of purchase, particularly if the student is nearing the end of their course.

In order to pay DSA near the end of a student's course or academic year, we may request confirmation that the student's needs could not be addressed by alternative forms of support. In such cases we may request the following:

- advice on why a DSA application was not submitted previously
- details of any reasonable adjustments made by the institution and an explanation of why DSA support is required in addition to this
- confirmation that alternative forms of support are not available or suitable for the student's needs, for example, they have no access to loan equipment from the institution
- confirmation that the student intends to continue with their studies in the following academic session

Please note, if DSA is awarded near the end of an academic year, on the grounds that the student intends to return in the following session, SAAS may seek recovery of all or part of the award if the student does not return to their studies.

Please do not hesitate to [contact us](#) for advice.

## Change of course – Equipment, Software and Accessories

The Equipment, Software and Accessories allowance is awarded for the duration of a student's studies and not for an individual course. Any items purchased as part of this allowance must support the student for the duration of their studies.

However, if the student's needs significantly alter, as a result of changing course, additional Equipment, Software and Accessories support may be necessary. We may request additional information to explain why additional funding is required.

In cases where a student returns to education after a significant break in study, they will typically be entitled to a new Equipment, Software and Accessories allowance.

## Eligibility – Additional information

### Eligibility – MSc Social Work programmes

The [Scottish Social Services Council \(SSSC\)](#) is responsible for providing tuition fees and living cost support for students undertaking postgraduate programmes in social work. Funding is available to a limited number of students in each academic session. Students who do not have a SSSC funded place are not eligible to claim postgraduate tuition fees or living cost support from SAAS.

The SSSC also provides disability related support. However, support is limited to those students who are eligible for SSSC funding.

Students who require disability related support and do not have a SSSC funded place can apply to SAAS for DSA Only.

Please note that we may request additional information to confirm that the student does not have a SSSC funded place.

### **Eligibility – Student prisoners**

Student prisoners are not eligible to claim DSA from SAAS. Instead, prisoners who require disability related support can apply for disability related support using their individual education budget.

Prisoners can apply to SAAS for tuition fee support only.

### **Eligibility – Those who are not eligible to support**

If a student does not meet our eligibility criteria, their institutions may continue to 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.

### **Equipment – What happens after a student finishes their course?**

All the equipment purchased through the DSA remains the property of the student.

### **Repeating a period of study**

We can pay DSA for students who have to repeat a period of study providing they are not undertaking examinations only.

Recommendations for DSA support should reflect the student's time in attendance. For example, if a student is attending in semester 2 only, we would not anticipate NMPH support to be recommended for semester one also unless there is suitable justification for doing so.

### **Retrospective claims**

Students will not be reimbursed for any items of equipment they purchase prior to a needs assessment being carried out.

When a needs assessment has been carried out, any equipment which becomes necessary at a later date must be recommended by the disability advisor prior to the student purchasing the item.

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 they 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 than the support recommended in their assessment.

## Temporary disability or illness

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

However, if a temporary disability or illness is likely to last for a significant proportion of their studies we may consider DSA support.

### Case study

*Student A is in year 1 of a 2 year HND course and is involved in a road traffic accident. As a result of their injuries, they are temporarily confined to a wheelchair. Although they are expected to make a fully recovery they submit evidence from a physiotherapist that confirms that it will be at least 18 months before they regain 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 their ability to study throughout the duration of the course.*

## Visual impairments

Diagnostic evidence for visual impairments such as Scotopic sensitivity or Meares-Irlen syndrome should be provided by a suitably qualified optician/optometrist or equivalent medically qualified eye specialist.

Discretionary funds may be used to pay for a diagnosis of a visual disability if the diagnosis is carried out by a qualified optician or eye doctor.

## Withdrawals and non-attendance

Students are required to tell us as soon as possible if they withdraw or do not attend their course as this may impact their eligibility to support.

We may seek to recover some or all of the money we have paid to them if they are no longer eligible for support.

Please note that SAAS will not typically ask students to repay money for equipment that they have purchased prior to a withdrawal from the course.

[\(back to contents\)](#)

## **Annex A – Needs assessment pro forma**

You can find the needs assessment pro forma within the DSA section on the [HEI Shared Area](#).

[\(back to contents\)](#)



