

Disabled Student Service Bulletin

February 2012



This bulletin gives you an update on the Student Finance England service for disabled students for academic year 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 – how we are doing and what's new.

AY 2012 / 2013 SERVICE

The AY 2012/13 Student Finance England service for new and continuing full-time students is open.

Our key message to students is to apply online now at www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance so that they can be sure to get all the student finance they are entitled to at the start of term in autumn 2012. Students don't need to have a confirmed place at university to apply.

DSA APPLICATIONS

Customers applying for Disabled Students' Allowances for AY12/13 will continue to apply using a paper application form.

New Students

New students applying for main student finance support online who also want to apply for DSAs should click the option to apply for Disabled Students' Allowances in the main online application. They will then receive a shortened DSA application form to fill out and return to Student Finance England. If they have already applied for student finance and now wish to apply for DSAs they should complete the short version of the DSA1 paper form (DSASL).

Continuing Students

Continuing students don't need to re-apply for DSAs. They should reapply for their student finance online and indicate that they want their DSA support to continue. This excludes DSA only, part-time and post-graduate customers, who need to reapply each year on the full version of the DSA application form (DSA1F).

Forms are available to download from www.direct.gov.uk/sfforms2012.

MEDICAL EVIDENCE

We're still receiving a large amount of original disability evidence. Please help us by telling any students you are in contact with that we now accept photocopies of disability evidence.

AY 2011 / 2012 APPLICATION PROCESSING

As of 05 February, we have received over 39,000 DSA applications which is 89% of our expected 2011/2012 applications.

This is a great achievement and we would like to thank all our partners for the work you have done helping us promote the apply early message to students.

NON-MEDICAL HELP RESEARCH

The research work to aid development of procurement guidance to address the current issues of quality and value for money in non medical help provision is now in its final stages.

The research involved analysing more than one hundred different non-medical helper job roles. The outcome of this analysis was a framework describing roles, training and qualifications and costs.

Five regional discussion groups were held to consult on the interim research outputs, along with a small group of students who were in receipt of DSAs.

Following consultation with the Disabled Students Stakeholder Group SLC are now working with BIS to progress how the guidance should be implemented.

SOCIAL MEDIA 'SURGERIES'

We run live SFE social media 'surgeries' on Twitter and Facebook, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 2-4pm. We've recently introduced specialist support surgeries to provide students entitled to specialist support, such as DSAs, with real-time answers to their questions. We have received some great feedback from students.

For the latest updates and information on future specialist support surgeries, follow Student Finance England on twitter.com/sf_england and facebook.com/SFEngland.

STUDY NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

Recently we undertook an exercise to contact 986 students who had been approved for DSAs for academic year 2010/2011 but not gone for a study needs assessment.

The main reasons for not progressing with a study needs assessment fell into two categories, students who were confused by the process and students who chose not to prioritise it.

Common themes captured from those who were confused were; did not think they needed DSAs, process was too confusing, didn't know they needed to book an assessment, thought the diagnostic test was the assessment or only applying because they wanted extra time in exams.

Common themes captured from those who didn't prioritise the study needs assessment were; unable to travel to the assessment, unsure of the benefits of DSAs, too busy with their course or the process seemed too much hassle.

As a result of this exercise we have improved our customer guidance.

CUSTOMER GUIDANCE

We've updated our customer guidance to highlight the key steps involved in the DSA application process and clarify what students needs to do at each stage. This includes development of a [DSA key dates](#) leaflet which summarises the key steps in applying for DSAs in an easy to use format.

All of our customer guidance, including the [DSA key dates](#) leaflet. [Bridging the Gap – a guide to Disabled Students' Allowances](#) and our [DSA factsheet](#) are available to download from www.practitioners.slc.co.uk with the option to [order paper copies](#).

DSA STAKEHOLDER CONSULTANT

We would like to welcome Graham Tranter as our new DSA Stakeholder Consultant. Currently Graham is 'out in the field' meeting DSA partners and stakeholders and understanding any issues that may be highlighted to him so that they can be taken forward.

If you would like Graham to visit you and your organisation, please contact him on 07979 792 241 or Email: graham_tranter@slc.co.uk

EMAILS

We've significantly increased employee numbers in our DSA team to improve our email response handling time.

If you are a practitioner with any type of DSA enquiry you can also call the DSA enquiries team on 01325 215194 between 9.30am-4pm Mondays to Fridays. (This number is not for students)

NEED TO CONTACT OUR DISABLED STUDENT TEAM?

- For Practitioners with DSA enquiries:
Tel - 01325 215194 (this number is not for students)
- For practitioners with queries relating to policy and regulations email – ssin_Queries@slc.co.uk
Tel - 0845 602 0583 (this number is not for students)
- For disability practitioners at HEIs email – disability_adviser@slc.co.uk
- For Needs Assessment Centres email – access_centre@slc.co.uk
- For Needs Assessors or Disability Advisors submitting information on late, final year applicants email - dsa_late_apps@slc.co.uk
- Submission of Needs Assessment Reports via encrypted PGP – needs_assessment_reports@slc.co.uk
- For suppliers submitting invoices, invoice queries or specific student queries email – invoice_team@slc.co.uk
- For Needs Assessment Centres referring Educational Psychologist's reports email – Matthew_hall@slc.co.uk
- For enquiries regarding the Disabled Student Service Stakeholder Group email – stakeholder_enquiries@slc.co.uk

FEEDBACK

If you have any comments or feedback on this bulletin, please email: stakeholder_enquiries@slc.co.uk