

Disabled Student Service Bulletin

August 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.

SOCIAL MEDIA 'SURGERIES'

We have recently introduced specialist support surgeries on Facebook to provide students entitled to DSAs and other specialist support with real-time answers to their questions. The next DSA specialist support surgeries will be on Wednesday 22nd August and Wednesday 12th September.

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

COURSE SPECIFIC SOFTWARE

In line with Student Finance regulations SLC will no longer accept recommendations for course specific software for students with Specific Learning Difficulties. This decision has been taken following Stakeholder consultation and is supported by DSSG and DSSG Assistive Technology sub group members.

This will take effect from **17th September** and ensure that DSA support remains appropriate. SLC will still consider exceptional circumstances on a case by case basis.

REQUESTING ADDITIONAL ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY TRAINING

Based on stakeholder consultation it is felt that Study Needs Assessors are best placed to assess students' additional or alternative training needs. As such from **17th September** Student Finance England will only accept requests for additional Assistive Technology Training from Study Needs Assessors.

This decision is supported by members of the DSSG and DSSG Assistive Technology sub-group. SLC will continue to consult with Stakeholders and Partners to improve the service we offer to students.

DSA INFORMATION FILMS

A series of short information films on the DSA process are now available. The films feature advice from Student Finance England's dedicated DSA team and first-hand accounts from students with a variety of needs.

The three films cover 'Are DSAs for me?', 'How can DSAs help?', '5 Steps to apply' and 'DSAs- The complete story' a longer version (about 11 minutes) combining all three short films that would be more suited to a classroom environment. Each film has accessibility options including a sign language function and interactive transcripts.

Please help encourage students to view the films by including the link- <http://www.sfengland.slc.co.uk/dsa> - in your own communications and channels. You can also download the films, or embed them directly onto your website by following the simple instructions provided on www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/marketing

VIRTUAL ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY TRAINING

When Assistive Technology training is delivered virtually it is important that Study Needs Assessors provide justification for the mode of AT training recommended. SLC also require an outline of the content of the training and at least two 'like for like' quotes within the Study Needs Assessment Report. Not providing the required information may delay a student's support.

The SLC, DSSG and DSSG Assistive Technology sub-group recommend that decisions on the mode of AT Training are made with the student during the needs assessment.

APPLY NOW!

The application deadlines have now passed for new and returning student finance applications. Please help us ensure students submit their finance applications as soon as possible by promoting the after deadline messages on your institutions website and social media.

Customer Messages

"The deadline for students applying for their 2012/13 student finance has now passed. If you've not yet applied then you need to do it now or you may not have your funding in place at term start. This could lead to problems with securing and paying for accommodation and other important expenses.

Don't delay any longer. You need to apply online today at www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance

Remember, you don't have to have a confirmed place – simply use your first choice of course and change it online at a later date if you need to."

DSA APPLICATIONS

Please access www.direct.gov.uk/dsas for information about how to apply for Disabled Students' Allowances.

AY 2011 / 2012 DSA APPLICATION PROCESSING

Processing of AY 2011/12 applications continue to be on track with both Needs Assessments and DSA1 applications within service level agreements. As of 1st August, we have received over 49,200 DSA applications which is a significant increase on AY 2010/11 applications.

AY 2012 / 2013 DSA APPLICATION PROCESSING

As of 1st August, we have received over 14,500 DSA applications for AY 2012/13.

It's great that many students are applying for their DSAs early, rather than waiting until they start university and we would ask all partners to continue to promote this message to students.

FEEDBACK

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

STUDY NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

There are currently over 5,500 students who have been approved by SFE for DSAs in AY 11/12 but have not yet attended a Study Needs Assessment.

Can You Help?

SFE sends reminders to these students but please encourage any students you are in contact with to arrange their Study Needs Assessment as soon as they receive their DSA1 letter.

NON-MEDICAL HELP RESEARCH

The research work to aid the development of procurement guidance is now complete. In May, key representatives from SLC, BIS and the DSSG met with the research consultants to discuss the research findings and how this information can be used to address the current issues of quality and value for money in non-medical help provision.

The meeting was very valuable and SLC will continue to work with BIS and stakeholders to achieve greater value for money and quality of service for students. Further updates on the improvements to non-medical help provision will be communicated in future months.

DISABLED STUDENT STAKEHOLDER GROUP

The Disabled Student Stakeholder Group met on 14 June. Members discussed AY 2011/12 outstanding Need Assessment Reports and more targeted ways to encourage students to attend a Study Needs Assessment. They also reviewed customer insight research and the issues it raised regarding the lack of awareness amongst new students of how DSA can support them. BIS outlined their work on reviewing quality assurance within DSA provision and members will work with BIS to improve this.

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 enquiries regarding the Disabled Student Stakeholder Group email – stakeholder_enquiries@slc.co.uk