## Annex B – DSA Allowances

	The Allowances		
	Consumable Items	Equipment, Software and Accessories	Non-Medical Personal Help (NMPH)
Rate	£1,725	£5,160	£20,520
Frequency	Annual	Duration of programme	Annual
What is covered? (examples)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Photocopying</li> <li>• Printer cartridges</li> <li>• Braille or Livescribe paper</li> <li>• USB memory sticks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability related software (for example, Dragon voice recognition software)</li> <li>• Printers/ scanners</li> <li>• Laptops/ Personal Computers (PC's)</li> <li>• Ergonomic equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Sign Language interpreters (BSL)</li> <li>• Tactile BSL</li> <li>• Note takers/ scribes</li> <li>• Proof readers</li> <li>• Mentors</li> <li>• IT training</li> <li>• Study skills support</li> <li>• Mobility support</li> </ul>
What isn't covered? (examples)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapted course hand-outs</li> <li>• Internet (new students)</li> <li>• Special dietary requirements (new students)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course specific equipment (for example, camera for photography courses)</li> <li>• Course specific software</li> <li>• Wheelchairs/ mobility scooters</li> <li>• Any equipment that an institution would be reasonably expected to provide under the Equality Act (2010) (for example, wheelchair access)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subject specific tuition</li> <li>• Support that would normally be provided by Social Services</li> <li>• Asfedic tuning (TintaVision) or similar diagnostic services</li> </ul>
Payments/ receipts:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The allowance is paid to the student on an annual basis</li> <li>• Payment is made when the allowance is approved</li> <li>• Receipts can be provided throughout or at the end of the academic year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The allowance is paid to the student</li> <li>• Payment is made when the allowance is approved</li> <li>• Large items should be purchased and receipts provided within 6 weeks of payment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support workers employed by the HEI or a private company - the allowance is paid directly to the HEI or on behalf of an NMPH provider employed by the HEI or Private</li> <li>• Support workers employed by the student - the allowance is paid directly to the student on behalf of an NMPH provider</li> <li>• Payments are made in arrears on</li> </ul>

			receipt of invoice • Invoices for unapproved NMPH will not be paid by SAAS
Additional information:	• The allowance is calculated pro rata for part-time students • Any unspent allowance <b>can</b> be used to top up the other allowances if necessary	• The allowance is not scaled down for part-time students • Any unspent allowance <b>cannot</b> be used to top up the other allowances	• The allowance is calculated pro rata for part-time students • Any unspent allowance <b>cannot</b> be used to top up the other allowances

### Notes:

In exceptional circumstances SAAS may pay a student's DSA directly to a supplier or third-party account, for example, in cases where a student is unable to undertake their own financial transaction.

SAAS are unable to pay more than the maximum allowances in any given academic year. However, if a student's disability related expenses exceed the maximum allowed they may be eligible to apply for additional support from their institution's Discretionary Funds.

Any unspent portion of the allowances cannot be brought forward from one academic session to another.

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

[\(back to contents\)](#)

## Annex C – Non-Medical Personal Help (NMPH) rates

NMPH	Employed by an agency or HEI	Employed by the student
Classroom or laboratory assistant	£11.44 - £18	Up to £11.44
IT trainers	£11.44 - £45	N/A
Mentors	£11.44 - £45	N/A
Notetakers	£11.44 - £18	Up to £11.44
Personal support assistants	£11.44 - £18	N/A
Proof-readers	£11.44 - £18	Up to £11.44
Readers	£11.44 - £18	Up to £11.44
British Sign Language Interpreters or Tactile BSL Interpreters	£11.44 - £45	N/A
Study support assistants	£11.44 - £45	N/A

### Notes:

In cases where the recommended cost of the support worker is higher than the rates noted above, for example, if a student is in a remote area and the availability of support is limited, we can consider paying a higher rate. Additional information and supporting evidence should be provided in such cases.

[\(back to contents\)](#)

## Annex D – SAAS Contacts

### Contact numbers

The number you should call will depend on the course type or where the student is studying. We may record your call as part of our on-going commitment to improve customer service.

Call **0300 555 0505**, then select:

Option	Service
Option #1	for Disabled Students enquiries (DSA)
Option #2	if you are calling to let us know that a student did not attend their course or that they have withdrawn from their course
Option #3	for online application enquiries
Option #4	for Nursing & Midwifery courses, courses at Private Institutions, Allied Health Profession courses and students taking undergraduate courses at a publicly funded college/university outside Scotland but within the UK
Option #5	for Postgraduate enquiries
Option #6	for Undergraduate or any other general enquiries

If you need to send documents/evidence on behalf of a student, we can accept these through the SAAS DSA Advisor online document uploader. If you have any issues using the document upload service, contact us. Please only submit emails to one inbox at a time.

**Email:** [SAAS\\_DSA\\_Advisors@gov.scot](mailto:SAAS_DSA_Advisors@gov.scot)  
(for enquiries relating for specific students)

[SAAS\\_4priority@gov.scot](mailto:SAAS_4priority@gov.scot)  
(for urgent enquiries for specific students)

[SAAS\\_DSAINVOICES@gov.scot](mailto:SAAS_DSAINVOICES@gov.scot)  
(for invoices and invoice related enquiries)

[saas\\_4@gov.scot](mailto:saas_4@gov.scot)  
(for any other related DSA communications)

[\(back to contents\)](#)

## Annex E - 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 by another department, for example, Social Work, NHS or a Local Authority, and 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, for example, 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 to review. If the Policy team are unable to make a decision, they will refer the case to the policy team in the Learner Experience Division (LED).

As each exceptional case is looked at on an individual basis, the decision to award funding 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 funding 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.

[\(back to contents\)](#)