

BRIEFING NOTE

Date: 15 September 2015

NDCS BRIEFING:

DISABLED STUDENT ALLOWANCES UPDATE: CHANGES FOR THE 2015 ACADEMIC YEAR IMPACTING NEW STUDENTS IN ENGLAND AND WALES



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The Government in England is currently consulting on proposed changes to Disabled Student Allowances (DSAs) for the 2016-17 academic year. However, there are some policy changes that will impact students starting HE this year which are outlined below:

1. Cancelled sessions policy

Student Finance England's (SFE) DSAs guidance for 2015-16 states that DSAs will not be generally provided to meet the cost of cancelled Non Medical Helper (NMH) support if the cancellation is made with more than 24 hours' notice.

This could potentially cause problems for bookings for communication support as cancellation charges are normally applied to bookings cancelled with less than two weeks' notice. NDCS will be raising the issue with BIS.

See page 30 of the [DSAs guidance](#)¹ for further information.

2. Missed sessions policy

SFE's DSAs guidance also states that where a student misses two or more sessions where NMH support was booked in one term without cancelling it (with more than 24 hours notice), their DSAs funding may be suspended.

This policy is thought to be discriminatory as it means disabled students requiring NMH support are being treated unfavourably in comparison with non-disabled students. Again, NDCS will raise the issue with BIS.

See page 30 of the [DSAs guidance](#)² for further information.

3. Evidence of disability

BIS has submitted guidance to SFE stating that students applying for DSA should supply evidence that confirms the student has a condition which has a substantial and long term negative effect on their ability to carry out daily activities. Student Finance Wales has received the same guidance from the Welsh Assembly.

This policy has created difficulties for a couple of deaf students this summer in acquiring the evidence needed to claim for DSAs. However, SFE has recently confirmed to NDCS that a letter confirming permanent deafness (not an audiogram) from an audiologist or doctor will be sufficient as evidence of disability because deafness is a 'protected condition'.

NDCS is waiting to hear back from Student Finance Wales regarding their position on this.

¹ http://www.practitioners.sl.cco.uk/media/5946/sfe_disabled_students_allowances_-_new_dsa_students_-_final_1_2_april_15.pdf

² http://www.practitioners.sl.cco.uk/media/5946/sfe_disabled_students_allowances_-_new_dsa_students_-_final_1_2_april_15.pdf

4. Computers

DSAs funding will no longer be available for 'entry-level computers'. Where it has been identified that a 'standard' or 'high cost' computer is required through a DSA assessment, funding will only be available above £200. This means the student must contribute £200 towards the cost of a new computer. For further information see page 53 of the [DSAs guidance](#)³.

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³ http://www.practitioners.sl.cco.uk/media/5946/sfe_disabled_students_allowances_-_new_dsa_students_-_final_1_2_april_15.pdf